

SBU HOSTS KICKOFF EVENT FOR NEW AGRICULTURE MINOR STARTING IN 2022



BOLIVAR, Mo. — Recognizing that agriculture is a major economic driver in Missouri and particularly in southwest Missouri, Southwest Baptist University is adding a [minor in agriculture](#), with classes starting in 2022. A kickoff event to introduce the new minor was held Thursday evening, July 29, on the Bolivar campus.

“Missouri ranks second in the nation for number of farms, and Polk County is first in the state of Missouri in beef

production,” said Interim President [Dr. Brad Johnson](#). “Farming is an integral part of the history and economy of southwest Missouri, and many students in this area are seeking agriculture-related vocations. I hope this Agriculture minor is just the beginning of more to come in agriculture at SBU.”

[Dr. John Murphy](#), associate professor of [biology](#), has led the curriculum development process. He has extensive education and experience in agriculture.

Though he currently teaches primarily anatomy courses at SBU, his Ph.D. is in agronomy from Kansas State University. His grandparents, aunts and uncles farmed in Nebraska. He has managed a large farm operation and spent three years managing a research farm at Kansas State.

“Agriculture is important. It’s important to our county when we look at the statistics for Polk County, and it’s important to our state, as we look at the impact of agriculture,” Murphy said. “We have the backing of SBU and we also have the backing of the community. The backing of that local agriculture community is what will make the agriculture program at SBU successful.”

In 2016, Polk County’s economic impact in agriculture and forestry in the state of Missouri was \$159 million, which made up part of Missouri’s national impact of \$88 billion. Polk County also totaled approximately 2,000 agriculture-related jobs in 2016 and currently reports about 1,500 farms.

A few special guests in attendance included Bolivar Mayor Chris Warwick and Missouri Sen. Sandy Crawford of the 28th District; Dr. Don Fahrni ’68, SBU Trustee, and Mike Cribbs ’88 of Triple C Farms, with music provided by Robbie and Jaron Bryant. Proclamations were read by Bob Moreland, Polk County Cattlemen’s Association; Ronnie Russell, Missouri Soybean Association; Hilary Black, Missouri Corn Merchandising Council; Jim Spencer, Missouri Agriculture Education (DESE); Dallen Davies, Missouri Prime Beef Packers; and JP Dunn, Protect the Harvest.

“It’s important that we all get involved and continue to see this nation blessed and to continue to support those farmers that are involved in the most noble of occupations,” Dunn said. “I commend everybody here at Southwest Baptist University. I hope that you feel a genuine sense of purpose because God created you to do what you’re doing here at Southwest Baptist University.”



Murphy locally owns and operates an 800-acre farm with 200 head of cattle. Students already are using his farm to conduct research projects, with a team of students winning a national research award this spring.

Students will gain first-hand knowledge of working with and handling cattle, feed preparation, daily farm management, equipment maintenance, planter and sprayer calibration, field scouting and harvest.



"We're going to sit in the classroom and learn and then be out in the field practicing what we learned," Murphy said. "Labs will be very hands-on and production-oriented. We also will utilize field trips to farming operations, seed dealers, feeding operations and mills.

"We'll also be able to be involved in our research program. Two years ago, with the support of the University, we established a research program where six students looked at the idea of weaning, the impact on immune system functionality and how cattle respond to

vaccines. Those six students were awarded national awards from the National Sigma Zeta foundation last year, and one of our students in that group was awarded the top scientific presentation in the nation – all related to agricultural research. So, I think we have a lot to offer our students."



Murphy added that the minor can pair with any major, but it will fit best with majors within the sciences, business, communication and intercultural studies.

"For a lot of agriculture jobs, you need the business side," Murphy said. "Many positions within the United States Department of Agriculture, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, as well as Missouri Department of Conservation require, at a minimum, coursework in crop

production, soil science, and animal science. This program will allow students to meet those requirements, opening up new career opportunities."

The 21 hours of coursework required for the minor can be completed in three years or less.

"I'm very grateful to be at this point here today," said SBU Provost [Dr. Lee Skinkle](#). "Dr. Murphy brings a wealth of knowledge of how science informs farming and ranching and how the science translates into the profitability of the profession.

"I'm confident the establishment of this program will benefit not only the students of Southwest Baptist University, but the community of Bolivar as well."

For more information, contact Dr. Murphy at (417) 328-1995 or jmurphy@SBUuniv.edu.

PHOTO 1: Dr. John Murphy, associate professor of biology at Southwest Baptist University, shares about the new agriculture minor at SBU.

PHOTO 2: Young agriculture fans visit the pen of beef cattle provided by Hancock Farms.

PHOTO 3: Robbie (right) and Jaron Bryant entertain the crowd.

PHOTO 4: Guests visit during the agriculture minor kickoff event. Farm machinery was provided by Crown Power and Equipment.

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