

# 5 BC3 students to press for funds in rotunda

Community colleges are “smart choice,” “great start,” Butler County residents say

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(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College students from Slippery Rock, Harrisville, Butler and Beaver will be among hundreds from across Pennsylvania advocating for increased community college funding at the state Capitol in Harrisburg on Tuesday.

“It is important that they go,” Sherri Osborne, BC3’s assistant director of student activities, said Wednesday.

“They are excellent examples, from a community college’s perspective, on why it is important for these colleges to have funding.”

Gov. Tom Wolf’s 2017-18 budget proposal maintains spending for Pennsylvania’s 14 community colleges at the current \$232.1 million level. The deadline for the state Legislature and Wolf to pass a spending plan is June 30.

BC3 students scheduled to attend Lobby Day in the Capitol’s Main Rotunda are Kacie Brandenburg and Ashlyn Bennett, both 19 and 2016 Slippery Rock Area High graduates; Lauren Denny, 20, a 2015 Butler Area Senior High graduate; James Manning, 30, a 2005 Butler Area Senior High graduate; and Lucas Carroll, 19, a 2016 Beaver Area High graduate.

Lobby Day attracts hundreds of students, faculty, administrators and lawmakers, says Danielle Gross, director of public affairs for the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges. The event, she says, “raises awareness with elected officials about the impact community colleges have on the commonwealth, and advocates for funding in the state budget.”

Brandenburg, of Slippery Rock, plans to become an occupational therapist; and Bennett, of Harrisville, and Denny, of Butler, are studying early childhood and special education. Manning, of Slippery Rock, is a guest student at BC3, where he has earned associate degrees in

criminology and homeland security and serves as president of the Student Veterans Association. Carroll, of Beaver, is pursuing a degree in communication.

“I hope to tell others that community college is a great choice because you get a great education for an affordable price,” says Brandenburg, who transferred from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. “I think many kids want the whole ‘college experience,’ but you still get that when you’re at BC3 and that’s what I want to stress to people. Community college is a very smart choice.”

Bennett, who transferred from Geneva College, says her message in Harrisburg will be to explain why she chose BC3. “In high school, everyone is picking a college that suits them, but truly what people need to focus on is what opportunity is smart and good for your life. For the high schoolers deciding on where to go, they need to think about saving their money. A community college is a great start into pursuing your career.”

BC3, Denny says, “is advertised as being the No. 1 community college in Pennsylvania (by Schools.com). I would agree that I have had a top-notch experience at BC3. I have had inspirational professors, extracurricular opportunities and have the ability to transfer my credits to a four-year college. BC3 also is known for affordability. That was a major component that made me decide to attend BC3.”

BC3’s tuition is lower than that of 24 regional four-year colleges and institutions, according to a January report in the Pittsburgh Business Times.

“At community colleges you are getting the same quality education for half the price, sometimes even less,” says Manning, an Army veteran who also holds an associate degree in intelligence operations studies from Cochise College in Arizona and is pursuing bachelor’s degrees in administration of justice from the University of Pittsburgh and in applied management from Franklin University.

Community colleges are a “great place to start,” says Carroll, who adds that BC3’s “main campus in Butler has the feel of a major four-year school.”

Among featured speakers at Lobby Day will be Joseph E. Kubit, a Butler attorney from Cabot, 1984 BC3 graduate and BC3 trustee.

Denny and fellow BC3 student Tarah Schmidt, a 2012 Moniteau High School graduate from Parker, will be honored as selections to the 2017 All-Pennsylvania Academic Team at a ceremony April 3 in Camp Hill. They will receive a full-tuition scholarship to any one of Pennsylvania’s 14 State System of Higher Education institutions.