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Westminster gets gift from Great Salt Lake Minerals

Philanthropy » College institute office to bear company name.

By Mike Gorrell
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Great Salt Lake Minerals, whose solar evaporation ponds remove sulfate of potash and magnesium chloride from the lake's briny waters outside of Ogden, has made a financial contribution to Westminster College.

As a result of the \$25,000 gift, the Salt Lake City college will name the director's office of the Great Salt Lake Institute after the company. The Institute is in the \$30 million Meldrum Science Center, under construction in the central campus. The 60,000-square-foot science facility is scheduled for completion next spring and to open for classes in fall 2010.

The Institute is the first dedicated to research on the Great Salt Lake, Utah's salty inland sea that has supported Great Salt Lake Minerals' extraction activities since 1970. The company is a wholly owned subsidiary of Compass Minerals.

"We appreciate Great Salt Lake Minerals and their support for Westminster's commitment to excellence in the sciences," said President Michael Bassis. "They help further discovery of this unique and understudied resource."

Directed by Bonnie Baxter, who has done considerable research on the lake, the Institute will pursue collaborative ventures between higher education, industry, nonprofit groups and government agencies.

Its creation extends longtime support for Westminster by the late Peter Behrens, who was vice chairman of Great Salt Lake Minerals and a college trustee for more than 15 years. He died in November 2005 at the age of 78.

"We have a warm feeling for Westminster," said Great Salt Lake Minerals spokesman Dave Hyams. But the sentimental attachment is far exceeded by the many benefits that can be derived from focused studies of the lake and its ecosystem, he added.

"They will be doing the research necessary for understanding the lake, the whys and hows there are changes that affect lake levels and bird populations," Hyams said. "That's important in determining how you go forward with sensible policies that protect the lake,

the human and bird populations and the economy... Knowledge and information about how the lake operates is important to and to the whole state."

Meldrum Science Center will have 14 classroom/laboratories and five dedicated undergraduate research laboratories that will be used by the college's growing number of science, pre-med, nursing and health-care majors.

VCBO Architects designed the center, being built by Big-D Construction. It will achieve the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Gold Certification.

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