

# Native of Taiwan follows bachelor's degree in homeland with associate degree from BC3

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Victor Lee, 26, earned a bachelor's degree in Russian in his native Taiwan, then chose to pursue an associate degree in physical therapist assistant from Butler County Community College. Lee, who is one of three foreign-born students in BC3's Class of 2021, is shown March 5, 2021, on the college's main campus in Butler Township. He is also among the 30 percent of graduates in BC3's Class of 2021 who are age 25 or older.

(Butler, PA) Victor Lee traveled halfway around the world to Butler, then walked the last three of 7,775 miles to attend Butler County Community College in Butler Township.

Lee, a native of Taiwan, would swing the flashlight from his cellphone to alert traffic of his presence in walking from downtown Butler to BC3's main campus in Butler Township in the early weeks of his attending BC3's physical therapist assistant program.

Two years and one previously owned car later, he is among three foreign-born graduates in BC3's Class of 2021.

After earning a bachelor's degree in Russian in Taiwan, the Mandarin-speaking Lee researched physical therapist assistant programs in the United States. He noticed BC3 and watched videos about the college on its website.

"About the college's No. 1 ranking," Lee said of BC3 being ranked as the No. 1 community college in Pennsylvania five times since 2015. Lee moved to the United States and stayed temporarily with relatives in New Jersey.

"When I came here to BC3, it was like, wow," Lee said. "It's a beautiful school. More than I expected."

## Classmates "embraced Victor"

He also expects that his graduation benefited from his seeking an English tutor through BC3's adult literacy program.

"I would have a class every week," Lee said. "They were very good classes. They helped me to understand the things I need to know. English is not my mother language. I had a hard time understanding what the professors were saying in class."

Lee tested high in reading English when he entered BC3's adult literacy program, according to Ben Getkin, the program's tutor coordinator.

"He is very conversational," Getkin said. "I think when he was taking the physical therapist assistant classes he thought that some of the spoken information in class was a bit of a challenge for him."

Classmates in BC3's physical therapist assistant program also worked with Lee on his English, said Dr. Randy Kruger, director of the college's physical therapist assistant program.

"They embraced Victor, and made sure every class, every lab, that they would work on his English lessons," Kruger said.

Lee is a graduate of a physical therapist assistant program that addresses a high-priority occupation in the Tri-County Workforce Development area, which encompasses Armstrong, Butler and Indiana counties. Its entry-level salary in 2019 was \$45,600, according to the state Department of Labor & Industry.

The success rate of BC3 graduates taking the post-graduation National Physical Therapy Examination that results in licensing is 94 percent in the past 21 years, Kruger said.

Lee, 26, is among the expected 461 students who earned associate degrees in career or in transfer programs, or certificates or workplace certificates in the college's Class of 2021.

Lee is also among the 30 percent of graduates in BC3's Class of 2021 who are age 25 or older; and among the 70 percent of graduates in BC3's Class of 2021 who will graduate debt-free.

He has been named to BC3's president's list, for those with a grade-point average of 3.75 or higher during a semester in which they attained at least 12 credits.

The college's 53rd commencement will be held May 19. BC3 is expecting to award 436 associate degrees and 46 certificates or workplace certificates, according to Becky Smith, BC3's associate director of records and registration. BC3's Class of 2021 includes residents of 17 Pennsylvania counties, Smith said.

Among BC3 Class of 2021 graduates born in foreign countries are those native to India and Mexico.

BC3's Class of 2021 includes John Dougan, of Kittanning and at 64 the college's most senior graduate in 2021; Julianna Bonnett, 19, of Zelienople and at 19 BC3's youngest graduate; Matthew Walter, of Butler, who will receive one associate degree and two certificates; 23 students receiving two associate degrees or certificates and eight student-veterans.