

Koelbel family honored at CU

Name at entrance to new Leeds School of Business

By John Rebchook, Rocky Mountain News
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BOULDER - The father and son development team on Wednesday morning for the first time saw the 12-inch letters spelling *KOELBEL* carved into the entrance of the new \$38 million Leeds School of Business at the University of Colorado.

"It looks like it has been there forever, doesn't it?" said Buz Koelbel, whose family has been developing residential projects in the Denver area for more than 50 years.

The building is named after the family in honor of the Koelbels' \$4 million gift for the 160,000-square-foot building.

"That's what put us over the hump," said Byron Koste, director of the real estate center in the building.

On Friday, the building will be officially dedicated at a ceremony in which the Koelbels plan to join Gov. Bill Ritter and CU President Hank Brown.

The Koelbel Building includes the existing 95,000-square-foot structure, which opened 37 years ago, and a 65,000-square-foot addition.

The two parts of the building seamlessly meld into each other, Koste said Wednesday while touring the building with Buz Koelbel and his 81-year-old father, Walter.

The atrium in the energy-efficient building, which even sports waterless urinals, is named after Koste.

The Koelbels have a long history with the business school. Walter graduated from it in 1947 and headed the fundraising campaign for the first business school building. His wife, Gene, also graduated from the school.

Buz attended the first classes taught in the now-renovated building when it opened in 1970.

But the original building, a warren of halls and small rooms, was not a hit with students or faculty.

"Our old building looked like a Siberian bunker," said Dennis Ahlburg, dean of the Leeds School.

When he arrived at the school about two years ago, Ahlburg said, some professors were teaching out of transformed janitor closets, and students frequently had to stand in hallways and on staircases because of classroom overcrowding.

Students agreed to pay \$17.5 million of the cost of the new building, private donations brought in \$17.25 million, and the university committed \$3.25 million.

Kristiana Carlton, her arms full of books and papers, was so taken by the new building that she introduced herself to the Koelbels.

"I'm a fifth-year student, getting my master's in accounting, and I just want to thank you for doing this," she told them. "We just love this building."

After she left, Buz Koelbel said it is students like Carlton who made their donation worthwhile.

"Education is obviously the foundation of the future," Koebel said. "This is the most important institution in the state. And the business school is a key cog in the wheel. And that we have three graduates of the business school in our family doesn't hurt."

Koebel Building at a glance

Size: 160,000 square feet - a 95,000-square-foot renovation of the existing building and a 65,000-square-foot new building

Why it was needed: The original building, which opened in 1970, was built to serve 1,400 students. Currently, it serves 3,600.

What students get: Sixteen classrooms, three research labs, two seminar rooms, six discussion areas, 25 team rooms, nine conference rooms and interview rooms for recruiters

Who paid for it: Funding comes from the following sources: student commitment from student fees, \$17.5 million; private philanthropy, \$17.25 million; and university commitment, \$3.25 million

Architects: Davis Partnership and ARC/Architectural Resources

General contractor: Pinkard Construction

Dedication: Formal dedication of the building will be at 3 p.m. Friday, with guests including Gov. Bill Ritter, the Koebel family, CU President Hank Brown, CU Chancellor Bud Peterson and Leeds School of Business Dean Dennis Ahlburg. *Source: University Of Colorado, Leeds School Of Business*

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