

Free BC3 workshops to help families, students apply for federal financial aid

Feb. 27, 2020

(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College will host free workshops beginning March 4 intended to help prospective students and their families apply for federal financial aid.

Grants available to financially eligible students who complete the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA) do not need to be repaid. The FAFSA workshops, also scheduled for April 30 and May 18, will be held from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. in Room 169 of the Student Success Center on BC3's main campus in Butler Township.

Families and prospective students who have created a federal student aid identification, and who bring to the workshop a W-2 form, tax return documents and a Social Security card, can complete the FAFSA within 30 minutes, said Kimberlee Matthews, BC3's assistant director of financial aid.

Those who initiate the federal student aid identification at the workshop should plan on a 60-minute visit.

Prospective students who plan to enroll this fall, or in the spring or summer of 2021, will file a 2020-2021 FAFSA. They or their families must use 2018 tax returns and a 2018 W-2 forms.

The FAFSA, Matthews said, is "intimidating" to many families and prospective students.

"They are completely unfamiliar with the FAFSA," Matthews said. "If they are uncomfortable completing the application at home, they can come to the workshop and get help."

Upon submitting the completed FAFSA online to the U.S. Department of Education, a student can review his or her eligibility on the confirmation page, Matthews said.

The deadline for students who plan to enroll this fall and who are seeking aid from the Pennsylvania state grant program is May 1, Matthews added. State grants also do not need to be repaid, she said.

Visitors can RSVP to the workshop at bc3.edu/fafsa.

In the 2017-18 academic year, 74 percent of BC3's first-time, full-time students received financial aid, and only 26 percent used a student loan, according to the most recent information available from the U.S. Department of Education's College Navigator.

Part-time students pursuing at least six credits may also be also eligible for federal and state financial aid, Matthews said.

First-time, full-time BC3 students in the 2017-2018 academic year received an average of \$5,804 in federal or state grants and scholarships, according to the College Navigator. Twenty-seven percent received a scholarship.

The BC3 Education Foundation in the 2019-2020 academic year awarded nearly \$217,000 in scholarships. Students can apply for a scholarship from the BC3 Education Foundation for the 2020-21 academic year online beginning April 15.

Tuition and fees at BC3 are among the lowest compared to those of 43 regional colleges and universities, according to the U.S. Department of Education's 2018 College Scorecard. The college's affordability, BC3 Education Foundation scholarships and state and federal financial aid enable 70 percent of BC3 graduates to graduate debt-free.

BC3's fall semester begins Aug. 24.

BC3's spring open houses are scheduled for March 26 at BC3 @ Cranberry in Cranberry Township; April 1 at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing in New Castle; April 8 at BC3's main campus; April 15 at BC3 @ LindenPointe in Hermitage; April 20 at BC3 @ Brockway in Brockway; and April 29 at BC3 @ Armstrong in Ford City.