Drones! Agribusiness Gets Technical
Career Options in Health Information Management
Alumni Profile

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Dr. Michael Woods holds up a drone—just one of the many exciting changes taking place in SRC’s Ag Business Management Program.
Drones! Agribusiness Gets Technical

Heads up! The drones are coming, along with an expansion of the existing Agriculture programs at Spoon River College.

New curriculum and increased learning (and money-making!) opportunities for students are being planned, all with the goal of better preparing students for the agricultural careers of the future.

“Our goal is to create a more realistic model of agribusiness that will better prepare our students for careers in agriculture, which will only continue to change and be more technology-driven,” said SRC Ag instructor Dr. Michael Woods.

“We will do that by building upon the areas that are already well established, such as the SRC land lab, local foods initiatives, and conservation efforts as part of the college arboretum.”

Along with new curriculum and exploration of the use of drones, plans are in the works to start a vineyard, establish a new orchard, and create an agri-tourism component with the goal of being a part of the Spoon River Scenic Drive. The department has added a greenhouse to support new horticulture and landscape initiatives.

Several student committees—finance, machinery, crops, animal science, public relations, buildings and grounds, and more—will be created that will align with the land lab and all department courses. Students will choose a committee to serve on that aligns with their career path and personal interests.

“Students will make more of the decisions about the operations of the SRC land lab and be responsible for making sure those decisions are carried out,” said Woods.

The payoff for students will be real-world experience, plus a percentage of the farm profits for those who are willing to put in hours outside of the classroom.

“We want to give students a chance to make their mistakes here—and learn from them—instead of when they are on the job,” said Woods, who noted that the Agribusiness Management students have been doing this for more than 40 years via the corn and soybean demonstration plot.

“Unlike an explanation from a teacher or a textbook, hands-on learning enables concepts and processes to be observed directly and can provide students with opportunities to develop key scientific skills,” Woods remarked.

Dual credit agriculture classes are currently available to students at Cuba High School, and the College is working with several other high schools that are interested in offering Ag dual credit courses to their students.

Woods himself is new to the SRC Ag faculty and joins long-time instructor Jeff Bash. Woods received a BS degree in Agricultural Communications and a Masters in Extension Education from the University of Illinois, and earned his PhD from Iowa State University in Agricultural Education.

For more information about the Ag programs offered at SRC, visit www.src.edu. The new curriculum will be announced following approval by the Illinois Community College Board.
Career Options in Health Information Management

An Associate in Applied Science Degree in Health Information Management (HIM) can give you an edge in the ever-changing and increasingly complex world of health-care-related record management.

“This is a field that is only going to grow as the move toward complete electronic management of medical records continues,” said HIM instructor Tracy Mustread. “Multiple career options are available and having the skills and credentials will make you stand out to prospective employers.”

Those “multiple career options” are one of the reasons Michael Kennedy of Lewistown chose the HIM program when he returned to college after finding out his secure factory job wasn’t so secure at all.

“We were just starting our family when the bottom fell out, and my wife and I knew we needed to get back in the classroom,” said Kennedy. “Briarne went first, graduating as an RN from the Associate Degree in Nursing program at Spoon River College in 2013. Now it’s my turn. Her medical studies interested me, but I wanted to take a different route than nursing.”

While the Associate in Applied Science Degree in Health Information Management can take two years to complete, those who want a faster track can choose from one of the certificate programs that can be completed in one year. Certificate options include medical coding, medical billing, medical records, medical transcription, medical assistant, and medical unit secretary.

“Some students complete a certificate program and then are able to find employment in that particular field, which allows them to work in the industry while they complete the two-year degree,” said Mustread, who added that hospitals and doctors’ offices are not the only places these skills are needed.

“Insurance offices, mental health facilities, chiropractors, and various other health-related facilities all need employees who have this skill set. These employment opportunities are also great for those who enjoy a health care setting but don’t want to provide direct patient care.”

Mustread noted that those who enjoy working with others, have strong analytical and communication skills, good listening habits, and are detail-oriented are suited to jobs in this field.

“Besides increasing my career options, the schedule for these classes allows me to continue raising my family while also maintaining a solid GPA,” said Kennedy. “I’m excited to finish the degree and see what opportunities await me.”

For more information about the HIM program and the courses required, visit http://www.src.edu/academics/career/him/Pages/default.aspx or call 309-649-6227.

From the Canton Campus, Tracy Mustread is able to instruct students in Havana, Macomb, and Rushville using SRC’s video conferencing system (IVS).
Spoon River College alumnus Scott Brown of Canton graduated from high school in 2003. By 2004, Brown had started his own business, TimbukTech, which provides total technology solutions to businesses in the Peoria and Canton areas, and in Macomb where he has a second location.

Brown took his first computer class at Spoon River College through their dual credit program when he was still in high school. The class was taught by Raj Siddaraju, chief information officer for the College.

“I was pretty sure I knew it all, and I argued with Raj a lot,” said Brown, who laughs when he recalls Siddaraju telling him a few years later, “You never backed down!”

“Heck no, I was a 16-year-old kid,” said Brown, but he also admits, “I actually learned a tremendous amount from Raj. He and Joe McRaven—who I also took computer classes from at SRC—were both instrumental in my decision to start my own company.” It was a good decision, and this year, Brown celebrated the 10-year anniversary of TimbukTech.

For those who are interested in a career in the computer technology field, Brown encourages them to find an internship or do some job shadowing. He also cautions that it’s not for everyone.

“You have to be geared for it, and you can’t necessarily learn it from a book. Hands-on application and training, like what is being offered in the CIS program at Spoon, is crucial,” Brown said.