

Butler Eagle

BC3: Deeply rooted in Butler County, and digging deeper Dr. Nicholas C. Neupauer President, Butler County Community College March 24, 2018

Often I reference Butler County Community College's role as that of being the community's college, one whose footprint has expanded to communities throughout northwestern Pennsylvania in the past decade.

So much so, in fact, that 25,000 students now enroll in credit and noncredit courses each year at BC3's six locations in eight counties. Collectively, more than 1,000 full- and part-time employees dedicate talents to teach, mentor and guide these individuals.

Let that sink in.

We are an institution of 25,000 with 1,000-plus employees.

While we're proud to answer the commonwealth's call to provide affordable, accessible and quality education in underserved areas of northwestern Pennsylvania, we remain firmly planted among our roots in Butler County and, specifically, on our beautiful 330-acre main campus on Oak Hill.

Recent additions to our main campus such as the Heaton Family Learning Commons and the Amy Wise Children's Creative Learning Center, and the proposed Victor K. Phillips Nursing and Allied Health Building that will house The Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health, are exciting and crucial. Community leaders who include Robert R. Heaton, John L. Wise and family, Janice Phillips Larrick and Tim Shaffer have provided incredible private support.

That support has shown an increase of approximately \$10 million to the BC3 Education Foundation Inc.'s assets during those same 10 years in which BC3 expanded its footprint across northwestern Pennsylvania.

Our No. 1-ranked community college in back-to-back Schools.com surveys also intends to expand and deepen its footprint in Butler County, an objective incorporated into "A Clear Path Forward," BC3's 2017-2022 strategic plan that emphasizes the college's role in the City of Butler's revitalization.

Members of BC3's boards of Trustees and of its Education Foundation, its Alumni Association, and the college's students, faculty and staff have embraced this initiative.

In December, we convened more than 80 community leaders in Founders Hall to discuss efforts to improve the city. A next meeting will be scheduled in the coming months to develop a common vision, partnerships with governmental entities and a sustainable organizational model that embraces a unified approach.

Since the rollout of "A Clear Path Forward" in July, BC3 has offered 12 noncredit Lifelong Learning courses in downtown Butler, attended by 120 learners, on topics such as gentle yoga for stress relief and small engine repairs. BC3's Lifelong Learning this spring is offering monthly presentations at the Butler Area Public Library on topics such as crafts and calligraphy, maximizing profits for crafts and vendors at shows and festivals, and event planning basics.

Further Lifelong Learning and academic programs will benefit from feedback of advisory teams composed of city

residents and of business owners that will shape our offerings. Curricula will match local high-priority occupational needs that could allow for statewide funding.

Within weeks, college officials will tour several city facilities for a downtown location. The plan is for a small footprint that will build on partnering, collaboration and larger strategies. We believe it is critical and symbolic for BC3 to establish this presence. Soon afterwards, we plan to bring together local landlords to discuss "living and learning" communities for students who wish to live in the city while attending BC3.

These students can work for city businesses or serve as interns.

These students can contribute in various ways to the numerous nonprofit and grassroots efforts that our community embraces and that are bolstered by BC3 employees. Seventy percent of BC3 staff members who responded to a collegewide survey in January indicated they volunteer in their communities.

The survey also showed some BC3 employees have volunteered for the same organization for up to 30 years; they volunteer on average four hours per week; and nearly half of the respondents reported they volunteer on a board of directors.

We promote a collegewide service effort at BC3. Our employees can volunteer three hours a month at a college-endorsed community organization or project, such as the Light of Life Community Outreach on West North Street in Butler. When I recently volunteered at that Butler nonprofit organization, I found the experience to be humbling, eye-opening and inspirational. My colleagues at BC3 were similarly moved.

Since the inception of "A Clear Path Forward," through 2022 and beyond, I have been and will be consistent in emphasizing BC3's role as a convener and educator. Our "Reset Your Brain: A Revolutionary Approach to Opioid Addiction & Recovery" initiative, led by Coordinator of Community Leadership Initiatives Tracy Hack and an active advisory board, is an example of what we can do as an institution of higher education. Nationally known speakers, course offerings and a gathering of like-minded community leaders are already making a noticeable impact on this epidemic.

BC3 will hold four courses in downtown Butler this spring as part of its "Reset Your Brain" initiative.

At the community-college based Strategic Horizon Network's 2017 summer conference in Burlington, Vt., a business futurist in economic, societal and demographic areas named Roger Selbert boldly predicted the future of higher education for the year 2030. Selbert emphasized during his presentation the "decentralizing" of higher education.

"Community colleges," Selbert said, "will be at the core of making this local impact."

Butler County Community College is humbled and excited to foster collaboration to once again expand its footprint – and make such a local impact.

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