WESTMINSTER COLLEGE

Great Salt Lake Institute

Great Salt Lake Institute:

Halophiles for Students, Teachers and the Community

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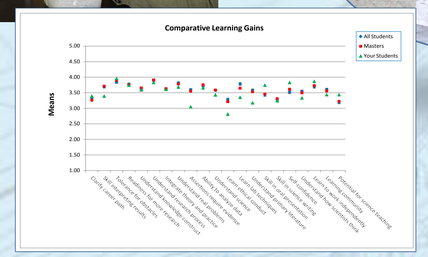
Filling a Niche

Westminster College is uniquely situated between the Wasatch Mountains to the east and Great Salt Lake to the west. We are firmly rooted in an urban landscape in a major metropolitan area adjacent to one of the great terminal lakes of the world. Science faculty at Westminster College noted a general disinterest in the lake by community and research institutions alike and began researching this unique ecosystem. The advocacy non-profit group, FRIENDS of Great Salt Lake, was active in stewardship and K-12 education endeavors at the lake, but scholarly investigations from academic perspectives were lacking. We realized a complementary organization could create a different community in a college setting. The vision was immense-that we could attract researchers from around the world, facilitate large projects, engage in outreach efforts, and all of these endeavors would involve our undergraduate students.

Connecting people to Great Salt Lake through research and education.

Research

GSLI engages in collaborative research efforts from schools, industry, non-profit groups, and government agencies. We encourage opportunities for undergraduate research and scholarship in all of the work completed by GSLI. We span the fields of the sciences, the humanities, the arts, education, and business.



Data on GSLI undergraduate researchers (green triangles) compared with national data sets created by the SURE (Survey for Undergraduate Research Experiences) project (Lapatto 2004, Lopatto 2007).

Education

GSLI is active in STEAM and environmental education for K-College students. While we love to work with youth we accomplish this goal primarily through undergraduate and teacher education.

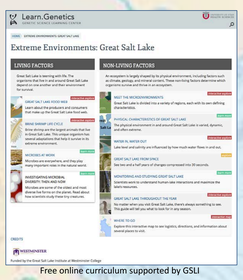
Progression:

Over the past 8 years our experiences have led to a progression in our mission based on our strengths and feedback from our students, funders, partners and the community

GSLI hosts STEAM activity at Spiral Jetty, Great Salt Lake Utah

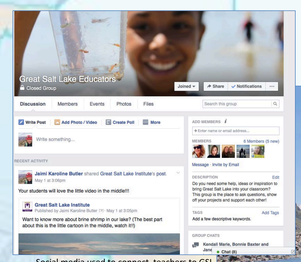
Great Salt Lake Institute is Born

Great Salt Lake Institute (GSLI) was established in 2008 with support from Westminster College and an external grant, allowing us to hire a coordinator, involve student employees, and purchase equipment to reach out to the community in a real way. We began by running community field trips and developing high school and college curriculum on GSL. Shortly thereafter, we created a GSLI summer undergraduate research program.



Free online curriculum supported by GSLI

Halophiles for students, teachers and the community



Social media used to connect teachers to GSL

Teachers immersed in Great Salt Lake during professional development course

Lessons Learned:

We knew we would perpetually have salt on our hands and mud on our boots but we found that GSLI is much more than scientific research!

- Unbiased, neutral and inviting to everyone
- Facilitating discussion, connecting ideas and helping build a passionate and informed GSL community
- Mentoring is a major part of GSLI

Lopatto, D. (2004). Survey of Undergraduate Research Experiences (SURE): First Findings. Cell Biology Education, 3, 270-277
Lopatto, D. (2007). Undergraduate research experiences support science career decisions and active learning. CBE – Life Sciences Education, 6, 297-306

Great Salt Lake Institute would not be the same without you! Thank you to the following for your support and partnerships.

Preston Chiaro

Dee Family Foundation

Bing and Judy Fang