

New pact with La Roche provides BC3 transfers with three options, possible scholarships

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Butler County Community College students are shown in an early childhood education (Pre K-4) course Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020, at BC3 @ Cranberry in Cranberry Township. From left, Sydney Servello, of Mars; Autumn Lersch, of Harmony; Hailey Stevenson, of Harmony; and Elianna Marsh, of Mars.

(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College's new agreement with La Roche University will allow BC3 graduates with an associate degree in early childhood education (Pre K-4) to transfer credits toward any one of three bachelor's degree programs in education and to be eligible for annual merit scholarships of up to \$15,000 from the private institution near Pittsburgh.

Graduates of BC3's early childhood education (Pre K-4) program can apply credits from courses in which they earned a C grade or higher toward La Roche programs in Pre K-4 education, Pre K-4 education with Pre K-12 special education, or Pre K-12 special education.

BC3 graduates who enroll full time at La Roche are also eligible for merit scholarships by maintaining an overall grade-point average of 2.5 or higher. Students must have a 3.0 grade-point average to be accepted into and remain within La Roche education programs.

The early childhood education (Pre K-4) program is available at BC3's main campus in Butler Township, BC3 @ Brockway in Brockway, BC3 @ Cranberry in Cranberry Township, BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing in New Castle and at BC3 @ LindenPointe in Hermitage.

More than 80 students are enrolled in BC3's early childhood education (Pre K-4) program this fall, according to Sharla Anke, BC3's assistant dean of institutional research and planning.

Early childhood education (Pre K-4) requires 60 to 61 credits to graduate, depending on electives, said Stephanie Long, coordinator of BC3's program.

La Roche's Pre K-4 education and Pre K-12 special education programs require 120 credits to graduate; and its Pre K-4 education with Pre K-12 special education, 126 credits.

The agreement BC3 and La Roche signed Oct. 21 represents the first in which "there are three separate pathways, three separate options for our students," Long said. "That La Roche is offering all three is a very unique opportunity for our students."

"A great need for teachers in Pennsylvania"

The median pay for kindergarten and elementary school teachers in 2019 was \$59,420, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. More than 56,000 job openings nationally are expected by 2029, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"In the past three or four years, there has been a huge shift and now there is a great need for teachers in Pennsylvania, especially for a diverse teaching force," said Dr. Kate Silvis, chair of La Roche's education department. "The teaching outlook in Pennsylvania is excellent."

Sixty-six percent of BC3 students this fall are enrolled in transfer programs such as early childhood education (Pre K-4). Courses within the program include introduction to education, child development, children's language and literature, introduction to special education, mathematics for elementary education and educational psychology.

BC3 also offers a one-credit academic skills preparation course for educators that helps students prepare for basic skills exams in reading, mathematics and writing, which are required by the state Department of Education before a student can be admitted into a four-year institution's college of education.

"Our goal is that by the time they are done with that course," Long said, "they should be ready to start taking those exams and will have those completed before they even transfer to a four-year institution."

Coordinator: BC3 offers affordable, "top-notch" education

The BC3 Education Foundation in 2020-2021 will award more than \$200,000 in named scholarships which, with financial aid and BC3's affordable tuition, allow 80 percent of BC3 graduates to graduate debt-free.

“We pride ourselves at BC3 on the idea that our students can graduate debt-free and with a top-notch, quality education,” Long said. “Being able to transfer to La Roche and having that scholarship will help them to not be in the overwhelming student debt that a lot of students have when they transfer to four-year institutions.”

La Roche is located at 9000 Babcock Blvd. in McCandless Township, Allegheny County, and approximately 12 miles from BC3 @ Cranberry and 23 miles from BC3’s main campus.