

Longtime New Castle business owner to graduate from “family-like” BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing

May 7, 2019



Dwayne Evans, 51, of New Castle, second from left, will graduate from BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing on May 15 with an associate degree in criminology. He is shown with daughters Jasmine, far left; Tasha, third from left, and Noel, far right. In front is Evans' granddaughter, Ava, 5. Jasmine graduated from BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing in 2017; and Noel is a BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing psychology student.

(New Castle, PA) Butler County Community College's Class of 2019 will be its largest of the century with 599 graduates – 14 more than in 2017, its previous top class since 2000.

Five-hundred-twenty-seven graduates will receive at least one associate degree, and 72 at least one certificate during BC3's commencement exercises, set for 7 p.m. May 15 in the Field House on BC3's main campus in Butler Township.

Among the 599 graduates are 32 student-veterans. A 70-year-old grandmother of three who is the Class of 2019's most senior graduate. A 35-year-old married mother of six. BC3's first two-sport All-American. Six high school students who achieved a Workplace Certificate in Entrepreneurship by completing the first Riv-ElI Entrepreneurship Program.

And Dwayne Evans, of New Castle, 25-year owner of Divine Designs, a barber shop-salon on West Washington Street in New Castle, and who at 51 will receive an associate degree in criminology.

“Part of my focus now is on helping troubled youth in the community in which I live, and that gives me the wonderful opportunity to give back, and make a lasting impression that will outlive me,” said Evans, who with his wife, Lydia, has three daughters and a 5-year-old granddaughter.

“If I can impact a young person's life, causing them to maximize their full potential and lead a productive, successful life, that,” Evans said, “is certainly the reason I wanted to be a criminology major.”

“I felt like I was part of a family”

Evans has also served as an assistant pastor at Whole Truth Ministries in New Castle, and was a member of NAACP and the United Way of Lawrence County executive boards. His wife attended BC3 for pre-nursing courses; his daughter, Jasmine, graduated from BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing with an associate degree in general studies; and his daughter, Noel, is a psychology major at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing.



Dwayne Evans, 51, of New Castle, left, will graduate from BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing on May 15 with an associate degree in criminology. He is shown with his wife, Lydia, who took pre-nursing courses at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing.

Like 75 percent of BC3 graduates, Evans will graduate from BC3 debt-free – as did Jasmine in 2017.

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

“As a nontraditional student, I did not want to procure any more high financial debt, and that certainly wasn’t the case,” Evans said. “That gives my wife and me more flexibility to assist my daughters with their future educational endeavors.”

Following his graduation from BC3, Evans said he will serve on the City Rescue Mission’s board of directors. He may pursue a bachelor’s degree online “which is my only option at this time,” he said, “because of my business.”

BC3 has the highest salary-to-cost ratio and the most affordable tuition among 43 regional colleges and universities, according to U.S. Department of Education College Scorecard data. BC3 has also been selected as the No. 1 community college in Pennsylvania in three consecutive rankings by Schools.com.

“I felt like I was a part of a family,” Evans said of BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing. “BC3 has been one of the most refreshing experiences of my life. I was unsure in the beginning, but at the end I have become determined, with more direction and purpose in the next venture of my life, thanks to my BC3 family.”

Evans City woman most senior graduate

Seventeen BC3 graduates will receive two associate degrees, two will receive two certificates, and 13 will receive one associate degree and one certificate.

Evans City resident Deborah Carter, at 70 years, one month and 12 days on May 15 will be BC3’s most senior graduate, 285 days more senior than Brenda Haney, of Cranberry Township. Carter will receive an associate degree in social work and Haney, in criminology.

Vanessa Eberle, 35, of Butler, a married mother of six, will receive an associate degree in psychology, as will her husband, Ethan, 41.

Mackenzie Craig, of Karns City, who since December was named a National Junior College Athletic Association Division III All-American in volleyball and in women’s basketball, will receive an associate degree in criminology.

Ellwood City resident Mikayla Beachem, at 17 years, eight months and 22 days will be BC3’s youngest graduate, 37 days younger than fellow Riv-Ell classmate Destiny DiMaggio, also of Ellwood City.

Ellwood City and Riverside high school students were able to participate in the first, yearlong Riv-Ell Entrepreneurship Program, a collaborative effort among BC3, the Community College of Beaver County and the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce, which blended classroom learning with real-world experience. Students who completed the program earned 16 tuition-free, transferrable credits.

Past three graduating classes largest since 2000

BC3 will also graduate its second class of Presidential Scholars. Meghan Hyatt, of Butler, will receive an associate degree in mathematics; Kelly Kriley, of Butler, in chemistry; Drew Meier, of Fenelton, in electronics technology with CADD; Noah Pollock, of Chicora, in business administration; Claire Rodgers, of Saxonburg, in history; and Haley Vissari, of Renfrew, in early childhood education (Pre K-4).

The Presidential Scholars program is in its third year at BC3. The full-tuition President's Scholarship is presented to students in the Top 10 percent of their graduating class and who have achieved at least a 3.5 grade-point average at any of Butler County's public high schools. A cyber school student counted in those public schools' graduating classes is also eligible. Students must also enroll at BC3 in the first semester following their high school graduation to be eligible for the scholarship, and are required to take Scholars-only courses and maintain at least a 3.5 GPA at BC3.

More than 125 members of BC3's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, an international academic honor society, will graduate, as will 13 members of Delta Theta, BC3's chapter of Kappa Beta Delta, an international honor society for business students.

Eight students will receive from BC3 11 reverse-transfer degrees, an opportunity created in 2016 as part of an agreement among Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges and 14 Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education institutions.

Seven employees of Oberg Industries, a precision manufacturer in Freeport, will receive apprenticeship technology workplace certificates as a result of a program instructed onsite by BC3. BC3's 26-credit apprenticeship technology workplace certificate program, launched in fall 2016, is taught entirely at Oberg Industries.

Dr. Steve Tyrell, president of North Country Community College, Saranac Lake, N.Y., will be the keynote speaker. Sandra J. Ihlenfeld, a 2007 BC3 graduate and executive director of the Butler YMCA, will be the distinguished alumni speaker.

BC3's three most recent graduating classes have been its largest of the century. The college's Class of 2017 had 585 graduates and of 2018, 578. BC3's Class of 2018 also had 32 student-veterans. Its class of 2012 had 34.