

BC3's Neupauer opens doors to help others achieve

Long-serving chief executive backs vision with work ethic

Oct. 28, 2020



Dr. Nicholas C. Neupauer, Butler County Community College's president since 2007, is shown in his office on BC3's main campus in Butler Township in this May 23, 2017, file photo. Five times since 2015 has BC3 been ranked the No. 1 community college in Pennsylvania by organizations that analyze U.S. Department of Education statistics in assessing academic quality, affordability and online competency.

(Butler, PA) The 53-year-old's footsteps are frequently the first to awaken Butler County Community College's administration building, his arrival time in this COVID-19 contact-tracing era corroborated by his initials penned atop a sign-in clipboard hanging on a glass door that, for him, opens often to a pre-sunrise hallway, its overhead fluorescent lights' eyelids having just fluttered but its sidetable ambient lamps' still shut.

NCN. 6:10.

NCN. 6:31.

NCN. 6:39.

A black leather briefcase swings from the end of Dr. Nicholas Charles Neupauer's left wrist, a bright-yellow Pittsburgh Steelers band dangles from his right, during the next 25 paces to his outer office, where 15 steps hence will open that soft-cover black briefcase and unpack what demands his expertise during what is sometimes a 14-hour day:

The Butler County Growth Collaborative.

The BC3 Education Foundation.

The BC3 2017-2022 strategic plan.

Butler County Community College met Neupauer in 1999 as a result of his intention to return to Pennsylvania to be beside his ailing father, to spell his care-giving mother.

Butler County Community College saw in that meeting what it wanted to close its search for its dean of humanities and social science.

Eight years later, Butler County Community College saw in the barely 40-year-old the chief executive it sought to open doors into BC3's every sunrise.

“Someone who would get things done”

“Tremendous vision and potential,” Glenn Miller said of his impression of Neupauer during the board's interview.

“He had a desire,” Dr. William DiCuccio said about the qualities he recognized in Neupauer, “to see not just himself, but BC3 succeed.”

“A hard worker, all of the time,” said Gordon Marburger, like Miller and DiCuccio a BC3 trustee and the last remaining members of the board that appointed Neupauer in 2007 as the college's eighth president – and as the youngest chief executive officer in BC3 history.



Nick Neupauer, left, who in 2007 became Butler County Community College's eighth president, and his brother, Michael, sit with their father, Nick, at their home in Ellwood City in 1974.

“Someone,” Marburger added, “who would get things done.”

BC3 – under Neupauer – has realized its vision, succeeded, got things done.

BC3’s reputation “extraordinary”

Six years into Neupauer’s leadership, BC3 created the additional location of BC3 @ Brockway in Jefferson County and two years later, BC3 @ Armstrong in Armstrong County, each – Neupauer has said – to serve under-represented counties in Pennsylvania with higher education. Enrollment this fall has increased 32 percent compared to last fall at BC3 @ Brockway, and 9 percent at BC3 @ Armstrong.

Flanking those additional location decisions were others to expand or renovate BC3 additional locations in Butler County, Lawrence County and Mercer County. Enrollment this fall compared to last has increased as high as 15 percent at BC3 @ LindenPointe in Hermitage, Mercer County.

At least 560 students have graduated from BC3 in each of the past four years. Each of BC3’s four most recent graduating classes have had more graduates than any other class between 2000 and 2016.

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“The impact Nick has had is best evidenced by the extraordinary reputation the college has, not only among other community colleges, but among business leaders and the community at large,” said Joseph Kubit, chairman of a BC3 board of trustees that in June approved a contract extension for Neupauer through 2024.

“The ultimate collaborator”



Dr. Nicholas C. Neupauer, Butler County Community College’s president since 2007, is shown in the Heaton Family Learning Commons on BC3’s main campus in Butler Township in this May 23, 2017, file photo. In an era when the average tenure of a college or university president nationally at his or her institution as of 2016 was 6.5 years, according to the eighth CEO tenure and retention study published by the Community College League of California in 2018 – Neupauer in 2021 will enter his 14th as BC3’s president.

BC3 – pronounced repeatedly as “the community’s college” by Neupauer – this year announced an up-to-\$10 million partnership with Concordia Lutheran Ministries that addresses a regional nursing shortage by creating by next fall BC3’s first licensed nursing program.

