

Farmers National Bank awards \$1K scholarships to 2 BC3 students

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Butler County Community College students Lena Holmes, 29, left, of Grove City, and Matthew Reitler, 19, of Cowansville, have been chosen to receive inaugural \$1,000 Business Student Scholarships from Farmers National Bank of Emlenton. Each plans to graduate from BC3 in May with an associate degree in business administration. Holmes is shown Thursday, Feb. 7, 2019, at BC3 @ LindenPointe in Hermitage; and Reitler, who attends BC3 @ Armstrong in Ford City, is shown Tuesday, Feb. 5, 2019, in the Heaton Family Learning Commons on BC3's main campus in Butler Township.

(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College business students from Armstrong and Mercer counties have been selected to receive inaugural \$1,000 Farmers National Bank of Emlenton scholarships that reward their academic excellence and acknowledge a “desire to achieve” as evidenced during meetings with executives of the financial institution, the bank’s chief operating officer said.

Matthew Reitler, 19, of Cowansville, and Lena Holmes, 29, of Grove City, were chosen as Business Student Scholarship recipients for BC3’s spring 2019 semester following Farmers National Bank’s first “meet and greet” designed to attract BC3 business students to the financial institution’s 170-member workforce, Jennifer Roxbury said.

Fourteen students from BC3’s 15 associate degree programs within its business division attended the Nov. 1 event at BC3. All were pursuing the scholarship, Roxbury said, and some, banking positions.

“We are looking to get an employable workforce,” Roxbury said. “It can be a challenge to get talent.”

Roxbury and executives Chris Martin and Bob Vernick introduced BC3 students to desired experience and skill sets for banking professions such as human resources, information technology, commercial lending, marketing, and deposit and credit operations, then met for 45 minutes with students in small groups to answer questions and review resumes.

Roxbury and Brittany Kerchersky, Farmers National Bank’s manager of human resources and organizational development, returned to BC3 two weeks later to conduct 30-minute individual interviews with select BC3 students such as Reitler and Holmes.

“These two,” Roxbury said, “are really driven, and know what they want.”

Reitler intends to become a financial adviser and Holmes, a personal finance coach.

“Their desire to achieve was so evident”

In evaluating scholarship candidates, “We were looking for the same things as if we were looking to employ somebody,” Roxbury said. “We say all the time we can teach anybody tasks. We can teach them skills. What you can’t teach is an attitude and a desire to be an achiever. That is what stood out about both of them. Their desire to achieve was so evident.”

Reitler serves as vice president of Rho Phi, BC3’s chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, an international academic honor society. He attends BC3 @ Armstrong in Ford City, started his own automobile detailing business and works for an electrical and plumbing business.

Holmes, who with her husband, Michael, are parents of children ages 5 and 4, attends BC3 @ LindenPointe in Hermitage, works 18 hours a week in customer service for a nonprofit organization and is a member of Rho Phi.

Each plans to graduate in May from BC3 with an associate degree in business administration, which with business management is among the top five most popular of BC3’s 56 associate degree programs in the spring 2019 semester, according to Sharla Anke, BC3’s assistant dean of institutional research.

Holmes accepted a position with Farmers National Bank, which this week is also interviewing another BC3 student who attended the Nov. 1 meet and greet, Roxbury said.

Reitler will transfer this fall to Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, where he will pursue a bachelor’s degree in finance.

“Academically, they are just awesome”

Farmers National Bank scholarships were available to students enrolled in BC3’s business division programs who had completed a minimum of 30 credit hours and had at least a 3.5 grade-point average, according to Dr. Christian Ola, BC3’s dean of business.

“There is that ‘it’ factor that a student has,” Ola said. “When you talk to both of these (scholarship) winners, they can look you in the eye, they can shake your hand, and they can speak with relative authority on so many different topics and subjects. They are the whole package.

“Then you throw in the fact that academically, they are just awesome.”

Students named to BC3’s president’s list have grade-point averages of at least 3.5 while completing a minimum of 12 credit hours during a semester. Holmes has been named to the list in each of the four semesters she has completed at BC3 and Reitler, in each of his three.

Holmes and Reitler said they will be among the 75 percent of BC3 graduates who are debt-free as a result of the Farmers National Bank Business Student Scholarships.

“I was raised to avoid debt,” said Reitler, a 2017 graduate of Armstrong Junior-Senior High School whose interest in becoming a financial adviser was inspired by job-shadowing an employee at Charles Schwab Corp. in the summer of 2018. “This scholarship helps ... and will make it a little bit easier to take the next step to a four-year university.”

Added Holmes, a 2007 graduate of Grove City Area High School who decided to become a personal finance coach after taking a course through financial expert Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University: “Being debt-free is important to me. With the Farmers National Bank scholarship, most of my cost of the spring semester has been covered. This alleviates many stressors.”

Bank creates a “win-win situation”

The Nov. 1 meet and greet presentations by Roxbury; and Martin, Farmers National Bank’s senior vice president and chief retail banking officer; and Vernick, senior vice president and chief lending and business development officer; were enlightening to BC3 business students, said Ruth Purcell, executive director of a BC3 Education Foundation that awards nearly \$200,000 in scholarships annually.

“When most people think of banks, they think of tellers,” Purcell said. “They don’t think there is a human resources component. They don’t think there is a sales component. Anytime you can have students learn more about what is in a certain sector is great.”

Farmers National Bank, Purcell added, has been an “outstanding” partner with BC3 through the financial institution’s Educational Improvement Tax Credit contributions, support of a three-year Pioneer Proud Campaign that ended in 2016 and in serving as the title sponsor of the BC3 Education Foundation golf outing nine consecutive years.

“This idea of a meet and greet shows their community focus,” Purcell said. “They want to create a win-win situation where they can also attract employees.”

Farmers National Bank has offices in Allegheny, Butler, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Jefferson, Mercer and Venango counties.

“BC3 is in most of our markets,” said Roxbury, herself a 2004 graduate of BC3 with an associate degree in business management. “It just makes sense for us to partner with BC3 because BC3 has good students coming out into the workforce and we have a workforce that needs good talent.”