

BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing a first in receiving Impact Award

BC3 building education, reputation and workforce in Lawrence County, chamber chair says

Sept. 20, 2018



BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing students are shown during class in this Oct. 6, 2016, file photo. BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing on Sept. 28 will become the first nonprofit educational institution to receive an Economic Development Impact Award from the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Lawrence County Economic Development Corp.

(New Castle, PA) BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, Butler County Community College's first additional location outside of Butler County and historically its most student-populated, will become on Sept. 28 the first nonprofit educational institution to receive an Economic Development Impact Award from Lawrence County's top business networking and economic promotion organizations.

Economic Development Impact Awards, according to the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Lawrence County Economic Development Corp., acknowledge businesses and developers whose investments of resources have significantly enhanced and made Lawrence County a better place in which to live and to work.

BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, near New Castle in Lawrence County, will be among seven recipients of 2018 awards at the Villa Banquet Center.

The recognition of BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing's influence follows results of a 2018 economic impact analysis conducted by Emsi, an Idaho research company, that found BC3 generated \$147.5 million in added income to Butler County's economy in the 2016-17 academic year.

Among other factors, Emsi considered student spending and BC3 alumni in the Butler County workforce.

Lawrence County officials said BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing provides to students with familial obligations or employment commitments a local opportunity to receive a college education, helps to develop the county's workforce and expand its tax base, and boosts commerce within Union Township.

"We have been very impressed with what BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing brings to the county," said Steve Sant, chairman of the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce. "And we are also impressed that BC3 has been ranked in back-to-back years as the No. 1 community college in Pennsylvania (by Schools.com). Although BC3 is not building anything per se like a lot of the recipients, BC3 is building education and building reputation and building a workforce in Lawrence County."

BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, Sant said, is "Lawrence County's community college."

Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of BC3, said BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing is "important for many reasons.



Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of Butler County Community College, discusses BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing with Kati Dey, marketing and events specialist for the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Lawrence County Economic Development Corp. BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing on Sept. 28 will become the first nonprofit educational institution to receive an Economic Development Impact Award from the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Lawrence County Economic Development Corp.

“It was our first strategic move outside of Butler County,” Neupauer said. “As the college moved from Butler County’s community college to a regional institution, we needed a winner. Lawrence Crossing has been a true champion over the years.

“On a personal level, I hail from Lawrence County. My grandfather’s family came from New Castle. I know the people. They are blue collar, hard-working and dedicated to their community. Ten years later, the citizens of this area and county as a whole have welcomed us with open arms and forged a tremendous partnership.”

Twenty-four Economic Development Impact Awards will have been presented in the past four years, said Linda Nitch, the chamber’s director of business and economic development. BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, she said, represents the first nonprofit educational institution to be recognized for its contributions to Lawrence County.



Students are shown outside BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing in this Oct. 6, 2016, file photo. BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing on Sept. 28 will become the first nonprofit educational institution to receive an Economic Development Impact Award from the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Lawrence County Economic Development Corp.

BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing “great way for students to get an education”

BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing opened in 1989 within the Lawrence County Area Vocational-Technical School in Shenango Township, and also held classes in the Lawrence County Learning Center in New Castle before moving in 2008 to its current 25,244-square-foot location at 2849 W. State St.

Nearly 340 students are enrolled this fall at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, the most of any of BC3’s additional locations in Brockway, Cranberry Township, Ford City and Hermitage, according to Sharla Anke, BC3’s assistant dean of institutional research.

Lawrence County has many students who, for various reasons, according to Nitch – “Maybe it’s economics. Maybe it’s a family commitment” – would not be able to further their post-secondary education if not for BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing.

BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing is “a real benefit for people who have families,” Sant said. “Or for those who may be older, have jobs and want to take night courses, maintain their jobs and continue to be an integral part of their family. You add that to the economics of it, and it is a real plus for us in Lawrence County.”

As is the opportunity with BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, Sant said, to keep college students in Lawrence County.

“It’s a great way for students to get an education without having to pay the full cost of living on campus. That,” Sant said, “is a benefit in my mind.”

Pennsylvania college students face the highest student-load debt in the nation, at an average of \$36,193, LendEdu reported Aug. 8.

