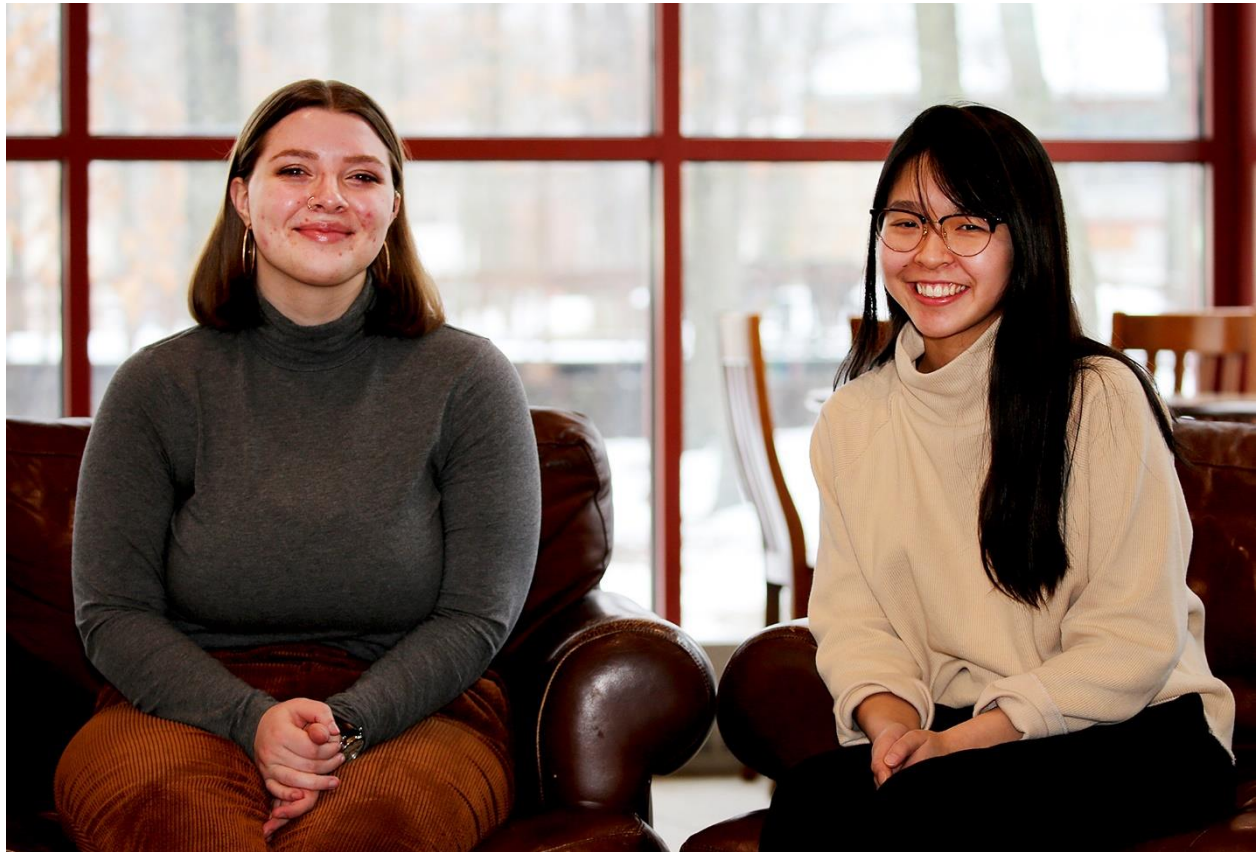


BC3 students picked to receive full-tuition scholarships toward bachelor's degrees

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Butler County Community College students Abbey Walker, 20, of Penn Township, left, and Teresa Kuo, 19, of Cabot, have been selected to the All-Pennsylvania Academic Team and will receive full-tuition two-year scholarships toward completing a bachelor's degree at their choice of one of 14 universities within the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. They are shown Feb. 13, 2020, inside the Student Success Center on BC3's main campus in Butler Township.

(Butler, PA) A Brooklyn native who after a 2018 trip to Cambodia intends to become a missionary teaching children in East Asia and a lifelong Penn Township resident who in May researched before guiding a cemetery tour dedicated to veterans are Butler County Community College students selected to receive full-tuition two-year scholarships toward completing a bachelor's degree.

