

# Report: BC3 ranks No. 1 in salary-to-cost ratio among 42 area institutions

Jan. 19, 2018

(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College has the highest ratio of graduates' salaries 10 years after commencement for every dollar a student pays to attend BC3, besting ratios at 41 other Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio colleges and universities whose U.S. Department of Education information was analyzed by the Pittsburgh Business Times.

BC3's salary-to-cost ratio of 7.6 was the highest among 42 institutions surveyed in a Jan. 9 report in the Pittsburgh Business Times headlined "College Scorecard: These regional colleges produce the highest earners."

The average salary of a BC3 graduate 10 years after graduation is \$33,700, according to the College Scorecard, introduced in 2015 and the use of which, according to the U.S. Department of Education, allows prospective students "to compare costs and outcomes with their future degrees" and enable students to become "better equipped to make these critical life decisions."

The average annual net price to attend BC3, recognized in October as the No. 1 community college in Pennsylvania in back-to-back surveys by Schools.com, was \$4,435 – the least expensive among the 42 schools surveyed in the Pittsburgh Business Times report.

"Not surprisingly, the less-expensive community colleges had the highest salary-to-cost ratios, with the Butler County Community College having the highest at 7.6," the Pittsburgh Business Times reported.

## Researcher: What is the cost-benefit analysis?

Ethan Lott, research director at the Pittsburgh Business Times, said Tuesday the publication examined the information compiled by the federal government and that "We hope people use it as a starting point when they are making decisions about where to attend college. What is the cost-benefit analysis of going to this college or that college? This is one of a number of different



Lexi Stayert, of Butler, a pre-nursing student at Butler County Community College, is shown during Welcome Day on BC3's main campus on Friday, Jan. 12, 2018.

factors that people can consider when making that decision. People might realize that they might be getting a better value going to some of these schools.”

Westmoreland County Community College was second in highest salary-to-cost ratios at 7.21; followed by the Community College of Allegheny County (5.64); the Community College of Beaver County (4.66) and West Virginia University (4.52).

“This report,” said Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of BC3, “speaks volumes. It validates what we have been saying all along. BC3 offers affordable, accessible and quality education. It is also interesting to note how well community colleges scored as a whole.”

Return on investment should be an important variable analyzed when selecting an institution of higher education, Neupauer said.

Seventy-five percent of BC3 students graduate debt-free.

“With an average student debt load nearing \$40,000 nationally, by selecting BC3, three out of four students leave here with no debt,” Neupauer said. “For those who do, it is minimal. And in many cases, the terminal degree necessary for entry-level positions is the associate – not a bachelor’s or even a master’s degree. We are just delighted to share the results of this important report.”

## New BC3 student, 56: Affordability ... is extremely important

Trailing BC3 in salary-to-cost ratios were regional Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education institutions; The Pennsylvania State University and the University of Pittsburgh and their campuses; and 22 private institutions.

The advantage of enrolling at BC3 wasn’t lost on Bernard Bailey, 56, of Kittanning, who on Friday attended BC3’s Welcome Day for new students for the spring 2018 semester.

“Affordability, when you are choosing a college, is extremely important,” said Bailey, who in 1991 earned a bachelor of science degree in chemistry from The Pennsylvania State University and, after being laid off from his position in an electronics firm associated with the coal mining industry, enrolled in BC3’s computer information systems-programming specialist program.

“You need to pay as little as you can to get the most because the costs of things are going up,” Bailey said. “If you pay for an expensive school, you are not always guaranteed to have the



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highest-paying job when you get out. So if you keep your costs low to begin with, and you finish, you are going to be able to pay that debt off sooner than you would if you had gone elsewhere.”

## “I do not want to have debt,” pre-nursing student says

Christina Denardo, of Ford City, a married mother of two children and BC3 pre-nursing student who also attended Welcome Day, envisions the \$68,770 average salary nurses in Pennsylvania earn, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Affordability in pursuit of her dream, she said, is important “because I have two children that I have to provide for. And I have to pay my bills. So I have to go somewhere that is affordable and I do not want to have debt. I am going to make a ton of money and I won’t have a lot to pay back.”

Sadie Lamer, of Natrona Heights, a pre-nursing student who also attended Welcome Day, said Friday that the results of her research led her to BC3.

“I feel that BC3 is way more affordable than the other colleges that I had researched in general,” Lamer said. “Originally I wanted to go to Pitt and that was not going to be affordable for me, even if I was going to commute. Other schools are literally 15 minutes from my parents’ house, and they are way more expensive than BC3.”

Lexi Stayert, of Butler, another pre-nursing student, agrees.

“BC3 is less-expensive,” she said, “and its costs are very reasonable.”

The Pittsburgh Business Times in January 2017 also reported that BC3’s tuition was the least expensive when compared with 24 Western Pennsylvania colleges and universities.