

# BC3, Concordia forge partnership with initial \$1M gift

Nearly \$10M commitment, largest in BC3's history, to address shortage of nurses with new LPN program, Concordia's tuition offer

June 2, 2020



Butler residents Mitchell Davis, right, and Katie Speranza, second from right, and other graduates of Butler County Community College's associate in applied science degree program in Nursing, R.N., prepare to enter Succop Theater on BC3's main campus in Butler Township for the nurses' pinning ceremony in this May 9, 2019, file photo. The ceremony celebrates graduates' completion of BC3's 70-credit program.

(Butler, PA) Concordia Lutheran Ministries' \$1 million gift to the Butler County Community College Education Foundation, the fifth in that amount to BC3 since 2014, will help to fund the proposed Victor K. Phillips Nursing and Allied Health Building on BC3's main campus and forges a partnership in which Concordia could provide up to \$10 million to BC3 and its students.

The largest commitment to BC3 in the college's 55-year-history also launches a collaboration that will respond to a nursing shortage by creating at BC3 a licensed practical nursing program, expanding BC3's registered nursing enrollment, and by offering tuition assistance to nursing students who agree to work for the healthcare provider after graduation.

The 10-year commitment, announced Tuesday, June 2, by Concordia and BC3 executives, includes Concordia's initial \$1 million gift to the BC3 Education Foundation.



Dr. Nick Neupauer, left, is president of Butler County Community College. Keith Frndak, right, is president and CEO of Concordia Lutheran Ministries.

“Officials from both organizations talked a great deal about the timing of this incredible announcement,” BC3 President Dr. Nick Neupauer said. “After those conversations, we fully endorsed that this is the right time to share this news. This is great news. And with what is going on in the world around us, we all need something positive.”

“In addition, this forward-thinking partnership with Concordia as part of the college's ‘all-in’ for nursing could not be announced at a more crucial time. This dynamic collaboration will not only assist Concordia with more qualified healthcare professionals, it will also help our county, region, commonwealth and beyond with more nurses.”

The Cabot-based organization has 13 facility-based locations in Allegheny, Beaver and Butler counties; and in Summit County, Ohio, and in Hillsborough County, Fla. It also serves thousands of people in their own homes in 10 western Pennsylvania counties through its various home and community service organizations.

Concordia's continuum of care includes adult day services, home care, hospice, medical and rehabilitation services, memory care, personal care, assisted living, respite care, retirement living, skilled nursing and short-term rehab, spiritual care and medical equipment.

While Concordia employs 700 nurses throughout the system, it has approximately 60 nursing vacancies at any given time, officials said.

**Concordia leader: BC3 produces highest-quality caregivers**

“The nursing shortage in this country is a real challenge for providers, but for Concordia specifically, we are a rapidly growing organization, which means we have an even greater need in terms of overall numbers,” said Keith Frndak, president and CEO of Concordia Lutheran Ministries. “To expand our mission, which is what we do, we need a reliable pipeline of talented people. And that’s exactly what this partnership provides.”



Karen Beilstein, of Saxonburg and a 2006 graduate of Butler County Community College’s Nursing, R.N., program, is the director of nursing for the Concordia at Cabot campus.

Concordia will benefit from the partnership, Frndak added, because the healthcare provider’s “mission and our stock in trade depends on us having the highest-quality caregivers, and that’s precisely what the BC3 nursing program produces. This partnership helps ensure we have some of the best nursing staff available in the region caring for our residents for decades to come.”

Concordia will provide to contracted BC3 nursing students up to \$550,000 annually in tuition assistance, and to BC3 up to \$350,000 yearly for operating costs, such as those associated with helping to finance salaries of additional BC3 staff hired to administer the programs.

Tuition and fees for BC3 students pursuing 15 credits per semester for one year in 2019-2020 are \$5,100 for Butler County residents and \$8,100 for residents of other Pennsylvania counties.

Students in each nursing program would be eligible for Concordia’s tuition assistance, said Jim Hrabosky, BC3’s vice president for administration and finance.

Specific agreements will be reached between Concordia and the participants, said Dr. Belinda Richardson, BC3’s vice president for academic affairs. Students will receive tuition assistance and contract to work for Concordia after graduation based on the nursing program they commit to and complete – either in registered nursing or in licensed practical nursing.

## BC3 could launch LPN program as soon as fall 2021

BC3’s licensed practical nursing program could debut in fall 2021 or spring 2022, said Dr. Patty Annear, dean of BC3’s Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health.

The partnership addresses a need in the community, and emphasizes the importance of BC3’s career programs, in which students develop skills needed to enter the workforce immediately upon graduation, BC3 executives said.



“By expanding the number of seats in our (registered) nursing program, BC3 demonstrates its continued commitment to sending well-trained healthcare professionals into the field,” Richardson said. “By expanding educational options for students through the addition of LPN training to our programs, we demonstrate our practice of working collaboratively with our local businesses and our responsiveness to their needs.

“We are,” Richardson added, “the community’s college.”

“Graduates of our career programs in nursing,” said Ruth Purcell, executive director of the BC3 Education

Foundation, “are ready to work in valuable positions in the community.”

The partnership, Annear said, “is going to be very, very big for the whole region of western Pennsylvania. It’s not every day that you get an up to \$10 million commitment at a community college.”

