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WKU receives \$2 million donation from petroleum engineering company

AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com 1 hr ago

A donation to Western Kentucky University topping \$2 million will allow geology and geography students to dig deeper in their exploration of what's happening beneath the Earth's surface.

Petroleum Experts, a petroleum exploration and structural geology company, has donated the equivalent of \$2.18 million in MOVE software to WKU's Department of Geography and Geology.

"The MOVE suite of software tools is a tremendous boost to the teaching and research mission of the department," Fred Siewers, chair of the Department of Geography and Geology, said in a news release. "We are very grateful to Petroleum Experts Inc. for their generous donation."

The industry-standard modeling software is useful for natural gas and oil exploration but can help users understand all kinds of geologic structures, like Kentucky's famous karst environment and cave systems. The donation is a renewal of a previous donation, according to the release.

Nahid Gani, an associate professor of geology, told the Daily News the donation provides one of the most robust kinds of software students can have the opportunity to work with.

WKU's geology program offers structural geology, tectonics and fossil fuel courses for undergraduate and graduate students. Without the donation, the department wouldn't be able to provide this opportunity to students, Gani said.

While the MOVE software has broad applications, Gani said it's primarily useful for mapping and understanding geologic structures, including how a fault or fracture is oriented. It's particularly useful for studying structures that are known for trapping fossil fuels.

While researchers can collect field data and observe structures from above ground, it can be difficult to determine how they're oriented underground. The software helps with that by allowing students to enter the data they can collect by observation and model what they would see beneath the surface.

Gani said the technology also has uses outside of hydrocarbon exploration, such as understanding the Earth's history, examining prospects for geothermal energy and even indirect carbon sequestration, which is a process for removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

"As a student-centered, applied research institution, WKU has benefited from this generous donation for training and education of both graduate and undergraduate students," Gani said in the release.



Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.