

# BC3 gets state approval to launch practical nursing program

College now accepting applications for January start

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(Butler, PA) The Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing has authorized Butler County Community College to create a practical nursing program on BC3's main campus, an approval that will enable the college to prepare students for the high-priority occupation in western Pennsylvania.

The college in June 2020 announced its plan to establish the program as a result of an up to \$10 million partnership with Concordia Lutheran Ministries, a Cabot-based health care provider. The partnership is intended to address a shortage in nursing.

"This really speaks to who we are as the community's college," said Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of BC3. "We are a collaborator. We listen to comments from our advisory boards and from our partners. We analyze workforce data. We did our own internal, proper vetting and then moved through the very long process of getting this approved by the state board."

BC3's 48-credit certificate program will debut in January. Prospective students can apply for admission to the college's program now through Sept. 30. Prospective students can also attend hourlong information sessions at 2 p.m. and at 5:30 p.m. Aug. 24 in the Haven I building at Concordia Lutheran Ministries, Cabot.

The college will accept up to 35 students in its first class, said Dr. Patty Annear, dean of BC3's Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health.

"I am hearing most from potential employers in the area," Annear said. "Concordia is a big one. There is a great nursing shortage and LPNs can certainly fill those holes."

## "BC3 has displayed a strong track record"

The college also offers a 70-credit associate degree program in Nursing, R.N. More than 75 percent of BC3's Class of 2021 in the career program received one or more job offers or had interviews scheduled before graduating in May.

"BC3 has displayed a strong track record of producing high-quality nurses through their RN program, so I have every expectation that the LPNs who come out of this new program will have the knowledge and skills to quickly and effectively help meet the health care demands of the region," said Keith Frndak, president and CEO of Concordia Lutheran Ministries.

“We hope many of them find their first work home at Concordia.”

Concordia is offering tuition sponsorship to BC3 nursing students who agree to work for the health care provider after graduation.

BC3 nursing students who receive one year of tuition sponsorship from Concordia will be committed to work for the health care provider for two years. Those who receive two years of tuition sponsorship will be committed to work for Concordia for three years.

The college’s practical nursing program is expected to take students one calendar year to complete.

## Researcher: LPN retirement risk high in region

Licensed practical nurse and licensed vocational nurse are high-priority occupations in the Tri-County and West Central workforce development areas, which include Armstrong, Butler, Lawrence and Mercer counties.

The average number of unique job postings for licensed practical nurses and licensed vocational nurses in Armstrong, Butler, Lawrence and Mercer counties has been 137 per month for the past year, according to Emsi, a labor market research firm based in Idaho.

Retirement risk is also high, with about 30 percent of the 882 licensed practical nurses or licensed vocational nurses in those four counties age 55 or older, according to Emsi.

Many licensed practical nurses and licensed vocational nurses in Armstrong, Butler, Lawrence and Mercer counties work in nursing care or skilled nursing facilities, according to Emsi.

“The LPNs are really the ones who are working at the bedside,” Annear said, “particularly in long-term care facilities. And we do have a lot of those in our communities.”

Courses in BC3’s program will include practical nursing pharmacology I through III, human anatomy and physiology I and II – and practical nursing I through III, “a combination of theory, lab and clinical,” Annear said.

Licensed practical nurses and licensed vocational nurses can monitor patients’ health, administer basic care, provide for basic comfort, report patients’ status and concerns to registered nurses and physicians, and keep records on patients’ health, according to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The median salary for licensed practical nurses and licensed vocational nurses in Armstrong, Butler, Lawrence and Mercer counties this year is \$42,560, according to Emsi.

BC3 practical nursing students who pass the post-graduation National Council Licensure Examination for Practical Nurses could also enter BC3's Nursing, R.N., program as second-year students, Annear said.

The 12-member State Board of Nursing is a subdivision of the Pennsylvania Department of State's Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs.

## Concordia helps state-of-the-art BC3 facility

Concordia Lutheran Ministries committed \$1 million to the BC3 Education Foundation toward the construction of the \$9 million Victor K. Phillips Nursing and Allied Health building on BC3's main campus. The 25,000-square-foot facility will provide an immersive learning environment and feature state-of-the-art skills laboratories, simulated medical-surgery rooms and simulated ICU rooms

BC3's Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health will be housed within the facility, whose groundbreaking could occur this quarter. The building could open in 2023.

Applications for admission to BC3's practical nursing program are available at [bc3.edu/admission/healthcare](http://bc3.edu/admission/healthcare).

To register for the hourlong information sessions at Concordia Lutheran Ministries or to learn more about the health care provider's tuition sponsorship, email [BC3NursingProgram@concordialm.org](mailto:BC3NursingProgram@concordialm.org) or call 724-352-1571, Ext. 8348 or Ext. 8372.