

BC3's new high school pathways address health care, business; offer savings of \$200 per credit

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(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College high school pathway programs that premiere this fall will enable sophomores through seniors to learn about health care or business, earn up to 26 transferable credits before they graduate, and save approximately \$200 per credit when compared to tuition costs charged by Pennsylvania's regional public four-year universities.

Pathway credits can be transferred to four-year colleges or universities, or applied to seven BC3 career programs, in which students can earn associate in applied science degrees and develop the skills needed to enter the workforce immediately upon graduation.

BC3's 26-credit Health Care Pathway features nine courses to be taught on BC3's main campus in Butler Township, and its 15-credit Business Pathway, six courses to be instructed online.

Costs for one BC3 pathway credit for a high school student are estimated at \$118 for a resident of Butler County and at \$128 for a resident of another Pennsylvania county. One credit costs at least \$319 for a Pennsylvania resident attending one of the state's regional public four-year universities in the 2019-2020 academic year.

BC3's tuition and fees rates for the 2020-2021 academic year will be approved by June 30.

The Business Pathway will also include a \$25 per credit technology fee and the Health Care Pathway, a \$35 lab fee for certain courses. Fees per credit at Pennsylvania's regional public four-year universities range from \$115 to \$182.

BC3 administrator lauds savings, transferability

Students completing 26 credits in the Health Care Pathway could save nearly \$5,000 in tuition costs alone and those completing 15 credits in the Business Pathway, nearly \$2,900 in tuition costs alone, when compared to that charged by Pennsylvania's regional public four-year universities. Students can take one to all 26 pathway credits.

"Everybody is looking to save money and the ease of the transfer of credits is so important," said Amy Pignatore, BC3's dean of admissions and college registrar, adding that BC3 created the pathways in response to requests from area school district administrators.

Some students may also be able to apply credits from BC3 courses to their high school graduation requirements, Pignatore added.

The pathways support the state Department of Education's Chapter 339 plan, which requires school districts to introduce career counseling to pupils as young as those in elementary school.

"Different careers, different pathways," said Erin Cioffi, BC3's assistant director of high school programming. "Educating students on what's out there, what their skills are. Do they want to go to college and earn a degree? Do they want to get right into the workforce? If they want to get into the workforce, what skills do they need in their given area? ... These pathways are exciting because they give students an opportunity to look at a career in business or in health care."

BC3 health care leaders: 2-year degrees net jobs

BC3's Health Care Pathway includes courses in anatomy and physiology I and II, general psychology and human growth and development.

Twenty-six Health Care Pathway credits will transfer into BC3's 70-credit Nursing, R.N., and physical therapist assistant programs. The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics projects job openings to increase 12 percent for registered nurses and 26 percent for physical therapist assistants through 2028.

"There is a major shortage in nursing," said Dr. Patty Annear, dean of BC3's Shaffer School of Nursing and Allied Health. "There are certainly jobs out there in nursing for graduates."

Said Dr. Randall Kruger, coordinator of BC3's physical therapist assistant program: "You just can't outsource patient care. And if you look at an aging population and a greater population, we really have no concerns that there won't be jobs in the future."

The current salary for entry-level registered nurses is \$51,280, according to nursingprocess.org. The median salary in 2018 for physical therapist assistants was \$48,090, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The Health Care Pathway, Annear said, "is an absolutely wonderful idea" in that it saves high school students who enroll in BC3's health care programs from having to take all BC3 courses within two years.

"With this, they will have a lot of the prerequisites and augmenting courses going in to college," Annear said. "They should be better prepared for getting into the nursing or the PTA programs right out of high school."

Pathway grads could beat others in job search, BC3 business dean says

BC3's Business Pathway includes courses in business math, marketing and principles of management.

Fifteen Business Pathway credits will transfer into BC3's 63-credit business management, 62-credit hospitality management, 61-credit marketing management, and 60-credit technical trades-cosmetology management option programs; and 12 into BC3's 62-credit accounting program.

High school students who transfer credit hours to BC3's business career programs could graduate early from BC3, said Sherri Mack, BC3's interim dean of business

"They could enter the workforce a semester ahead," Mack said. "Most students graduate in May. This could put them out there in December or January, when most people in business might have their new budgets in order. They might be ready to hire someone at the beginning of their fiscal year and money is out there to support new positions."

The online format may also be attractive to students who live in any Pennsylvania county, Mack said.

"They can come home from school, and at a convenient time in the evenings or weekends accomplish the task," Mack said.

Added Cioffi: "There are some school districts that are looking at it from the vantage point that the student may have an extra study hall or (personal time built into their school schedule). They might have that opportunity to take it within their school and have that structure every day."

Each pathway will offer courses in BC3's fall, spring and summer semesters. Sophomores must have a cumulative grade-point average of 3.25 to enroll in a pathway program; juniors, a 3.0; and seniors, a 2.75.

For more information, visit bc3.edu/healthcare-pathways or bc3.edu/business-pathways.

BC3's high school programming this fall will also debut the first noncredit selection in its 23-year history. The Penn United Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Program in Partnership with BC3, to be held mostly online, will enable sophomores through seniors to earn nationally recognized credentials in manufacturing.