

BC3's planned nursing and allied health building would feature "latest, greatest technology"

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An artist's conception shows the proposed \$10 million Victor K. Phillips Nursing and Allied Health Building housing The Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health on Butler County Community College's main campus in Butler Township.

(Butler, PA) A proposed \$10 million Victor K. Phillips Nursing and Allied Health Building housing The Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health at Butler County Community College would be among the most state-of-the-art healthcare training facilities in western Pennsylvania, according to Brian Opitz, BC3's executive director of operations.

The planned 30,000-square-foot, two-story facility on the south side of BC3's main campus in Butler Township could be financed in part with \$1 million donations made to the BC3 Education Foundation from Tim Shaffer, of Prospect, and from Janice Phillips Larrick, of Butler Township, and with a possible combination of state assistance, private giving, bond proceeds and-or college reserves, said James A. Hrabosky, BC3's vice president for administration and finance.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania supports capital improvements at community colleges by often or typically providing 50 percent of the funds when the colleges, local sponsors and-or private fundraising also provide a 50 percent match of the project costs.

Among the building's eight classrooms would be a tiered auditorium-style hall that seats 80, Opitz said, with overhead cameras focused on the instructor's table and projecting onto back-wall screens lessons that might include work on a cadaver.

"The latest and the greatest technology," Opitz said.

The building could also include two nursing skills laboratories, two simulation laboratories resembling and equipped as hospital rooms, a waiting area and an emergency-room-like entrance into which an ambulance's patient compartment would be built, according to Opitz.

"The environment," Opitz said, "would completely resemble a hospital."

A larger facility would also enable BC3 to increase the number of students accepted into its hallmark registered nursing program from an annual pool of 200 applicants, said Dr. Nick Neupauer, BC3's president.

"This state-of-the-art facility will allow us to expand and further enhance the success that we have in the program," Neupauer said, citing the 96 percent passing rate of 2017 BC3 graduates on the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses, which, according to Patty Annear, exceeds the state average of 84 percent.

Annear, BC3's dean of nursing and allied health, said that while BC3 accepts only 70 students into its registered nursing program each year, that number could rise to nearly 100 in the proposed building.

Levi Pintirsch, a 21-year-old from Saxonburg who expects to graduate from BC3's registered nursing program in May, said a building whose skills laboratories, simulated hospital rooms and architectural accoutrements would mirror those found in high-tech healthcare settings would "help students immensely."



An artist's conception shows the possible entrance to the proposed \$10 million Victor K. Phillips Nursing and Allied Health Building housing The Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health on Butler County Community College's main campus in Butler Township.



An artist's conception shows a possible simulated hospital room within the proposed \$10 million Victor K. Phillips Nursing and Allied Health Building housing The Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health on Butler County Community College's main campus in Butler Township.

“The realistic setting will allow students to become even more comfortable and be able to conduct themselves in a more realistic manner when they enter the workforce,” Pintirsch said.

While clinical experiences with healthcare institutions provide educational opportunities, the chance to learn in a campus environment replicating such facilities would be equally advantageous, said Christopher Hornberger, 21, of Cowansville, a first-year BC3 registered nursing student.

“It will help you to prepare to take on that real-world scenario” much like the benefit of BC3’s Janice Phillips Larrick simulation nursing laboratory in the Business and Health Professions Building, Hornberger said. “You would be more comfortable.”

A community health clinic and community office space may also be incorporated into the building, Opitz said.

BC3’s allied health programs, which include medical assistant, medical coding and billing specialist, and physical therapist assistant, could also be located within the building, as could its noncredit Workforce Development EMS programs such as American Heart Association CPR, emergency medical technician and phlebotomy.

The building would “provide the ideal space to enhance the learning experiences for students in both BC3’s allied health and Workforce Development EMS programs,” said Dr. Belinda Richardson, BC3’s vice president for academic affairs. “The environment will provide a state-of-the-art facility that reflects a realistic healthcare setting. What could be better for students? What would be a better platform for launching future healthcare professionals?”



Levi Pintirsch, 21, of Saxonburg, who expects to graduate from Butler County Community College’s registered nursing program in May, is shown in BC3’s nursing skills laboratory Feb. 14, 2018.



Christopher Hornberger, 21, of Cowansville, a first-year Butler County Community College registered nursing student, is shown in BC3’s Janice Phillips Larrick simulation nursing laboratory Thursday, Feb. 15, 2018