New tech company joins WKU Innovation Campus

bgdailynews.com/2025/09/15/new-tech-company-joins-wku-innovation-campus

David Horowitz September 15, 2025



OgMentum ARK CEO Kent Murphy and President Jake Weise stand at the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday, Sept. 10.

A new tech company is establishing itself at the Western Kentucky University Innovation Campus with plans to significantly expand its workforce and collaborate with WKU.

The four-person fiber optics and marketing enterprise, OgMentum ARK, is investing $475,000 into operations and infrastructure to add at least 24 high-wage, full-time positions within three years, with plans for a WKU internship program. It conducts research and development spanning fiber optic communications and sensing — pursuing commercially viable products to be developed and manufactured in Bowling Green and sold globally for commercial and government contracts.

OgMentum ARK's vision stems from decades of experience from the two entrepreneurs heading it, president Jake Weise, who provides marketing and sales expertise, and CEO Kent Murphy, who brings experience in research, development and intellectual property.

Murphy founded and served as CEO for the 1990-built business development firm Luna Innovations, and started and sold seven fiber optics to Fortune 500 companies, taking one public; he's also CEO of the research and technology company Caza Innovations, which he's in the midst of relocating to Bowling Green. Weise has for more than 20 years led OgMentum, an approved vendor for thousands of customers to whom it markets and sells optical and electronic technologies, especially for fiber optic testing and measurement.

While separate from OgMentum, OgMentum ARK ("Advanced Research and commercialization in Kentucky") will preserve its namesake's branding and customer base, Weise said. Meanwhile, Murphy intends for at least part of Caza Innovations' fiber optics expertise and efforts to benefit OgMentum ARK.

Caza Innovations' relocation was announced days prior, making OgMentum's arrival the second tech startup announced for Bowling Green in a week, Murphy CEO at both.

OgMentum ARK plans to draw up an internship program and support WKU's expanding curriculum, which would then fuel more qualified employees in the future, Weise said. This would help fill a need for a technical labor force — skilled work in assembly, manufacturing and testing — as well as engineers for development, he said.

Caza Innovations' partnership with WKU aligns with the latter's goal of becoming a Cargenie-classified Research II university, WKU has stated.

And, with OgMentum ARK's arrival and its planned collaboration with WKU, WKU President Tim Caboni added that the university is "building a highly specialized talent pipeline, advancing our university's strategic priority of innovation-driven regional transformation, and laying the groundwork for meaningful public private synergy that benefits students, industry, and our broader community."

"Our collaboration with OgMentum ARK embodies the essence of WKU's mission — leveraging applied research and academic excellence to elevate South Central Kentucky," Caboni wrote in a statement.

Based on its own projects and the business model, OgMentum has projected that OgMentum ARK will generate more than $195.8 million in long-term economic impact across southcentral Kentucky, Weise said.

A partnership and plan

Weise moved last Monday, and Murphy a couple months ago. So, it's early in the initiative, with little more on the ground than the office and an outstanding need for infrastructure and equipment remains. But the two heads expressed confidence they and Bowling Green have everything needed to execute the vision, as Weise pointed to WKU and the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce.

"We've got nothing but strength and support to help us do that," he said.

The two entrepreneurs' connection to Bowling Green initially came out of Murphy's longtime friendship and work relationship with chamber CEO Ron Bunch, who had invited him to Bowling Green several years ago, Murphy said.

As Murphy got acquainted with the area, he and Weise, who had also worked together, began developing the vision for OgMentum ARK — a startup that would draw from their respective organizations. Murphy's organization, Weise said, had no sales and marketing infrastructure — while Weise's OgMentum had no development or manufacturing capabilities.

"They're the perfect fit," he said.

And, fiber optic technology gets leveraged across both communications and sensing.

Fiber optics surround the transfer of enormous quantities of data by light that flows through hair-sized strands of glass called fiber, enabling communications. Fiber optic technology can also detect signal changes, which allows it to also be used for sensing; Murphy for instance, previously oversaw technology that precisely measured robotic arms during surgery and sold it to Intuitive Surgical, he said.

The region, Weise added, provides the vision, workforce and partnerships needed to innovate at scale.

Murphy pointed to his former company Luna Innovations. He had founded it beside Virginia Tech, where he taught electrical engineering — and they had started off by hiring students.

They had hired more than 200, he said — and the company has had over 700 employees.

Murphy then pointed to a close relationship with the chamber and Bunch as well as WKU and its president Caboni, adding that they'd already met people at Western doing fiber optic sensing work related to theirs.

"Hopefully there's a great stream of students," he said.

Print Article