

# Mobile lab at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing to bolster debut of mostly online manufacturing program

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Jason Boyer, 39, of West Mifflin, Allegheny County, a student in Butler County Community College's manufacturing pre-apprenticeship certificate program held on BC3's main campus in Butler Township, locates a drill to a piece of metal using a digital readout on a geared milling and drilling machine in BC3's manufacturing lab on Monday, July 15, 2019.

(New Castle, PA) Butler County Community College's manufacturing pre-apprenticeship certificate program, registered with the state Department of Labor and Industry and free to eligible students, will debut at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing in August as mostly online and bolstered by eight hands-on lab sessions using equipment to be brought to BC3's additional location in New Castle.

The mostly online format may be “attractive to individuals who have barriers to getting to class every day,” said Kelly McKissick, coordinator of professional education and certificate programs in BC3’s Workforce Development division.

Manufacturers are Lawrence County’s second-largest employers, with 12.5 percent of the workforce, following only health care and social assistance at 21.2 percent, according to this month’s report from the state Department of Labor’s Center for Workforce Information and Analysis.



A digital readout displays the movement of the x- and y-coordinate system on a geared milling and drilling machine inside Butler County Community College’s manufacturing lab on Monday, July 15, 2019.

Those who complete the 150-hour noncredit program, with courses that include basic blueprint reading, manufacturing processes and introduction to computer numerical control, will receive nationally recognized credentials, and certificates from the state Department of Labor and Industry, and from BC3, McKissick said. Employers with hiring needs will also meet with the class, McKissick said.

“This is going to give students the basic skills that manufacturers are looking for in their entry-level employees,” said instructor Scott Covert, who has worked for 30 years at Penn United Technology, a precision manufacturer in Cabot, Butler County, and has been its training coordinator since 2013.

“Manufacturers are looking for people who have a skill set already so that, as an employer, they don’t have to give you those skills. It saves them time and it saves them money.”

## Instructor: DOL registration aids student, employer

The average annual salary among those employed by Lawrence County’s 150 manufacturers in 2018 was \$59,598, according to this month’s Center for Workforce Information and Analysis report.

“Anyone can say they have a training program,” Covert said. “But to have it registered with the Department of Labor means students are receiving an actual pre-apprentice curriculum so if they

get hired as an apprentice, that company will have the option of giving them apprentice credit because of the credentials and the certificate they will have at the end of the course.”

Covert holds one-year certificates from BC3 in machine tool programming, computer numerical control programming technology and in machine tool technology, and an associate degree in computer-aided machining technology.

He will bring from Cabot to BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing for lab sessions CNC simulators, micrometers, calipers, precision scales, height and depth gauges, and a small milling machine and small electronic boards for circuitry discussions.

The Haas CNC control simulator replicates the control panel of a CNC lathe or mill, Covert said.

“It lets the students write a CNC program and then,” he said, “they can run it on the graphic display and see their tool path.”

### “Same basic skill set is desirable”

Students can attain National Institute for Metalworking Skills credentials in measurement, material and safety; and in job planning, benchwork and layout. They can also earn National Tooling and Machining Association credentials in precision machining technology; blueprint reading; and quality control, statistical process control and inspection; and an Occupational Safety and Health Administration 10-hour general industry card, McKissick said.

The program is free to eligible participants as a result of a \$147,000 grant BC3 received from the Tri-County Workforce Investment Board and the state Department of Labor, McKissick said.

To be eligible, students must pass a drug screening and criminal background check, complete a vocational screening assessment and possess a high school diploma or its equivalency.

Orientation for the program will be held from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Aug. 8 at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, 2849 W. State St., New Castle. The program is scheduled from Aug. 12 to Oct. 11.

Eight four-hour Thursday morning hands-on lab sessions will be held at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing.

Following instruction on manufacturing, McKissick said, students must attend classes at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing on OSHA 10, about health and safety awareness, from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Oct. 7-8; and bring a resume to employability skills sessions, from 8 a.m. to noon Oct. 9-11.

BC3’s manufacturing pre-apprenticeship certificate can lead to employment opportunities as machine operators, assemblers and press operators; or apprenticeships in machining, computer numerical control or quality control, McKissick said.

“The manufacturers that I have talked to are looking for the same type of skills that we are looking for in Butler County,” Covert said. “So the success of this program in Butler County should carry over into adjacent counties because employers are looking for that same skill set.

“Every company makes something different. But that same basic skill set is desirable no matter what we are doing. Maybe they are making automotive parts. Medical parts. Contracting for the military. Oil and gas. It doesn’t matter. Once you have those entry-level skills, an employer can then adapt those skills, streamline them and make you more job-specific to what they do in their company.”

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