



## **Dr. Nicholas Neupauer**

### **Guest Column From The Butler Eagle**

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Last Aug. 1, the Butler County Community College Board of Trustees appointed me as the institution's eighth president.

Honored to lead Western Pennsylvania's first community college, I am not only humbled by the backing of the board and campus, but awe-struck when considering the decades of support from Butler County's board of commissioners.

Such support goes all the way back to March 3, 1965. On that date, Commissioners James A. Green, A.H. Bachman and William H. McCune resolved unanimously to become the community college's local sponsor.

Today, Commissioners Dale Pinkerton, James Kennedy and James Lokhaiser continue this tradition. The college understands the current state of the local, statewide and national economies. Yet, time and again, year after year, the county has supported BC3.

We strongly believe such support is a wise investment. As a matter of fact, two studies support this claim. In its analysis titled "America's Community and Technical Colleges: Investing in America's Future," Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc., reported the following:

- Compared to those with a high school diploma, workers with a two-year college degree receive \$10,700 more in annual earnings, or about \$375,000 over the course of their career.
- Compared with those with a high school diploma, workers with a two-year degree have increased job satisfaction, better health, and much lower rates of unemployment, incarceration and dependence on social assistance.

- America's community and technical colleges return more than they cost to taxpayers. The total socioeconomic benefits and savings associated with the college yield an average of 16 percent return-on-investment to state and local governments - a surplus that can be passed on to taxpayers.

A 2006 study by CCbenefits, Inc., of Moscow, Idaho, discovered the following as related to the college:

- BC3 leverages taxpayer financial support by returning \$8.44 on every dollar and avoiding \$3 million in costs to the state each year.
- BC3 generates a return on government investments by fully recovering state and local support in only five years at a rate of 33 percent rate-of-return.
- BC3 increases students' earning potential by \$117 annually for every credit completed, and a 21 percent rate-of-return on their educational investment.

Our 15,630 alumni (those who take 45 or more credits at the institution) can attest to such a rate-of-return. Eighty-five percent - 13,216 graduates - have stayed in Pennsylvania. A more staggering figure is the number of graduates who have stayed in Butler County. That number is 8,800, a total of 67 percent of our alumni.

Since 1966, 11,702 students have graduated from BC3. More than 67,535 students have enrolled in credit programs, while 107,354 have taken Lifelong Learning programs.

These graduates go on to work in many fields. If they don't go directly into a profession, students will transfer to a senior institution. Today, 66 percent of our students transfer to four-year colleges and universities.

A growing number of high school students bring in credits to the college as part of our College Within The High School Program or state-sponsored dual-enrollment programs.

"Seamless education" is one of the latest buzzwords in higher education. The terminology means that students can transfer credits from secondary to post-secondary institutions and/or community colleges to universities. One example is a unique collaboration BC3 has with the Butler County Area Vocational-Technical School.

Meanwhile, unique articulation agreements exist between BC3 and Slippery Rock University. Thirty percent of our students who transfer go to the Rock.

To further demonstrate the collaborative spirit between these two institutions of higher education, Robert Smith, SRU's president, is a member of the BC3 board of trustees.

So is Donald Tylinski, superintendent of the Seneca Valley School District. Tylinski's son is a BC3 student.

But our success extends beyond county lines. For example, in collaboration with Carnegie Mellon University, last year we hosted an international robotics educator conference. A total of 150 participants representing five countries attended.

BC3 alumni live in all 50 states and two other countries, China and Ecuador.

Because we often hear that our students "wish we could get our four-year degrees without ever leaving BC3," we have a number of successful degree-completion partnerships. Students save thousands of dollars by earning associate degrees at BC3 and then taking their junior and senior year classes at the other college, such as the University of Pittsburgh, Geneva College, Point Park University, and Franklin University, an institution that allows students to take 84 credits at BC3 and their remaining credits online in several different programs.

Last fall, Indiana University of Pennsylvania began offering its executive master of business administration program on our main campus. Point Park offers an MBA at our Cranberry site. In August, Geneva will begin offering its master of science in organizational leadership program at the Succop Conservancy.

Leaders in their respective fields and the community are plentiful at BC3.

Our highly successful public safety training program offers training for the unsung heroes in fire, hazardous materials, police and emergency medical services.

Dedicated to affordable and accessible educational, training and cultural opportunities, what impacts me most are the lives touched by the college. Whether it be hosting the Heart Association Walk in the Fall, the Hot House Jazz Band at the Succop Theater or the Locks of Love-Phi Theta Kappa fundraiser, events like these continue to make Butler County a better place.

Mike Doerfler, a former BC3 student from public relations and mass communication classes I taught, contacted me recently to share the impact the college had on him. A 2001 Seneca Valley High School graduate who took classes at the college before transferring and eventually graduating from Point Park University in 2007, Mike represents the best of BC3.

Mike is blind - has been since birth. But he used the opportunity to attend the college (both at our main campus and Cranberry site), tasted success by earning solid grades, transferred his credits and now is considering graduate school. At the end of our conversation he thanked me.

In turn, I thank Butler County for providing the foundation of an economic and educational engine that makes our county so vibrant.

By NICHOLAS C. NEUPAUER