

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
& COOPER CENTER FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING**

## Camp Cooper Begins Long Awaited Facilities Upgrade, with Majority of Initial Funding In Place

- The Cooper Center will host a live, socially distanced press conference at Camp Cooper, Friday Dec. 4 at 1 p.m. Event will stream live at [campcooper.org](http://campcooper.org).
- Event will highlight Phase I of the Camp Cooper Master Plan: Eco-friendly bathroom and shower facility construction, replacing facilities built more than 45 years ago.
- Energy-saving construction features will include: solar energy, composting toilets and rainwater harvesting to serve as a model for sustainable outdoor education facilities.
- At the Dec. 4 event, Camp Cooper will kick off a \$500K Capital Campaign to fund these improvements; \$225K has already been secured, with a \$100K match waiting to be filled.
- Event will feature director Colin Waite, University of Arizona College of Education dean Bruce Johnson, and Tucson Unified School District superintendent Dr. Gabriel Trujillo

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

TUCSON, Ariz. – November 23, 2020 – After nearly half a century with no significant upgrades to facilities, the Cooper Center for Environmental Learning is launching Phase 1 of a new facility master plan for Camp Cooper: including ecologically designed bathroom and shower facilities that will model sustainability with composting toilets, solar power, rainwater harvesting and greywater systems for water conservation. Designs are currently being finalized with leading Southern Arizona architects, Swaim and Associates, with groundbreaking scheduled for spring 2021.

While bathrooms might seem an unlikely first step for improving the Camp Cooper property, prioritizing this project will have a far-reaching impact, explained Colin Waite, director of the Cooper Center. “Camp Cooper sees overnight groups as large as 60 students and 20 adults at a time, and until now we have managed this with 4 toilets, 2 urinals, and no showers,” Waite said. “This upgrade will more than double our capacity while using less water and electricity, and showers will allow for longer programs and a new revenue stream from facility rentals.”

The Cooper Center seeks to raise \$500,000 to pay for the project, with \$225,000 of that amount already pledged by private donors. A local philanthropic couple have also pledged to match up to \$100,000 in additional donations, essentially making the ongoing fundraising goal for this portion of the master plan \$175,000.

Contributions can be made by individuals and families, foundations, or businesses and corporations at [give.uafoundation.org/cooper-center](https://give.uafoundation.org/cooper-center).

Spring 2021 construction will mark the first major facility improvements at Camp Cooper since its original buildings were erected in the early 1970s. Eco-friendly bathrooms and showers comprise the first step in a \$3 - \$4M master plan. Future phases will include renovated sleeping cabins, new classroom and administrative spaces and a commercial kitchen with sustainable food service.

Waite projects that the full scope planned upgrades will be completed within 5–7 years.

While Camp Cooper stakeholders have long anticipated upgrades to the property and facilities, construction is now able to move forward now thanks to a 20-year agreement between Tucson Unified School District and the University of Arizona College of Education, formalized in October 2019. These two entities have partnered in the operation of Camp Cooper since 2008, and recently extended their agreement after more than a decade of successful collaboration.

Plans for Camp Cooper’s facility improvements will be announced at a socially distanced press event on Friday, Dec. 4. Waite will be joined by Tucson Unified superintendent Dr. Gabriel Trujillo and UArizona College of Education dean Bruce Johnson. The event will feature conceptual designs of the new bathrooms and showers. Waite, Trujillo and Johnson will speak on the importance of these renovations to the Cooper Center’s work in the community.

The event will take place at Camp Cooper, 5403 W. Trails End Road, 85745, and will stream online at [campcooper.org](https://campcooper.org) at 1pm on Dec 4.

## Quotes for Media Use

### **Bruce Johnson, dean of the College of Education, University of Arizona:**

“For many years, the University of Arizona College of Education has hosted outdoor experiences at Camp Cooper for undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty and staff. Improving Camp Cooper’s aging facilities means, quite simply, that we can inspire more educators and future educators with the kind of hands-on science education and teacher development that Camp Cooper and the Cooper Center are known for.”

### **Dr. Gabriel Trujillo, Superintendent of Tucson Unified School District**

“TUSD is excited to support Camp Cooper’s efforts to modernize their facility, starting with improved bathrooms and showers. Even with their rustic facilities, Camp Cooper has inspired tens of thousands of TUSD students over six decades. Now is the time to invest in future generations of Camp Cooper campers by making the Cooper facility accessible to all and comfortable to use.”

**Kathy DeVinney, retired teacher, TUSD’s Robins K-8 School:**

“Camp Cooper’s existing bathrooms are sufficient for day trips, but with overnights, there was always a long line just before bed and early in the mornings. The existing facilities really weren’t designed for wash-ups, teeth brushing, etc. Overnight trips will be much more enjoyable with updated bathrooms and something I’ve wanted for years...showers!”

**Marguerite Samples, teacher, TUSD’s Pueblo Gardens K-8 School:**

“Upgrades like solar power support Camp Cooper’s environmental philosophy, while improving bathrooms and showers removes an obstacle some folks had with attending. It allows for some of the ‘comforts of home’ while continuing to provide a genuine experience.”

###

## **About the Cooper Center for Environmental Learning**

The Cooper Center for Environmental Learning is a project of the University of Arizona (UArizona) College of Education, educating people of all ages with a goal of inspiring them to live more lightly on the Earth. Its work includes programs for grades K–12, outreach across the UArizona campus, community events, professional development for educators, training for future teachers and research on effective environmental education. Its flagship initiative, Camp Cooper, is a “living classroom” in Tucson’s desert foothills, run in partnership with Tucson Unified School District (TUSD). Each year, thousands of kids visit Camp Cooper for hands-on, outdoor lessons and activities designed to inspire youth to care about the environment by revealing the science and wonder of nature. Operating since 1964 and today funded almost entirely by grassroots donors and private grants, Camp Cooper now often hosts the grandkids of its earliest students, welcoming a third generation to its 130,000 alumni around the world.

- VIDEO: About The Cooper Center <https://youtu.be/mxqxgk8AyAk>
- Cooper Center Website: <http://coopercenter.arizona.edu>

## **Media Contacts**

Colin Waite  
Director, Cooper Center for Environmental Learning  
(520) 626-1825, [cwaite@arizona.edu](mailto:cwaite@arizona.edu)

Ana Luisa Terrazas  
Director of Marketing and Communications, UA College of Education  
(520) 626-3473, [anat@arizona.edu](mailto:anat@arizona.edu)

## **Additional Resources**

- Media Kit: <https://coopercenter.arizona.edu/cooper-center-capital-campaign-phase-1>
- Donations can be made at [give.uafoundation.org/cooper-center](https://give.uafoundation.org/cooper-center).