The agreement includes the fourth \$1 million gift to BC3 since 2013.

It also brings the amount gifted to the BC3 Education Foundation, which supports student scholarships and other initiatives at BC3, from \$8.9 million to \$21.6 million since Neupauer sat in the middle of a U-shaped table, surrounded by 16 trustees, all of whom his elder, each with questions for two hours.



Dr. Nicholas C. Neupauer, fourth from left, a lifelong Pittsburgh Steelers’ fan and Butler County Community College’s eighth president, is shown with his family in Rochester in February. From left, son-in-law Chad Tudor, daughter Paige Tudor, wife Tamatha and daughter Meredith.

“If you could go back and gather up all the bullets that were coming off Nick’s forehead as he was being interviewed,” Miller said, “you would have a pile of them.”

Among those gifts to the BC3 Education Foundation are those designated to help fund an objective within BC3’s 2017-2022 strategic plan, one that created an opioid addiction recovery program in response to the crises and that since debuting in April 2018 has drawn more than 600 participants and has expanded to Lawrence and Mercer counties.

The college’s opioid addiction recovery program was among the reasons BC3 was presented with the Collaborator of the Year Award from Butler County Human Services 10 months ago.

“Nick,” said Mark Gordon, Butler County’s chief of economic development and planning, “is the ultimate collaborator.”

Neupauer works with Gordon and business, education, government, healthcare, tourism and transportation officials on the Butler County Growth Collaborative, whose mission is to preserve and empower economic prosperity throughout the entire county.

“Nick’s heavily engaged,” said Kim Geyer, a BC3 ex-officio trustee and Butler County commissioner. “Actively engaged.”

“He rolls up his sleeves,” Kubit said, “and is available at all times to everybody who needs input from him.”

Stability “great for the institution”

BC3 generated \$147.5 million in added income to Butler County’s economy in the 2016-17 fiscal year, according to an economic impact analysis conducted by Emsi, an Idaho research company that has completed more than 1,800 impact studies for educational institutions since 2000.



Dr. Nicholas C. Neupauer, left, Butler County Community College’s eighth president, is shown at the wedding of his daughter, Paige, in July 2019. To Neupauer’s left is wife Tamatha, daughter Paige, son-in-law Chad Tudor and daughter Meredith.

An estimated 1,255 students relocated to Butler County to attend BC3 in the 2016-17 fiscal year, according to EMSI.

“They are making local purchases,” Geyer said. “They are investing in housing. They are reinvesting back into our local economy.”

BC3 students in Butler County, or Armstrong, Jefferson, Lawrence and Mercer counties, have also attended an idea of Neupauer’s – pizza with the president.

“That just goes to show you what kind of guy he is,” Miller said. “He just wants the students to have a chance to communicate with him.”

It is the demand of that communication – “You’re always ‘on,’” Dr. Tuesday Stanley said, with constituents that also include trustees, foundation board members, legislators, faculty and staff, “and that can be exhausting, frankly.”

In an era when the average tenure of a college or university president nationally at his or her institution as of 2016 was 6.5 years, according to the eighth CEO tenure and retention study published by the Community College League of California in 2018 – Neupauer in 2021 will enter his 14th as BC3’s president.

“To stay, like Nick has, is great for the institution,” said Stanley, president of Westmoreland County Community College. “It allows you to get significant work done, but it requires a level of selflessness and fortitude and tenacity that is very difficult to maintain for long periods of time.”

“Can’t imagine BC3 without Nick”

Butler County Community College’s chief executive officer is already known as the longest-serving active president among Pennsylvania’s 14 state-related universities – which include the Slippery Rocks, the IUPs and the Clarions; among Pennsylvania’s four state-related universities – the Penn States, the Pitts and the Temples – and among Pennsylvania’s 14 community colleges – the Westmorelands, the community colleges of Allegheny County and of Philadelphia.

As some point in 2022, Neupauer will awaken Butler County Community College’s administration building, swinging that black leather briefcase during 25 steps to his outer office, and during another 15 paces hence, and become known as BC3’s longest-serving chief executive, passing Dr. Thomas Ten Hoeve, the college’s president from 1970-1985.

“I really can’t imagine BC3 without Nick,” Kubit said.

“It is hard to imagine him not being in that office.”