USU Salt Lake Center Opening Campus Greenhouse to Benefit Students and Refugee Farmers

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In the culmination of a six-year project, new on-campus greenhouse is set to open at the Utah State University Salt Lake Center this fall.

The 1,800-square-foot facility will highlight and strengthen the horticulture program at the Salt Lake Center. Prior to the construction of the greenhouse, students and faculty had access to the Granite School District greenhouse, in conjunction with the Granite Technical Institute.

“The greenhouse will increase student learning through hands-on experience and prepare them for jobs in horticulture-related fields,” said David Vernon, Associate Vice President of the Salt Lake Center. “It will also provide our faculty the opportunity to design an authentic learning environment.”

In addition to the practical and academic aspects of the greenhouse, the Salt Lake Center will share the greenhouse with New Roots, an International Rescue Committee program that helps refugee farmers use the skills they already have to help them provide food for their families and communities, or to develop their farms into businesses.

USU Salt Lake horticulture students will work with New Roots employees and refugee farmers from Sudan, Burma, Bhutan, Chad, Somalia, and Burundi to start the seedlings, which will then be taken and planted at the local farms.

“Starting the seedlings in the greenhouse will help the refugee farmers increase production,” Vernon said. “The horticulture students will have the opportunity to learn greenhouse production in a meaningful way by serving the refugee farmers.”

Rachel Broadbent, the horticulture program coordinator, said that in the future, the greenhouse property will also feature garden space and raised garden boxes that will be available to USU students, faculty and staff interested in growing food or flowers.

The Salt Lake Center is committed to the safety of its students and faculty members and will be following standard recommended operating procedures to reduce risk through the COVID-19 pandemic.

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