

Administrators finalize BC3 @ Brockway's first bachelor's degree-completion pact

Partnership “mutually beneficial” to both schools, St. Francis vice president says

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Administrators from Butler County Community College and from St. Francis University met Tuesday, April 24, 2018, in Brockway to finalize an agreement that creates the first bachelor's degree-completion program at BC3 @ Brockway. Front row, from left, Dr. Belinda Richardson, BC3 vice president for academic affairs; Billie Kochara, St. Francis assistant director of adult degree and continuing studies; Dr. Julie A. Barris, St. Francis associate dean of adult degree and continuing studies-career services; Dr. Nick Neupauer, BC3 president; the Rev. Joe Lehman, St. Francis vice president for mission; and Dr. Case Willoughby, BC3 vice president for student affairs and enrollment management. Back row, from left, Jill Martin Rend, BC3 @ Brockway director; Dr. Pete Skoner, St. Francis associate provost; Amy Pignatore, BC3 director of records and registration; Robert Morris, BC3 dean of admissions; and Dr. Christian Ola, BC3 dean of business.

(Butler, PA) Administrators from BC3 and from St. Francis University on Tuesday finalized an agreement that creates the first bachelor's degree-completion program at the 5-year-old BC3 @ Brockway site that serves students from Clarion, Clearfield, Elk and Jefferson counties.

Beginning this summer, BC3 @ Brockway students who complete an associate degree in business administration, business management or in office administration-executive can pursue a

bachelor's degree in organizational leadership online from the oldest Catholic-Franciscan university in the country.

St. Francis ranks No. 18 in U.S. News & World Report's 2018 survey of the Top 100 northern four-year schools in the United States. BC3 ranks No. 1 among Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges in back-to-back surveys conducted by Schools.com, most recently as of October.

"This is very good for our area," Jill Martin Rend, BC3 @ Brockway director, said Tuesday as college and university officials met to discuss the advantages for BC3 students of the pact between the two schools. "We don't have as many people in the counties we serve with bachelor's degrees, so this presents a good opportunity for them to stay here locally, in our communities, in their jobs and pursue the degree online."

According to the most recent report from the U.S. Census Bureau, the percentage of those 25 or older living in BC3 @ Brockway's service area and holding a bachelor's degree is 20.9 in Clarion County; 13.2 in Clearfield County; 17.8 in Elk County and 14.8 in Jefferson County, home of BC3 @ Brockway.

Nearly 30 percent of Pennsylvanians age 25 or older hold bachelor's degrees, according to the Census Bureau report.

BC3 @ Brockway, in Brockway, and St. Francis, Loretto, share similarities in central Pennsylvania, said the Rev. Joe Lehman, St. Francis vice president for mission.

"We both serve students who are from something of a rural area," Lehman said. "This partnership is mutually beneficial to both schools as well as to the students of central Pennsylvania who benefit from two institutions coming together to offer educational opportunities to them in this way."

Students will be able to transfer up to 98 credits – whose tuition would reflect the cost of attending BC3 – and pursue their final 30 credits online from St. Francis.



Dr. Nick Neupauer, left, Butler County Community College president, and the Rev. Joe Lehman, center, St. Francis University vice president for mission, share a laugh while speaking with Dr. Pete Skoner, St. Francis associate provost, on Tuesday, April 24, 2018, at BC3 @ Brockway in Brockway. Administrators from both institutions met to finalize an agreement that creates the first bachelor's degree-completion program at the 5-year-old BC3 @ Brockway site.

BC3's tuition is the least expensive when compared with 41 other regional colleges and universities, according to the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard.

BC3 @ Brockway also announced in January that it would begin a registered nursing program this fall to help to satisfy what the six-county North Central Workforce Development area identifies as its highest priority occupational need.

"BC3 @ Brockway just keeps getting stronger and stronger," said Dr. Nick Neupauer, BC3 president. "This is a special place. It seems like when I speak to the students here, they are clamoring for a four-year degree. They ask for it constantly."

As of this fall, BC3 @ Brockway will be the only BC3 location other than the college's main campus to offer an associate of applied science degree in registered nursing and its own bachelor's degree-completion program.