

# BC3 career program preps grads for “so many options”

Alums work as park rangers, municipal police officers or in related positions

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Butler County Community College graduate Abigail Grooms, 20, of Kittanning, is shown Thursday, Jan. 14, 2021, on BC3's main campus in Butler. Grooms in 2020 earned an associate degree from BC3 in park and recreation management-park law enforcement option. The program requires students to achieve the Act 120 basic recruit training certification the state Municipal Police Officers Education and Training Commission requires of candidates seeking to become a municipal police officer. Grooms has begun her career as a police officer with Lancaster and Middlesex townships in Butler County.

(Butler, PA) First thing Professor Chris Calhoun tells new students on their first day of class?

“Park your career goals at the door,” he says, “and be open to a variety of different opportunities.”

Those different opportunities in Butler County Community College's associate degree program in park and recreation management include careers upon graduation as a park manager, guide or naturalist through the program's general option track.

Those different opportunities also include careers upon graduation as a park ranger or as a municipal police officer through the program's other track, a park law enforcement option whose graduates could also be eligible for related positions with the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, state Game Commission or state Fish and Boat Commission.



Butler County Community College Professor Chris Calhoun, a former park ranger with the National Park Service and coordinator of BC3's park and recreation management associate degree program, talks with students on BC3's main campus in this Friday, Aug. 24, 2018, file photo.

"The program opens job opportunities that I had never even thought of before," Garrett Layman said.

"So many options," Trey Carulli said.

"It's ridiculous," Abigail Grooms added.

Each found the program's park law enforcement option appealing to their love of nature and their concern for public safety.

Layman said he enjoys being outdoors. Carulli said he grew up fishing, hiking and boating. And once Grooms, whose father, brother and cousins are police officers "saw that BC3 had this option," she said, "I was like, 'Man, I love the outdoors.'"

## 2020 grad lands job as officer

Layman and Carulli are finishing the program's park law enforcement option. To earn 15 BC3 credits toward graduation, they must achieve the Act 120 basic recruit training certification the state Municipal Police Officers Education and Training Commission requires of candidates seeking to become a municipal police officer.

Grooms, of Kittanning and a 2018 graduate of Armstrong Junior-Senior High School, completed the 919-hour training at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in August. The 20-year-old 2020

BC3 graduate has begun her career as a police officer with Lancaster and Middlesex townships in Butler County.

Twenty-year-olds Layman, of Fenelton, and Carulli, of Mars, started Act 120 basic recruit training Jan. 11 at the Allegheny County Police Training Academy.

“It’s a weird transition, from sitting at a classroom at BC3, then going to the academy where you’re in a uniform,” Grooms said, “and you stand at attention when someone walks in.”

“A lot of yelling,” Layman said, “but that is normal because they are desensitizing you.”

The site in Allison Park is one of 11 in Western Pennsylvania certified by the state commission to instruct topics such as basic firearms, crisis management, defense tactics, patrol procedures and operations, and principles of criminal investigation.

“They teach you so much in the academy,” Grooms said, “what you need to know when you are out there.”

The Act 120 basic recruit training augments what students need to know when they are out there in any of Pennsylvania’s 121 state parks, or possibly among its 1.5 million acres of state game lands or hundreds of waterways and lakes.

## Extra certifications required in options

Students in BC3’s 61-credit park and recreation management options are also required to become certified in areas such as water rescue and emergency response, ice rescue and emergency response, advance line systems rescue and wildland firefighter training.

“I left BC3 with probably close to 10 certifications that I never thought I’d have,” Grooms said, “and that put me above other people in (job) interviews.”



Butler County Community College student Garrett Layman, 20, of Fenelton, is shown Saturday, Jan. 16, 2021, at McConnells Mill State Park in Lawrence County. Layman, enrolled in BC3’s park and recreation management-park law enforcement option, intends to graduate from BC3 this year and is considering a career as a park ranger or possibly with the state Fish and Boat Commission.



“It’s applicable to almost any job,” said Layman, a 2019 graduate of First Baptist Christian School, Butler, who is considering a career as a park ranger or possibly with the state Fish and Boat Commission. “It’s really cool how it all works.”

Calhoun is also coordinator of a program whose required courses within each option include forestry, introduction to parks and recreation, park and recreation administration, park safety and visitor services, and wildlife management.

“Even before I knew what I wanted to do, I found out about all the options this one program had,” said Carulli, a 2019 graduate of Rocky Grove High School in Franklin who envisions a career as a park ranger. “It lit a fire and made me think, ‘Everything’s there.’”

## Ranger: BC3 program “so well-respected”

Pennsylvania’s DCNR hires more BC3 park law enforcement option graduates than does any other state agency, Calhoun said.

“BC3’s program is so well-respected,” said Brian Lambermont, who attended BC3’s program, completed Act 120 basic recruit training in 2012 and is a DCNR ranger at Point State Park in Pittsburgh. The park’s manager is Jake Weiland, of Portersville, a 2002 graduate of BC3’s park and recreation management-general option track.

“It’s not unusual to be in a training in Harrisburg where I’ve met not only other rangers, but other educational staff who went through BC3’s program,” Lambermont said. “Everybody loves it.”

Lambermont, a Summit Township resident and 1988 BC3 graduate, has also worked as a ranger trainee at Maurice K. Goddard State Park in Mercer County and with BC3’s campus police and security.



Butler County Community College graduate Brian Lambermont is shown Thursday, Jan. 14, 2021, at Point State Park in Pittsburgh, where he serves as a park ranger. Lambermont, a 1988 BC3 graduate and Summit Township resident, attended the college’s park and recreation management-park law enforcement option and also serves as a member of BC3’s campus police and security.

The college's program, Lambermont said, is "really well-respected across the state. Even outside the state. There are people who work for national parks who went through BC3's program."

Calhoun himself is a former a park ranger with the National Park Service at the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River near Pennsylvania's northeast border with New York.

## "Best decision I have ever made"

The Act 120 basic recruit training and additional certifications required by the college's park law enforcement option prepare graduates to respond to state park emergencies, thefts, reports of illegal substance use or of public disturbances, Calhoun said.

"Any time you put large groups of people together, when they are out there recreating, there's going to be conflict," Calhoun said.

"Making sure that nobody," Carulli said, "is doing anything that they shouldn't be doing."

Layman and Carulli expect to complete Act 120 basic recruit training in June. They could eventually become one of DCNR's 2,700 employees, or hired by other state or national agencies.

His pursuit of the college's park law enforcement option is, Layman said, "the best decision I have ever made."

Maybe he'll end up out West, he added, in Yellowstone or Yosemite national parks, "directing traffic, helping people with directions, just keeping the peace if there's any ruckus or really loud campers."

"Whatever it may be. I like caring for people and helping people who are in need. Defending the weak, the victims."

"Standing up for what's right and doing what is right for others and protecting the community."



Butler County Community College Professor Chris Calhoun is a former a park ranger with the National Park Service at the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River near Pennsylvania's northeast border with New York.