

Job Corps reps to tout “greatest secret on Earth” at BC3 RegFest

Program to help students graduate debt-free seeks more participants July 11-12

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Butler County Community College students participating in Job Corps and attending various BC3 locations: Jim Eckert, of Economy, Beaver County; Isabella Mariacher, of Butler; Devin Murphey, of New Castle; Mason Scovil, of Jamestown, Mercer County; and Monica Stewart, of New Castle.

(Butler, PA) Job Corps officials assisting Butler County Community College seek to expand this fall the number of students enrolled at five sites in the federal program that offers preparation for higher education, provides financial and career assistance and enables many of its participants to graduate debt-free.

The U.S. Department of Labor training and education program, whose only post-graduation obligation is that the student find gainful employment in his or her career path, was first offered on BC3’s main campus in June 2009 with 25 students, said David Martin, a Job Corps counselor with BC3.

Enrollment in the program available to community colleges grew to 122 students at five of BC3’s six sites in the spring 2017 semester, he said.

“Sometimes it takes some convincing,” Martin said of assuring doubtful students and parents who assume the program features requirements to be fulfilled after commencement.

“When I talk to the students about it, they ask, ‘What do we have to do when we are done with the program?’” Martin said. “I say, ‘You have to go start your career. You have to go to the four-year school that you want to go to. You have to go build yourself a life.’”

The reaction he often hears is that the program is too good to be true, said Paul Williams, business community liaison with the Pittsburgh Job Corps Center.

“Job Corps,” he said, “is the greatest secret on Earth.”

Isabella Mariacher, 19, of Butler, a psychology major who attends BC3’s main campus in Butler Township, said: “At first, I thought this would have been a bogus thing.”

Added Mason Scovil, 19, of Jamestown, Mercer County, a business administration major who attends BC3 @ LindenPointe in Hermitage: “At first, I honestly thought it was something that was going to have me obligated to work at a certain position at some company for X amount of years after graduating, but it’s a no-obligation program. It took a few times being told to actually be convinced it was true, but there are no obligations after graduating.”

Students and prospective students of BC3’s main campus or of BC3 @ Armstrong, BC3 @ Cranberry, BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing and BC3 @ LindenPointe can meet with Job Corps representatives on BC3’s main campus during RegFest, to be held from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. July 11-12 in the Student Success Center.

Scholarships available for continued education

The program assists students with tuition, books and fees not covered by Pell grants. Participants who enroll in Job Corps also receive a \$21 stipend every two weeks, a \$15 gasoline card once a week, a \$100 clothing allowance at the outset and conclusion of their community college career, \$500 in transition pay, one year of post-commencement employment advisement and a transportation stipend for job interviews. Students can also receive personal or career counseling and advice on class scheduling from Job Corps officials at BC3, said Bob Gottschalk, the Pittsburgh Job Corps’ director of education and training.

BC3 graduates who transfer to a four-year college or university are also eligible to receive a \$1,000 or \$500 Christopher Evans Scholarship, Williams said.

Job Corps can also purchase supplies required of a student in BC3’s registered nursing program, and assist registered nursing graduates with the cost associated with taking the National Council Licensure Examination, Gottschalk said.

“Whatever they need,” Gottschalk said, “to be successful within the program.”

BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing student: Job Corps aided in childcare, transportation costs

Monica Stewart, 21, of New Castle, who attends BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing in New Castle, said she also received assistance from Job Corps for childcare. All students with children are eligible to participate in the childcare allotment program.

“Job Corps also gave me commuting money for transportation to get to class,” said Stewart, who is pursuing an associate of applied science degree in medical assistant and a certificate as a medical coding and billing specialist.

“It also paid each semester for all of my books, my college tuition, and any required extras for specific classes, such as scrubs, nurses’ shoes, lab coats, name tags, a stethoscope, blood pressure cuffs, certification exams and so much more. They even refer you to other programs that can help you with getting a car, or repairs for your vehicle.”

To receive Job Corps assistance, BC3 students must meet the program’s income criteria and be eligible for Pell grants, a federal subsidy limited to students with financial need and who have not earned their first bachelor’s degree, or who are enrolled in certain post-baccalaureate programs, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

The maximum amount a student can receive through a Pell grant in the 2017-18 academic year is \$5,920, the U.S. Department of Education reports. Job Corps would pay the remaining balance for BC3 students, Williams said.