Teresa Kuo, 19, a Cabot resident born in the New York City borough, and Abbey Walker, 20, can apply the scholarship to their choice of one of 14 universities within the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, which since 2001 has funded the financial awards for those named by Phi Theta Kappa to its All-Pennsylvania Academic Team.

Phi Theta Kappa is an international academic honor society for two-year colleges and academic programs among whose 1,300 chapters in 10 countries is BC3's 52-year-old Rho Phi. Kuo is vice president of service for Rho Phi and Walker is among its 143 members.

All-Pennsylvania Academic Team status recognizes Kuo and Walker's excellence in the classroom and dedication to their community college and communities, said Morgan Rizzardi, BC3's primary adviser to Rho Phi and the college's associate director of admissions.

Among eligibility requirements for students to receive the status are their having earned a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.5 while completing at least 36 credits at a Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges institution, Rizzardi said. BC3 administrators and faculty nominate students, Rizzardi added.

After graduation from BC3, off to IUP, SRU

Members of BC3's Rho Phi must have earned at least a 3.5 grade-point average. Kuo and Walker have achieved at least a 3.75 grade-point average in the fall 2018, and spring and fall 2019 semesters, and were named to BC3's president's list.

The Knoch High School alumnae said they will graduate debt-free from BC3 on May 13 with associate degrees, Kuo, in early childhood education (pre-K to 4) and Walker, in history.

Kuo and Walker will apply their scholarships to Indiana and to Slippery Rock universities of Pennsylvania, respectively. Kuo intends to pursue a bachelor's degree in early childhood and special education, and Walker, in history.

Kuo, Walker and other members of the All-Pennsylvania Academic Team who must be enrolled at a Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges' institution will receive citations and medallions during the commission's conference in Harrisburg in April.

BC3 is one of 14 institutions within the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges.

Selections to the All-Pennsylvania Academic Team must have written an essay explaining their community service, Rizzardi said, adding that Kuo and Walker are "outstanding examples" of what Phi Theta Kappa represents.

"As students they exercise every opportunity to think critically and apply what they have learned to the larger community and a global context," Rizzardi said. "I have seen them both grow in confidence and passion for their chosen fields while at BC3.

"I am excited to see where the world takes them next."

Volunteers locally, and 9,000 miles away

Kuo next could become a missionary nearly halfway around the world, in an urban area of Taiwan, she said, and Walker, a guide in a museum or at a historical site.

Kuo wrote in her essay that she was raised in an underprivileged family, and lived in Toronto and Dallas – “I’ve moved quite a number of times,” she said – before relocating to Cabot in 2017 after having met a Canadian pastor who himself met a Butler County pastor during a mission to Cambodia.

“Education was my hope,” she wrote. “My hope to change the world and the world of those around me. I am created, chosen and called to share this hope with others.”

Kuo served on a 2018 mission to Cambodia with New Life Christian Ministries in Saxonburg, directed by that Butler County pastor, Chris Marshall, and as an intern served in 2019 in the Urban Impact Foundation’s summer day camp in Pittsburgh.

“My biggest dream is to become a missionary,” she said. “East Asia is what’s in my heart. I hope to be able to travel around the world and teach. Teach inner-city children and to be able to break that cycle of poverty, to let them know there is something more than their current situation. I will show students that I was able to overcome a lot of those factors that block success in life.”

Walker wrote in her essay that she joined BC3’s history club and learned of BC3 assistant professor Deborah Kruger’s connection to the Butler Historical Society. Kruger has served as vice president for the past two years of the society, to which she has been a member or volunteer since before 2000.

Walker chose to volunteer in her first “Echoes of the Past” walk in North Side Cemetery in May – “a guided tour to share the stories of a handful of those buried there,” Walker wrote in her essay.

The 2019 cemetery walk was dedicated to veterans, Walker wrote.

“It is interesting to see a local connection to these wars that you learn about in class,” Walker said. “These are places you have never been. It’s interesting to know people from your community were part of this. Their families could still even be here. It is interesting to see a more personal connection to it.”