

BC3's 23-year-old College Within the High School program tops 500 students for first time

Nov. 10, 2020



Ireland Rinker is one of 72 students taking college writing this fall through Butler County Community College's College Within the High School program. Rinker, who plans to become a nurse, is shown Friday, Oct. 23, 2020, outside Lincoln High School in Ellwood City, Lawrence County, where she is a senior.

(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College's College Within the High School program, which enables sophomores through seniors the opportunity to earn transferrable college credits, has exceeded 500 students in a semester for the first time.

In the fall 2020 semester, 507 students in Butler, Clarion, Clearfield, Jefferson, Lawrence and Mercer counties are taking at least one BC3 course in subjects ranging from anatomy and physiology to western civilization I.

The 617 seats occupied this fall are also the most in a semester since BC3's College Within the High School program began in 1997.

The number of students and seats occupied this fall follows previous highs of 455 students and of 599 seats, each set in BC3's spring 2020 semester.

"High school students are showing an interest in furthering their education," said Erin Cioffi, BC3's assistant director of high school programming, and "are finally seeing the advantage of a community college and the cost of its tuition. They are saving a lot of money and getting a quality education with transferrable credits."



Erin Cioffi is assistant director of Butler County Community College's high school programming.

Tuition and fees this fall for a three-credit course at five regional Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education universities range from \$1,246.23 to \$1,385.60 for in-state residents. Tuition and fees this fall for a three-credit course for part-time students at regional state-related institutions' branch campuses range from \$1,495 to \$1,819 for in-state residents.

Savings range from \$850 to \$880

Tuition and fees this fall for a three-credit BC3 College Within the High School program course range from \$384 to \$414, depending on the county in which the high school is located. BC3 high school programming credits can be applied toward BC3 associate degrees and bachelor's degrees at public, private and online four-year colleges and universities.

High school students from Butler County can save at least \$880.23 – and high school students from Clarion, Clearfield, Jefferson, Lawrence and Mercer counties, at least \$850.23 – on a three-credit course offered by BC3's program.



Anthony Vargo is one of 43 students taking elementary statistics this fall through Butler County Community College's College Within the High School program. Vargo, who plans to attend law school, is shown Saturday, Oct. 31, 2020, outside Mars Area High School in Mars, Butler County, where he is a senior.

"BC3 has given these kids an advantage," said Ted Gross, who since 2009 has taught BC3 general psychology courses to students at Mars Area High School in Butler County, which this fall is also offering BC3 courses in business leadership, elementary statistics, microeconomics, productivity applications and speech.

"We never had as kids in school an educational advantage and also a major financial advantage," said Gross, a 1982 Knoch High graduate. "When you look at some of the schools that these kids are going to go to, where a year will cost 35, 36, 40 thousand dollars, students can complete some of these credits for a cost that is less expensive."

BC3, added Christine Cataloni, a counselor at Union Area Middle-High School in Lawrence County, “gives students the opportunity to earn college credits in a cost-effective manner,” and helps students to “develop time-management skills, explore different interests, take fewer classes in college and save money in the long run,” said Taryn Dobson, who instructs a BC3 general psychology course at Reynolds Junior-Senior High in Mercer County.



Ireland Rinker took BC3’s speech course last fall, is taking BC3’s college writing course this fall, and will take BC3’s general psychology course next spring – all at Lincoln High in Ellwood City, Lawrence County. The senior plans to enroll next fall in a private four-year institution and pursue a bachelor’s degree in nursing.

Delanie Blake is taking college writing and speech courses this fall through Butler County Community College’s College Within the High School program. Blake, whose goal is to become an art therapist, is shown Friday, Oct. 23, 2020, outside Lincoln High School in Ellwood City, Lawrence County, where she is a senior.

“College is expensive,” Rinker said, “and the price of BC3’s classes is so reasonable (that I) can cut down on the overall price for college dramatically.”

Added senior Delanie Blake, who is taking BC3 college writing and speech courses this fall at Lincoln: “My parents taught me to work hard for what you want. ... It is nice to have an option that is more affordable because I have to save for my future.”

Anthony Vargo took BC3’s microeconomics course last fall, BC3’s general psychology course last spring, and is taking BC3’s elementary statistics course this fall – all at Mars High in Mars, Butler County.

Vargo plans to ultimately attend law school.

“This program appealed to me,” Vargo said, “because bottom-line, it is getting me ready for college. Taking college courses, it doesn’t get any better than that. ... You can’t beat the price. I love it.”

7 remote courses offered in spring

BC3 has also announced it will offer seven courses through remote instruction as part of its spring 2021 College Within the High School program.

Remote instruction includes video conferencing, email and Internet-based learning management

system formats. Remote-instruction College Within the High School courses begin Jan. 19 and will be available to all eligible students.

BC3 will offer through remote instruction college algebra, college writing, intermediate algebra, general psychology, productivity applications, research writing and speech.

For more information, contact Cioffi at 724-287-8711 Ext. 8254 or at erin.cioffi@bc3.edu.