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Winona State University broke ground Thursday on its Integrated Wellness Complex and announced a large donation toward the project from Merchants Bank.

The 90,000-square-foot facility scheduled to be completed by 2010 will mix space for fitness, sports, classrooms and research programs. The \$19 million cost is being funded through \$7.1 million of student fees, \$8.4 million in state money, \$3.5 million in money raised through a WSU capital campaign and \$300,000 donated by Merchants Bank on Thursday.



Winona State University broke ground Thursday on its 90,000 square foot Integrated Wellness Complex, a facility that combines space dedicated to academic, sports and health services. The project has been funded through a collection of state, student and private money, and Merchants Bank announced a new donation at the groundbreaking ceremony. (Contributed Photo)

"This facility represents a first for Winona not only because of the many partnerships that have formed to realize it but also for its sustainable design," WSU President Judith Ramaley said.

Merchants Bank's donation is the company's largest to date, President Rod Nelson said. The donation is partially contingent on matching funds by WSU community members and alumni. The bank gave \$300,000 with no strings attached and will add another \$200,000 if individuals make a matching donation.

"It's our hope that we provide each of those dollars," Nelson said. "We thought this particular project was especially important to Winona State and our community."

The project is environmentally friendly, WSU officials said. The complex will be Winona's first Silver Level Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-rated building design, an award given by the United States Green Building Council. The designation recognizes energy-saving techniques used in the design, which are expected to make the building more efficient than comparable ones.

Local health care providers may house cardiac rehabilitation services and electronic medical records at the complex, Ramaley said, and Minnesota State College-Southeast Technical students will have access to the facility.

In other WSU news, the John Nett Center, 351 Lafayette St., was renamed the Wabasha Recreational Center. The building houses academic rooms, intramural sports and some outside agencies. The university bought the center from Cotter schools after leasing the property the past two years.