



Dr. Nicholas Neupauer New Castle News Op-Ed

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New College Promises Plenty of Opportunity

The first 18 years of my life were spent on Martin Avenue in Ellport.

My father, Nick, and grandfather, Charles Nativio, were proud steelworkers.

My home life was really no different than most of my classmates from the Lincoln High School graduating class of 1985. But by the time we received our diplomas, the mills were closing, money was tight and life as we knew it changed dramatically.

Like most of my pals, I headed off to further my education as a first-generation college student.

Fast forward to 2008: I am now the president of the institution that will help make higher education possible for all citizens of Lawrence County -- Butler County Community College.

We have actually been in Lawrence County since 1989. But beginning in August, county residents will enjoy a state-of-the-art, 25,000-square-foot facility known as BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing.

Our building, which will serve as anchor to a campus-like setting, is located in Union Township at the former site of Riley's Funspot.

StartingGate -- a non-profit business incubator dedicated to assisting entrepreneurs and new business start-ups -- has already committed to this site. Other buildings planned for Lawrence Crossing include a workforce development building, day care, workout facility, restaurants and a coffee shop. Each will fit perfectly for a successful college campus.

We will provide the first two years of an undergraduate education at just \$166 per credit. Associate degrees offered will be pre-nursing, general studies, psychology, criminology, elementary education, business management, business administration and medical assisting.

Medical coding will be offered as a one-year certificate program. Medical coding is listed as a high-priority occupation for this region. In other words, local jobs are available in this profession.

BC3 also will bring four-year institutions to the campus to provide baccalaureate options. Point Park University will offer a degree in criminal justice that will accept our entire associate's degree in transfer. The same is true of LaRoche College's bachelor in psychology. Youngstown State University will partner in delivering an associate of applied science in electrical power plant technology. The degree, also listed as a high-priority program, will utilize the Reliant Energy plant in New Castle as a working lab.

If these programs don't interest you, we have many other agreements -- including more than 20 with Slippery Rock University -- allowing students to save thousands before transferring with junior status.

Approximately 80 Lifelong Learning courses will be offered each semester at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing as well as the Lawrence County Career and Technical Center -- a long-time, wonderful partner. These include: computer, manufacturing, professional development and real estate courses. New programs will include certification in leadership and supervision, entrepreneurship and floral design.

Our work with the Lawrence County Career Link and the Lawrence County Learning Center has enabled tremendous educational opportunities. Diane DeCarbo, BC3's director of Lawrence County, serves on the Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce and works with Adult Literacy.

I am a member of the Lawrence County Economic Development Steering Committee as well as its education subcommittee.

Education in Lawrence County is entering a new era. BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing is proud to spearhead the effort.

By NICHOLAS C. NEUPAUER