

Butler Eagle

Agreement will benefit students BC3 signs reverse transfer pact

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HARRISBURG — The **Butler County Community College** joined the state's 13 other community colleges in signing an agreement that would allow students earning their bachelor's degree to "reverse transfer" credits to obtain an associate degree.

The agreement included the state's 14 community colleges and the 14 State System of Higher Education universities, which includes Slippery Rock University.

The agreement allows students who begin their education at community colleges before transferring to a state system school to "reverse transfer" credits to earn an associate degree while they continue working toward a bachelor's degree.

Students would need a minimum of 45 credits at a community college before transferring to a state system school. Then, they would need at least 15 additional credits at the state university within five years of leaving community college.

These 60 credits can be transferred back to the community college and applied to the requirements of an associate degree.

"If their studies toward a bachelor's degree are interrupted for any reason, with this program, they will still have their associate degree, which will benefit them as they prepare to enter the workforce or will help enable them to move up the career ladder," said Elizabeth Bolden, president and CEO of the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges.

Students who earn an associate degree are more likely to earn a bachelor's degree, Bolden said. BC3 has a significant transfer population of about 70 percent, said Jessica Matonak, interim director for communications and marketing.

"It has the potential to impact a majority of past students," she said.

Bruce Russell, BC3's interim vice president for academic affairs, also believes the change to be significant for BC3 students.

"Of the 191 students who transferred from BC3 to one of the 14 state system universities in the fall of 2015, 83 students are eligible for the reverse transfer because they did not graduate with an associate degree," Russell said.

"Should a student's progress to a bachelor's degree be delayed, or as a complement to a student who earns a bachelor's degree, individuals with an associate degree could have a greater

potential for employment and increased earning potential.

“This is a wonderful opportunity for those individuals to complete their associate degree utilizing the courses they take at the four-year institution.”

Even if an individual does not finish the requirements for a bachelor’s degree, the students who earn an associate degree may also have increased earning power than those without the two-year degree.

The agreement also ensures that students will not be charged a graduation or transcript fee by either of the two schools involved.