

BC3 president's speech to Leadership Lawrence County class "eye-opening"

Dec. 18, 2019



Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of Butler County Community College, is shown Thursday, Dec. 12, 2019, at the Confluence in New Castle during an Education Day presentation as part of the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Lawrence County program.

(New Castle, PA) Students should research the average starting wage of their intended profession when evaluating the cost of the college or university that will prepare them to enter their field, Dr. Nick Neupauer told Leadership Lawrence County's Class of 2019-2020 during an Education Day seminar Thursday designed to introduce program participants to higher education opportunities in the county of 86,000.

"If you have student-loan debt equal to or less than the average starting wage, you can make it work," said Neupauer, an Ellwood City native and president of Butler County Community

College since 2007. “If you are going into a profession where you will be starting at \$34,000 and you are coming out of college with \$80,000 or \$90,000 in student-loan debt, I think that is something that should be questioned.”

Neupauer was selected to be one of two keynote speakers at Education Day, the fourth of nine topical seminars within the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce’s second Leadership Lawrence County program. Seminars in the nearly yearlong program conclude in May for participants who represent manufacturers, healthcare facilities, cultural centers, social service agencies, educational institutions and other sectors.



Liz Caggiano, a participant in the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce’s Leadership Lawrence County program, listens to a presentation by Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of Butler County Community College, during Education Day on Thursday, Dec. 12, 2019, at the Confluence in New Castle.

Neupauer’s speech at the Confluence in New Castle follows 2019 guest appearances, presentations and legislative testimony at locations that include Butler, Harrisburg, Indiana, Lemont Furnace, Monaca and New York.

“I thought he was outstanding”

Neupauer in 2019 appeared on “Inside Pennsylvania Boroughs,” a cable television show recorded in Harrisburg and airing on PCN; spoke about “Generational Differences” with Dr. Case Willoughby, BC3’s vice president for student affairs and enrollment management, at Mohawk Valley Community College, Utica, N.Y.; and testified before the state Senate Communications and Technology Committee at Penn State-Fayette about the lack of broadband Internet access in areas of Pennsylvania and its impact.

He was also a speaker at the inauguration of Dr. Roger Davis as president of the Community College of Beaver County, to the Pennsylvania Commission for Community College’s communications and government relations affinity groups in Harrisburg, and before doctoral students attending Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Neupauer in December spoke before Connecting2Tomorrow, a Butler nonprofit organization that helps teens and young adults; at the Butler County Human Services’ Christmas holiday breakfast, an event in Prospect where BC3 received a 2019 Collaborator of the Year Award; and at the Confluence in New Castle for Education Day.

“I thought he was outstanding,” said Renee Silverman, chief marketing officer of Klafter’s, a wholesale distributor in New Castle, and a Leadership Lawrence County participant. “I’ve heard a lot of speakers and I do think he was energetic. He is very passionate about what he does and he has a lot of experience.”

“Very approachable and accessible,” added Kim Koller-Jones, executive director of the Hoyt Center for the Arts, New Castle.

Said Jeter Smith, a Leadership Lawrence County participant and associate dean of student affairs at Westminster College, New Wilmington: Neupauer’s “delivery was casual. It was easy. He knew his audience.”



Erin Orrico, a participant in the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce’s Leadership Lawrence County program, listens to a presentation by Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of Butler County Community College, during Education Day on Thursday, Dec. 12, 2019, at the Confluence in New Castle.

Participant: Presentation “eye-opening”

It was important for Leadership Lawrence County participants to get an overview of educational opportunities in Lawrence County, said Kati Dey, the chamber’s marketing and events specialist.

“And one of them being a community college in our community,” she said. “That was important for us to be able to showcase today.”

Higher education opportunities in Lawrence County include BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing in New Castle, and Westminster College, a private institution whose president, Dr. Kathy Richardson, was also a keynote speaker at Education Day.

It was Neupauer’s salary-to-cost ratio that most intrigued Silverman, who called his hourlong presentation “eye-opening.”

“How much you are going to make, and if you owe that amount or less,” the mother of a student attending a state-related university said of Neupauer’s example. “I have never heard that said before, at any college or in any seminars I have sat through.

“I think too many of these students are coming out of college without a job that pays enough to actually repay what they’re borrowing to attend a four-year institution,” she said. “They are not exploring their options financially or having discussions with their parents about what situation they are going to be in when they get out of college. I don’t think they are realizing this until later.

“I think the parents are the ones who are strapping themselves. And they are not even exploring these options.”

“Here’s where parents fit in,” Neupauer said. “Students do not understand debt load. It is abstract to them. They have no concept of that.”

BC3, Neupauer told Leadership Lawrence County participants, also had the best return-on-investment in 2018 among 43 colleges and universities in western Pennsylvania, northern West Virginia and eastern Ohio – “and that includes Pitt, Penn State and West Virginia,” he said.

BC3’s salary-to-cost ratio is a measurement of graduates’ salaries 10 years after commencement for every dollar a student pays to attend the institution. It was ranked highest by information within the U.S. Department of Education’s 2018 College Scorecard.

“That,” Neupauer said, “is an incredible benchmark.”

President’s message has “a lot of impact”

And, “You’re getting the same education,” said Silverman, of Klafter’s. “It’s good to know that students can transfer to a different college after attending a community college with the financial savings.”

Sarah Burns transferred to a different college after attending a community college with the financial savings, said the Serra Catholic High graduate and former Duquesne resident who is now a quality engineer for the Ellwood City Forge Group.

“I went to a community college for that exact reason,” said the Leadership Lawrence County member who earned an associate degree in engineering science from the Community College of Allegheny County. She then transferred under an articulation agreement with Robert Morris University, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering.

“I was able to save a whole lot of money, get a good quality education, and save” what she estimated to be \$30,000.

The same opportunity is available to students who attend BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, she said.

“We do have a good community college,” Burns said. “And hearing it from the president from that institution has a lot of impact.”

In addition to undergraduate return-on-investment, Neupauer addressed with Leadership Lawrence County participants the college's partnerships and collaborations that include BC3 expanding its opioid addiction recovery program to New Castle in May, and the creation of the Riv-ElI Entrepreneurship Program in Ellwood City.

The Riv-ElI Entrepreneurship Program, a collaboration among BC3, the Community College of Beaver County and the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce, enables students of Lincoln and Riverside high schools to earn a BC3 Workplace Certificate in Entrepreneurship and 16 tuition-free, transferable credits. Its first class graduated in May.