

200-plus new students pick BC3 for spring semester

Jan. 14, 2019



Jahred Philips, 18, of Butler, and his mother, Candy, are shown Friday, Jan. 11, 2019, during Butler County Community College's Welcome Day for new students. Candy Philips is a 2007 BC3 graduate and Jahred Philips, a 2018 Butler Area Senior High graduate, has enrolled in BC3's communications program this spring.

(Butler, PA) More than 200 new students have enrolled at Butler County Community College for the spring 2019 semester, including a 54-year-old Navy veteran, a teen facing significant student-loan debt from attending another educational institution, and a 21-year-old who after earning a high school equivalency diploma felt "ecstatic" at BC3's Welcome Day on Friday about her future.

Welcome Day provided an opportunity for new students to become comfortable on and tour BC3's main campus, locate the site of their classes, purchase textbooks, receive parking permits and IDs – and prepare for what BC3's vice president for student affairs and enrollment management calls a major life change.

“Going from high school to college, or the world of work to college, or even from one college to another, is a massive transition,” Dr. Case Willoughby said. “There are different expectations in terms of your role, in terms of how to interact with faculty, how to interact with other students, and what it is like to be a college student at a specific college, in this case, BC3.

“It would be unfair of us not to help prepare students for that transition. Welcome Day is entirely based on learning outcomes we need our students to achieve – so that they are successful. We want to bring them in to succeed wildly, and within two or three years, walk across the stage as graduates.”

BC3's Classes of 2017, with 585 graduates, and of 2018, with 578, have been its largest this century.

Alaina Engel, an Oil City native who moved to Butler last year, said she was drawn to the college with the most affordable tuition among 42 regional colleges and universities, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

BC3's affordability “played big part,” teen says

“I didn't have to take out any loans to come here,” said Engel, whose work as a part-time videographer after leaving high school in her sophomore year inspired her to enroll in BC3's communications program. “If I don't finish here in two years, I can take my time.”



Angel Powers, left, and her daughter, Devan Powers, 19, of Butler, are shown Friday, Jan. 11, 2019, during Butler County Community College's Welcome Day for new students. Devan, a 2017 graduate of Butler Area Senior High, attended a for-profit educational institution before choosing to enroll in BC3's parks and recreation management program this spring.

Engel, who hopes to one day produce documentaries, arrived at BC3's main campus Friday with questions, and left with answers – and a large plastic bag filled with ethics, health science, college writing and speech textbooks for her classes that begin Tuesday.

“I’m ecstatic,” Engel said. “Today is really important. I feel this is the first time I can actually accomplish the goal of attending college and finishing college.”

The goal of Devan Powers, 19, of Butler, a 2017 Butler Area Senior High graduate, is to attain the same BC3 associate degree in parks and recreation management as did her stepfather, land a job working in national parks and begin to repay the significant student-loan debt she accrued while studying special makeup effects and cosmetology over 18 months at a for-profit institution.

BC3's affordability “played a big part,” said Powers, who this month earned an associate degree in specialized business from the for-profit institution. “I was leaving another college and coming home. BC3 was more affordable, since I had already paid for so much college already.”

Pennsylvania college students owe an average of \$36,193 in student-loan debt, the highest in the nation, LendEdu reported Aug. 8.

Seventy-five percent of BC3 graduates are debt-free.

If her daughter decides parks and recreation management does not suit her interest, “She can change her major,” Angel Powers said, “and still not be in debt.”

“You can’t pass BC3 up for how much it costs,” said Candy Philips, of Butler, whose son, Jahred, 18, a 2018 Butler Area Senior High graduate, has enrolled in BC3's communications program this spring.

“The teachers are great and very helpful,” said Philips, who graduated debt-free from BC3 in 2007 and is an administrative assistant for a nuclear product company. “BC3 is close to home. The student-to-teacher ratio was great. The teachers knew who you were.”

Air Force veteran, 26: “The perfect school for me”



Alaina Engel, 21, of Butler, is shown Friday, Jan. 11, 2019, during Butler County Community College's Welcome Day for new students. Engel, who attained a high school equivalency diploma in 2016, has enrolled in BC3's communications program this spring.

Like George Brumagin, 54, of Butler, who served in the Navy from 1984 to 1987 and is seeking an associate degree in BC3's computer information systems programs, Chelsea Walker, 26, is also a veteran, serving four years in the Air Force after earning an associate degree in accounting from the now-defunct DuBois Business College.



“I was looking for schools online,” said Walker, a resident of Widnoon, Armstrong County and a 2011 graduate of Redbank Valley High who hopes to enroll in BC3's registered nursing program. “BC3 seemed very interactive, good for students and for the military.”

BC3 has been named a Military Friendly institution five consecutive years by Victory Media.

George Brumagin, 54, of Butler, left, and Chelsea Walter, 26, of Widnoon, Armstrong County, are shown Friday, Jan. 11, 2019, during Butler County Community College's Welcome Day for new students. Brumagin is a first-time college student who served in the Navy from 1984 to 1987 and has enrolled in BC3's computer information systems program this spring. Walker, who served four years in the Air Force after attaining an associate degree in accounting from DuBois Business College, is a BC3 general studies student this spring who hopes to enroll in the college's registered nursing program.

Ninety-four percent of BC3's registered nursing program graduates have passed the National Council Licensure Examination in the past two years, according to Patty Annear, BC3's dean of nursing and allied health. BC3's registered nursing program is the college's third-most popular among students in the spring 2019 semester, according to Sharla Anke, BC3's assistant dean of institutional research.

After her research, Walker said, “BC3 just seemed like the perfect school for me.”

Welcome Days were also held Thursday at BC3 @ Armstrong, Ford City; BC3 @ Brockway, Brockway; BC3 @ Cranberry, Cranberry Township; and BC3 @ LindenPointe, Hermitage; and on Wednesday at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, New Castle.

BC3's 14-week spring 2019 semester begins Monday, Jan. 14. Its 10-week session starts Feb. 11. Five-week Fast Track sessions, in which students can take three-credit courses online, begin Monday, Jan. 14, and will also start Feb. 18 and April 1.

BC3's spring 2019 open houses are scheduled for March 27 at BC3 @ LindenPointe; April 3 on BC3's main campus in Butler Township; April 11 @ BC3 @ Cranberry; April 17 at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing; April 22 at BC3 @ Brockway; and May 1 at BC3 @ Armstrong.