Seventy-five percent of BC3’s graduates are debt-free. BC3’s tuition is the most affordable among 42 colleges and universities in western Pennsylvania, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

“I think one of the worst things we have done over the past number of years is that we have had young people pile up tons and tons of student debt, going to school and ending up with a degree that really doesn’t add any value at all to what they want to do long term,” said John Cournan, president of the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce Foundation, which funds the chamber and the economic development corporation.

“And so they have school debt. They have a difficult time finding a job that can help them to pay back that school debt, and so my impression is that BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing gives these students an opportunity to have their cake and eat it too.

“They can get their college credits, start working hard and studying, and have a job outside of school so that they can continue to figure out what they want to do long term. And they are not breaking the bank to do it.”

Students can select from BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing’s nine transfer, seven career and two certificate programs. BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing’s credits transfer to public, private and online four-year colleges and universities, and its career programs enable students to earn a two-year associate degree and develop the professional and technical skills necessary to start a career upon graduation. Students at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing can also take pre-nursing courses.

BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing “critical” in matching workforce, business needs

Up to 70 instructors teach at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing annually, said Sean Carroll, BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing director, among them courses in career programs such as accounting, business management, emergency services-police services option, human resource management, office administration-executive, office administration-medical, and technical trades-cosmetology management option.

Students at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing can also pursue certificates that take one year to complete in medical assistant, and in medical coding and billing specialist.

BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing graduates can be qualified to fill vacancies at UPMC Jameson and at Liberty Mutual Insurance, and other large Lawrence County employers, Nitch said.

“We need to better match our workforce with our business needs,” she said, “and I see BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing as being critical to that.”

BC3’s salary-to-cost ratio is the highest among 42 colleges and universities in western Pennsylvania, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

“If we can create opportunities that allow our students to stay local, then they buy houses, they support local businesses, they pay taxes, they support the local schools,” Cournan said.

“The better job we can all do to attract and retain our young people to our area, the better chance we have of sustaining the western Pennsylvania lifestyle that we have all been accustomed to and that we love so much. Keeping as many of our students local is a very important thing, and I think BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing really helps us do that.”

BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing “clearly” sparks commerce

BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing houses six traditional classrooms, a tiered classroom, three computer labs, a natural science lab and a medical assistant lab, and conference and multi-purpose rooms, according to Brian Opitz, BC3’s executive director of operations.

It also serves as a meeting site used by economic development officials to showcase the area to prospective developers, Nitch said.

“The impact of even the facility here in Union Township has been great,” she said. “I think that it is a significant investment and it gives rise to the ability of the Lawrence County Economic Development Corp. to point to that campus as a great asset for the community. It is really important to us. We had site selectors come in last winter and we utilized the BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing facility. They were greatly impressed with the facility in and of itself, its location, and the services that it provides.”

With BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, “you are basically bringing traffic through the county,” Cournan said. “So whether it is the educators or the students, or the facility’s maintenance people, these folks probably buy their coffee and gasoline in the morning in the area, and go to lunch somewhere nearby. I think any time you can have something that increases traffic into and through the community, that can only be a good thing.

“And that is clearly what BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing has done.”

Union Township was home to 380 companies as of 2012, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

“I am sure the students visit restaurants,” Sant said. “If they have to do quick shopping, we have retail stores nearby. They can buy their gasoline nearby. We have a lot of businesses in that area that they can utilize.”

BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing students have a “need for such things as coffee, food, supplies, the whole nine yards,” Nitch said. “They go there, purchase their service or product, and making it more viable as far as Union Township’s economy goes.”

BC3’s other additional locations are in Brockway, Cranberry Township, Ford City and Hermitage. BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing also offers transfer programs in business administration, criminology, early childhood education (Pre K-4), general studies, history, physical education-sports management option, psychology, secondary education and social work.

Other recipients of a 2018 Economic Development Impact Award are New York Blower, Pennsylvania American Water, UPMC Jameson, Edcom and Fresh Marketplace at New Wilmington Center, RAR Engineering and Jennifer Price, restaurant trades instructor at the Lawrence County Career & Technical Center.