

Butler Eagle

BC3's Heaton Commons shows learning a priority

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Congratulations are in order for **Butler County Community College** as it prepares to open the Heaton Family Learning Commons about a week from now. The commons represents a \$5 million upgrade of the previous John A. Beck Library.

The college hosted a dedication ceremony on Friday for the 200 people who had contributed more than \$1,500 to the project. In all, more than 900 people donated to BC3's Pioneer Proud campaign, a total that included 82 percent of the college community.

That's an impressive show of support — more than double the rate of employee support that might be anticipated in a typical college capital campaign.

The rate of giving shows that the faculty, staff and administration believe enough in their academic mission and have enough faith in it to sow some of their earnings back into their school.

It demonstrates a pride of ownership that is key to the success of any community venture. It's more than the campus that employs them; it's a community college that belongs to them, the community.

And perhaps most importantly, it's the end product of a clear vision that was simultaneously ambitious and attainable.

The balance of financing for the learning commons tells a story about BC3 and the Butler County community it serves.

A \$1 million contribution came from real estate developer Robert Heaton. It was the largest donation the college has received in its 50-year history. The commons bears his name in recognition of the gift.

Another \$2.5 million came in the form of government matching grants, a representative share for an institution dedicated to filling the employment training needs of area business.

The remainder came from contributions by individuals representing a multitude of on- and off-campus interests in a robust BC3.

College President Nick Neupauer said the Pioneer Proud campaign substantially surpassed its goal of \$5.5 million, topping out at \$6.85 million. That's the largest fundraising campaign in the history of Butler County.

The surplus money raised in the campaign will go toward projects to provide scholarships and innovation and support economic development.

All told, the Heaton Family Learning Commons demonstrates a community's commitment to education as a clear vision to maintain education as a high priority.

As campaign names go, Pioneer Proud seemed fitting.