

2 BC3 students selected to All-PA Academic Team

Sophomores to receive full-tuition scholarships toward bachelor's degree

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(Butler, PA) A Butler County Community College student who wants to teach children about the alphabet, shapes and colors, and another whose goal is to help adults manage mental health challenges will receive full-tuition scholarships toward completing a bachelor's degree at a Pennsylvania public four-year institution of their choice.

Jaysa Ditty, of Kittanning, and Sydni Smith, of Cranberry Township, have been selected to the 2021 All-Pennsylvania Academic Team by Phi Theta Kappa, an international academic honor society for two-year colleges and programs.

Selections receive a scholarship funded by the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education to attend one of its 14 four-year institutions, which include Clarion, Indiana and Slippery Rock universities of Pennsylvania.

The All-Pennsylvania Academic Team is composed of students who are members of Phi Theta Kappa and enrolled in transfer programs at a



Butler County Community College students Jaysa Ditty, of Kittanning, top photo, and Sydni Smith, of Cranberry Township, have been selected to the 2021 All-Pennsylvania Academic Team by Phi Theta Kappa, an international academic honor society for two-year colleges and programs. Selections receive a full-tuition scholarship toward completing a bachelor's degree at a Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education institution of their choice. Ditty, a BC3 general studies major who attends BC3 @ Armstrong near Ford City, is shown in 2020 at Buttermilk Falls near Kittanning. Smith, a psychology major who attends BC3 @ Cranberry, is shown Friday, Jan. 22, 2021, at BC3's additional location in Cranberry Township.

Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges institution such as BC3. Students must also have earned a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.5 while completing at least 36 credits.

“It’s a huge honor,” Smith said. “There are so many awesome, intelligent, achieving people in Phi Theta Kappa.”

Added Ditty: “I am just beyond thankful to receive this.”

Recipients “want to make a difference”

Advisers for Phi Theta Kappa chapters at Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges institutions annually nominate top students to the All-Pennsylvania Academic Team based on the students’ excellence in the classroom and dedication to their community college and communities.

When BC3’s committee of administrators met, “It was obvious that these are two excellent students who spend a lot of time in their community and who want to make a difference in the world now as young adults,” Morgan Rizzardi said.

Rizzardi is among advisers of BC3’s Rho Phi chapter of Phi Theta Kappa and is the college’s associate director of admissions. Rho Phi was established in 1968 and this spring has 139 members with a grade-point average of at least 3.5.

Ditty and Smith, who have been named to BC3’s dean’s list or president’s list, attend BC3 additional locations and plan to graduate debt-free this spring with associate degrees, Ditty in general studies and Smith in psychology. Each intends to transfer to Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania.

Ditty, 19, is a 2019 graduate of Armstrong Junior-Senior High School, where she earned six college credits through BC3’s College Within the High School program. She intends to pursue a bachelor’s degree in education at Slippery Rock toward her goal of teaching pupils in kindergarten through sixth grade.

Smith, 21, is a 2018 graduate of Seneca Valley High School, and transferred to BC3 from a private four-year university in eastern Ohio. She plans to pursue a bachelor’s degree in psychology at Slippery Rock, then a master’s degree toward her goal of becoming a mental health therapist.

BC3 students serve their communities

Ditty is PTK vice president for BC3 @ Armstrong and Smith, a student at BC3 @ Cranberry in Cranberry Township, is a Rho Phi member.

Ditty volunteers to prepare, package and serve meals to the less-fortunate during the holidays and at times during a weekly soup kitchen in Armstrong County, and Smith volunteers to gather roadside or trailside trash – “a pet peeve of mine,” she said – in Butler and Cranberry townships.

“We have students who come to BC3 because they know it is the community’s college, which allows them to stay involved in their local communities while they get their education,” Rizzardi said. “It blends so nicely together.”

Through her work with the less-fortunate, Ditty said she has realized that “A lot of people don’t receive the love that families give. And because I was able to have that, I want other people to feel that. Even though they don’t have that, I want them to know I am there for them.”

When she is not working up to 20 hours a week at a coffee shop, Smith may be found collecting “water bottles. Cigarette butts. Plastic shopping bags,” she said. “It’s not pretty to look at. I don’t think anybody wants to look at it. I’ve been trying to be more environmentally aware as I age. I try to do my part in little ways.”

BC3 students who have achieved a cumulative grade-point average of 3.75 or higher are named to the president’s list and those with a cumulative grade-point average of 3.5 to 3.74 are named to the dean’s list following completion of at least 12 semester hours or upon completion of degree requirements.

The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education has funded scholarships for Phi Theta Kappa’s selections to its All-Pennsylvania Academic Team since 2001.

The Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges will recognize members of the 2021 All-Pennsylvania Academic Team on April 15 through a Facebook video to be shown in concert with Community College Day.