Licensed practical nurses can monitor patients’ health, administer basic care, provide for basic comfort, report patients’ status and concerns to registered nurses and physicians, and keep records on patients’ health, according to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Registered nurses can assess patients’ conditions, record medical histories, symptoms and observations; administer medicine and treatments, operate and monitor medical equipment, and help to perform diagnostic tests and analyze results, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## LPN-to-RN transition would be “smooth”

BC3’s new licensed practical nursing program could feature up to 45 credits. The program may include 28 credits that could be applied toward the college’s 70-credit associate in applied science degree in registered nursing, Annear said.

“That’s the beauty of this,” Annear said. “Some students may choose then to matriculate right into the registered nursing program. For those students who wish to go from LPN to RN, it would be a nice, smooth transition.”

Students in BC3’s licensed practical nursing program would take introductory courses that are similar to those taken by students in the college’s registered nursing program.



Christopher Hornberger, of Cowansville, a student in Butler County Community College’s Nursing, R.N., program, is shown with BC3’s computerized patient in this Feb. 15, 2018, file photo.

“Semester one of the RN program,” Annear said, “would be pretty much completed.”

Each of the first 20 seats available upon the licensed practical nursing program’s debut could be held by Concordia employees seeking a licensed practical nursing diploma, or by BC3 or high school students who agree to work for Concordia after graduation.

The median salary for licensed practical nurses in 2018 was \$46,240, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Concordia will help to fund additional BC3 nursing staff such as a licensed practical nursing program director, faculty members, clerical employees and a simulation laboratory coordinator.

## BC3’s RN enrollment could expand further this fall

BC3’s registered nursing program enrollment could expand further as early as this fall with Concordia licensed practical nurses attracted by their employer’s offer and seeking admission to BC3 as advanced-standing applicants, Annear said.

BC3’s nursing program on its main campus is currently expected to enroll 175 first- and second-level students, and those in the college’s three-year option, Annear said.

“The students that we accept from Concordia will have to meet the same program criteria as any other nursing student to be accepted into BC3’s RN program,” Richardson added.

Enrollment may also increase with general applicants or current BC3 nursing students drawn by Concordia’s offer, Annear said.



Cailyn Fleeger, left, of Petrolia, and Josh Cranmer, of Butler, discuss findings from their evidence-based practice research analyzing infection rates in single-lumen central lines versus multi-lumen central lines. The Butler County Community College Nursing, R.N., students are shown in a Dec. 6, 2018, file photo in AK Steel lobby near Succop Theater on BC3’s main campus in Butler Township.

The median salary for entry-level registered nurses with an associate degree in 2020 is \$51,280, according to nursingprocess.org.

BC3 will seek approval of the licensed practical nursing program through the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, Atlanta, and through the Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing.

Graduates of BC3's licensed practical nursing program will take the National Council Licensure Examination for Licensed Practical Nurses.

Nearly 93 percent of BC3's first-time National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses test-takers in the past year were successful, according to BC3 administrators citing the most recent data available.



Jassimyn Broe, left, of Portersville, passes the flame from her candle to Ashley Bailey, of Cranberry Township, in this May 9, 2019, file photo from Butler County Community College's nurses' pinning ceremony in Succop Theater on BC3's main campus in Butler Township. The ceremony celebrates graduates' completion of BC3's 70-credit associate in applied science degree program in Nursing, R.N.

## Five \$1M gifts to BC3 since 2014

BC3 is expected to begin in June a two-month project to create additional, temporary simulation and nursing skills laboratories and a three-tiered classroom within its Business and Health Professions Building, according to Brian Opitz, BC3's executive director of operations.

The Business and Health Professions Building currently houses the Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health, which may relocate in fall 2022 to the proposed \$9 million Victor K. Phillips Nursing and Allied Health Building. The building is part of an \$18 million project on the south end of BC3's main campus.

Groundbreaking for the state-of-the-art 30,000-square-foot, two-story facility could take place in May 2021, Opitz said.

Concordia's \$1 million gift to the BC3 Education Foundation is the fifth in that amount since July 2014 and the third designated for the college's healthcare division, following commitments from Janice Phillips Larrick in September 2017 and from former state Sen. Tim Shaffer in February 2018.

BC3 in December also received a \$500,000 gift toward the proposed building from Grove City College using donations to its new Charles Jr. and Betty Johnson School of Nursing. Grove City College students in fall 2021 will begin to attend technical and clinical courses at BC3 as part of

a new bachelor's degree program in nursing that starts this fall at the Mercer County private institution.

The college received \$1 million gifts from Robert R. Heaton in July 2014, which helped to fund what became the \$6.4 million Heaton Family Learning Commons; and from John L. Wise III and family in September 2016, which helped to create the \$2.3 million Amy Wise Children's Creative Learning Center.

BC3's associate degree program in nursing, which began in 1973, expanded in 2018 to include BC3 @ Brockway in Brockway, Jefferson County, which will graduate its first class in May.

BC3 offers pre-nursing courses at its main campus, and at BC3 @ Armstrong in Ford City, Armstrong County; BC3 @ Brockway; BC3 @ Cranberry in Cranberry Township, Butler County; BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing in New Castle, Lawrence County; and at BC3 @ LindenPointe in Hermitage, Mercer County.



Thanh Ngo, center, of Cranberry Township, holds flowers in this May 9, 2019, file photo after Butler County Community College's nurses' pinning ceremony in Succop Theater on BC3's main campus in Butler Township. The ceremony celebrates graduates' completion of BC3's 70-credit associate in applied science degree program in Nursing, R.N.