

BC3 drives home advantages to interested Lawrence County students

“It’s a great opportunity for students to be able to see what BC3 offers,” high school counselor says

March 23, 2017

(New Castle, PA) For the first time, BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing is providing transportation to school districts that cannot afford to bus interested students to tours of Butler County Community College’s most-populated off-campus site, an idea applauded by a Wilmington Area High counselor.

Director Sean Carroll is using strategic enrollment management funds to charter a bus from a Wilmington provider and transport up to 100 juniors and seniors from five districts and a vocational-technical school to BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing for 90- to 120-minute sessions through March 30.



Ariel Junkin is among the nearly 500 students who each year attend classes at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, New Castle. “The small classes at BC3 are amazing,” Junkin, a 2015 Union Area High graduate and sophomore psychology major, said Tuesday, March 21, 2017. “You are not a number. You are a person. I feel like the teachers actually care.”

Those sessions include a tour of the New Castle facility, which opened in 2008, with its state-of-the-art health care labs, its traditional and high-tech tiered classrooms, its multipurpose area that can be converted to a rec room for competitions, and its expansive lobby, where collegians such as Ariel Junkin and Tyler Alberico spend time and save money.

Junkin and Alberico are among the nearly 500 students who each year attend classes at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, according to Bill O’Brien, BC3’s vice president for continuing education and off-campus sites.

As juniors and seniors from Neshannock Township and Wilmington Area high schools toured BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing on Tuesday, Junkin, a 2015 Union Area High graduate and sophomore psychology major, said she would tell them, “The small classes at BC3 are amazing. You are not a number. You are a person. I feel like the teachers actually care.”

BC3 student: “I would tell them to come here because it is affordable”

Average class sizes at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing range from 10 to 14, Garrett Nogan, the center’s specialist, would later tell Neshannock and Wilmington students.

“And the cost,” Junkin said about her advice to the students. “I didn’t want to be in debt for the rest of my life. So it’s a smart place to start.”

BC3’s tuition is lower than that of 24 regional colleges and universities, the Pittsburgh Business Times reported in January. Students who complete an associate degree in any one of 6 programs offered at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing can transfer to a State System of Higher Education institution with junior standing.

“I would tell them to come here because it is affordable,” said Alberico, a 2016 Shenango Area High graduate and freshman business major. “You could start here and move on to a larger college.”

Tutoring “doesn’t cost you a dime”

Eighty percent of students at BC3, named the No. 1 community college in Pennsylvania by Schools.com, receive grants and scholarships totaling \$280,000 annually. Seventy-five percent of BC3 students graduate debt free. Additionally, Jennifer Loue told the juniors and seniors on Tuesday, “Here at BC3, tutoring is our No. 1 resource. BC3 tutoring is free.

“Free,” she repeated. “It doesn’t cost you a dime. Every student at BC3 is eligible for tutoring. You just have to apply for it. Keep that in mind.”

Private tutors charge \$20 to \$25 per hour, said Loue, BC3’s assistant coordinator for disability services and tutoring.

Students are eligible for one hour of free tutoring each week per class, Carroll told the high school juniors and seniors.

“If you are taking four classes, that’s four hours of free tutoring,” Carroll said. “It is a tremendous asset.”

It is an asset that Jacob Harvey on Tuesday told his former schoolmates he has used.

“Take advantage of the tutoring,” the 2016 Wilmington Area High graduate and freshman early childhood education major told the Wilmington and Neshannock students. “Tutoring has helped me so much. And take advantage of the disabilities center.”

Carroll’s tours have also drawn interest in BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing from students in the Shenango, Ellwood City and New Castle area school districts, in addition to the Lawrence County Career and Technical Center. Juniors and seniors who attend the tours receive information on BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing’s 13 associate degree programs, its pre-nursing courses and two certificate programs.

An impediment to showcasing BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing’s qualities has been transportation during the school day, Carroll said.

“We would always talk to the (high school guidance) counselors, and it was always this conundrum, that they wanted their students to get here, but the schools didn’t have the money to pay for the bus,” he said.

“They offer so many programs”

Tuesday’s presentations, said Taryn Powell, a Wilmington Area High School counselor, were “fantastic.”

“It’s a great opportunity for students to be able to see what BC3 offers,” Powell said. “And with today’s education and economy, a lot of students need to be able to take advantage of coming to a community college to start out, or even to get their full degree.”

The Edinboro University of Pennsylvania graduate said she has been paying for student loans used for her bachelor’s and master’s degrees for 30 years.

“BC3 has been so fantastic and has grown over the past seven years during the time that I have actually worked in this area, and it is such a great place for students to start,” Powell said. “They offer so many programs and they keep expanding. ... I think it is really a great opportunity for students who may be undecided, for students who want to start out going to a smaller school, in a smaller setting, and then moving on to a four-year college. And for students who really just don’t have the money.”

Smaller class sizes such as those at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing make “such a huge difference,” Powell said. “I think that gives them an advantage because of the personal relationship that you can have with a teacher -- when there are only 10 to 15 students in a class as opposed to 40 or even 100. It is really advantageous to any student.”

When he walks through the doors and into that expansive lobby, “The teachers know you by name,” Harvey said. “It’s just amazing. It makes you feel like you are welcome and that you are at home.”

Students in the smaller environment at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing will get to know their instructors one on one, Nogan told the high school juniors and seniors, “as opposed to being in a huge auditorium with 200 other people. That is another small little perk here.”

Up to 40 students from New Castle Area High are scheduled to tour BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing on March 30, Carroll said.

An open house will be held from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. April 4 at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, 2849 W. State St., New Castle. BC3 will waive its \$25 application fee for those who apply for admission during the April 4 open house.