

Ellwood City teen BC3's youngest graduate in Class of 2020

Riv-Ell student rivals former program participant in recognition

May 19, 2020



Saylee Grinnen, of Ellwood City, is the youngest graduate in Butler County Community College's Class of 2020. She also ties former Riv-Ell Entrepreneurship Program student Mikayla Beachem, also of Ellwood City, as BC3's youngest graduate – to the day – since at least 2000. Grinnen and Beachem each earned a resume-building BC3 workplace certificate in entrepreneurship through the program.

(Ellwood City, PA) A teenager from Ellwood City in 2019 became the youngest graduate in at least 20 years at Butler County Community College when 17-year-old Mikayla Beachem received a BC3 workplace certificate in entrepreneurship.

A teenager from Ellwood City in 2020 has tied Beachem in age to the day.

Saylee Grinnen completed the same Riv-Ell Entrepreneurship Program as did Beachem and became BC3's youngest graduate in its Class of 2020.

Both achieved certificates from BC3 on their 6,474th day in age.

Like Beachem, Grinnen and her eight Lincoln or Riverside high school classmates in the Riv-Ell Entrepreneurship Program also received 16 tuition-free, transferable credits in addition to the resume-building BC3 workplace certificate in entrepreneurship.

The Riv-Ell program is a collaborative effort among BC3, the Community College of Beaver County's nationally distinct high school academy dual enrollment program, and the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce, and blends classroom learning with real-world experience.

BC3 and CCBC faculty instructed the high school seniors in financial literacy, psychology, entrepreneurship, marketing, public speaking and business plan development during the yearlong program.



Students: Program is “an amazing opportunity”

Members of the Riv-Ell Entrepreneurship Program's Class of 2020 are, top row from left, Kelton Docchio and Avery Dudek, of Lincoln High School; bottom row, from left, Ashley Fitzgibbons, of Lincoln High School, and Liam Grinnen, of Riverside High School.

Lincoln students Kelton Docchio, Avery Dudek, Ashley Fitzgibbons, Kurtis Larry, Katelyn Lopes, ShyLee Schwartz and Grinnen, along with Riverside students Liam Grinnen and Carley Zak, networked with and gained insight from successful Ellwood City area business leaders last fall, said the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce's former executive director.

“They got to see the importance of having a business plan,” Lorelei Gallaher-Hink said of field trips students took on Friday afternoons last fall. “That was something at that time they weren't

really understanding or didn't see the point of it. When we came back for the spring semester, they were asking more questions."

Among those students benefiting from the field trips and college instruction was Saylee Grinnen.

"I wanted to learn more about business, as I plan to operate my own," Saylee Grinnen said of a possible profession as an orthodontist. "I also wanted to earn college credits while still in high school."

Earning college credits through Riv-Ell, Larry said, "is a great opportunity. ... This program offered me 16 college credits as well as the knowledge for a business."

Added Zak: "It's an amazing opportunity to earn 16 free college credits while still in high school."

And Liam Grinnen: "I saw it as an amazing opportunity to get a head start on my college career."

Along the way, the Riv-Ell students said they learned that "Cash is king," Lopes said; "If you can't quantify it, don't do it," Fitzgibbons said; and that "Competition is fierce," Larry said.

The students gave program-ending business-plan development presentations on April 30 that included Docchio's idea for high-friction socks, Dudek's for a nonprofit animal shelter and Fitzgibbons' for a cosmetics company.

Beachem, a member of the inaugural Riv-Ell Entrepreneurship program in 2018-19, enrolled at BC3 following her graduation from Lincoln. Beachem in the fall 2019 semester at BC3 earned



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president's list honors, a recognition for students who achieve at least a 3.75 grade-point average.

Donors to the Riv-El Entrepreneurship Program include Air Physical Therapy and Fitness, Armstrong, the May Emma Hoyt Foundation, Ellwood City Wolves Club, First National Bank of Pennsylvania, Frank and Carolyn McElwain, Kevin and Debra McElwain, Good Wheels Inc. of Ellwood City, the Hungarian Home, Dave and Ann Hunter of Smokin' Dave's BBQ, the Neupauer Corp., TMK IPSCO and WesBanco Bank Inc.

Among 31 student-veterans, BC3's most senior graduate in 2020

BC3's Class of 2020 includes 563 graduates, 518 of whom will receive associate degrees in career or transfer programs, and 71 of whom will receive certificates or workplace certificates that take one year or less to complete.

Kathleen Cashaw, 61, of Butler, a disabled veteran, is the college's most-senior graduate in the Class of 2020, with an associate degree in BC3's medical assistant career program. She is also one of 31 student-veterans in BC3's Class of 2020.

Students from Valencia and Kittanning earned two associate degrees and one certificate. Victoria Berzonski achieved degrees in criminology and in emergency services-police services option, and a certificate in emergency services-corrections option. Sara Peters earned degrees in business management and technical trades-cosmetology management option, and a workplace certificate in entrepreneurship.

BC3 will also graduate its second class of presidential scholars; 126 members of its Rho Phi chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, an international academic honor society; and 16 members of Delta Theta, its chapter of Kappa Beta Delta, an international honor society for business students.

Thirteen employees of Oberg Industries, a precision manufacturer in Freeport, will receive apprenticeship technology workplace certificates as a result of a program instructed onsite by BC3. Courses in the college's 26-credit apprenticeship technology workplace certificate program, launched in fall 2016, are taught entirely at Oberg Industries.