Thirty-seven percent of BC3 students received a Pell grant in the 2016-17 academic year, according to Becky Smith, BC3’s assistant director of financial aid.

Neither Pell grants nor Job Corps financial assistance require repayment.

“It is a great start to my four-year bachelor’s at a fraction of the cost, and Job Corps essentially cut the entire cost of my bachelor’s in half because I’m getting the first two years essentially free,” Scovil said.

Choose from 44 BC3 programs

BC3 students seeking to receive assistance from Job Corps, a \$1.9 billion U.S. Department of Labor program, must be 17 to 24 years old, possess a high school diploma or its equivalent, be a U.S. citizen or legal alien, possess a birth certificate and Social Security card, be free of court obligations and successfully pass a drug test.

Participants must be enrolled in any one of 44 designated associate degree or workplace certificate programs in BC3’s business; humanities and social sciences; health care; and science, technology, engineering and mathematics divisions.

“Those that focus on certain industry tracks,” Williams said.

A two-week daytime orientation in Pittsburgh will be held for students seeking to benefit from Job Corps assistance, Gottschalk said. A weeklong career preparation seminar is held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, followed by a weeklong class intended to help students transition from high school to college. That class is also held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday at multiple BC3 locations.

2016 BC3 grad: “Benefits speak for themselves”

“Job Corps aided me tremendously financially by helping me pay for my textbooks and the remainder of my tuition,” said Devin Murphey, 19, of New Castle, a criminology major who attends BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing. “The program also gives you guidelines to follow, for example, maintaining a certain grade-point average that helps in keeping your grades up.”

Jim Eckert, of Economy, Beaver County, earned an associate of applied science degree in park and recreation management from BC3 in 2016 and with assistance from Job Corps, was ready to start on his career path.

“Some people may perceive the (class-day) sign-ins and attendance policies tedious, or too much commitment,” he said, “but compared to what you get in return, a funded education, supplies and gas and clothing stipends ... The benefits speak for themselves.”

Of the 122 BC3 students who in the spring 2017 semester capitalized on Job Corps’ financial assistance, 55 attended BC3’s main campus; 41 attended BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, where the program began in 2014; four attended BC3 @ Cranberry in Cranberry Township, where Job Corps began in 2010; and 19 attended BC3 @ Armstrong in Ford City and three attended BC3 @ LindenPointe, where Job Corps began in August.

All of the 35 BC3 Job Corps students who graduated in May have either accepted a job offer or have enrolled in a four-year college or university or other training programs, Martin said.

BC3 @ Armstrong student: They want you to push yourself”

“This program wants to see you succeed,” said Victoria Good, 21, of Ford City, a business administration major at BC3 @ Armstrong. “They want you to push yourself because they know you can. In simple terms they want you to be the best you can and they want to be with you every step of the way.”

The excitement for Gottschalk, he said, “is seeing these students start out in the college program. When they are coming to orientation they are afraid, worried. They are not really sure where they are going to go in life. And then you see them walk across that stage at BC3. And you hear the young adults come over and say, ‘Thank you. I would never have made it without you.’ Of course, the onus goes back onto the student, because he or she is the one who put in all the hard work. But it’s just the excitement.”

Regionally, the Pittsburgh Job Corps Center offers its program at five BC3 locations and at the Community College of Allegheny County’s four campuses and four centers.

About 63,000 students participate each year in Job Corps, which began in 1964.

Seventy-five percent of students at BC3, ranked as the No. 1 community college in Pennsylvania by Schools.Com, graduate debt-free. BC3’s tuition is also the least expensive when compared

with 24 colleges and universities in Western Pennsylvania, the Pittsburgh Business Journal reported in January.

The school offers 120 scholarships totaling \$180,000 each year.

“College and money are not things to mess around with or waste,” Mariacher said. “It’s a serious topic to talk about with your parents.”

For more information that includes the 44 BC3 associate degree or certificate programs eligible for Job Corps, contact Dave Martin at 412-867-1699 or Martin.DavidC@jobcorps.org.