

Mother of 2, bank teller make BC3 @ Armstrong history

Students of newest off-campus site first to graduate

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(Ford City, PA) A mother of two expecting her third child and a part-time bank teller who says his history instructor brought the subject to life have become the first students to graduate from BC3 @ Armstrong, which opened in fall 2015 as Butler County Community College's fifth off-campus site.

Meagan Roush, 23, of Adrian, will receive an associate degree in psychology during BC3's 49th commencement exercises Wednesday in the Field House on BC3's main campus.

Eric Schall, 20, of Kittanning, began his BC3 career as a student in the College Within the High School program, in which high school students can earn transferrable, college level credits in local high schools or career and technical centers. Schall, who took a BC3 speech class during his senior year at Evangel Heights Christian Academy in 2015, earned an associate degree in business administration from BC3.



Meagan Roush, 23, of Adrian, left, will receive an associate degree in psychology. Eric Schall, 20, of Kittanning, right, will receive an associate degree in business administration. Roush and Schall are the first two students to graduate from BC3 @ Armstrong in Ford City, which opened in fall 2015 as BC3's fifth off-campus site.

"They are role models for how you can succeed by attending BC3 in your own community and at BC3 @ Armstrong," says Karen Zapp, BC3 @ Armstrong's student services/technology support specialist.

While at BC3, Schall was named to the President's List, attained by students who have achieved at least a 3.75 grade-point average while carrying at least 12 credits. He was also a member of Rho Phi, BC3's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa. The prestigious international academic honor society has 3.2 million members in nine nations, all of whom must have at least a 3.5 grade-point average.

"Eric is a curious, skeptical and analytical scholar," Zapp says, "all of which makes him a better student."

Roush “is juggling a home life, a husband and family,” Zapp says. “That can be hard. If her children are ill, who will watch them while she is at school? Managing that kind of life is difficult because you have to consider everyone else’s needs before you can commit to your own.”

BC3 began to offer night classes at Lenape Technical School in 1982, ultimately offering up to 12 courses per semester through 2008, according to Bill O’Brien, BC3’s vice president for continuing education and off-campus sites and director of BC3 @ Armstrong.

Classes were discontinued in Armstrong County as BC3 built other off-campus sites and as a response to the number of Armstrong County students choosing to attend BC3’s main campus, O’Brien says.

BC3 milestone “exciting”

BC3 @ Armstrong opened in Ford City two years ago “because we began to see a drop in enrollment from our Armstrong County residents,” O’Brien says. “We believed travel time was the reason.”

That BC3 @ Armstrong has graduated its first two students is “exciting,” O’Brien says, adding that the Ford City site offers day and evening classes, “making it possible for a student to graduate without ever setting foot on the main campus.”

Zapp, he says, “has been instrumental in helping students meet their goals.”

Roush and Schall were among the 596 students, the highest number of applicants since at least 2000, who planned to graduate Wednesday, according to Amy Pignatore, BC3’s director of records and registration.

They are also among the 71 students who this spring attended BC3 @ Armstrong, a 115 percent increase over spring 2016.

Roush says she plans to pursue a bachelor of arts degree in psychology from La Roche College through the Pittsburgh school’s bachelor degree completion partnership with BC3. Unique partnerships with six four-year colleges and universities allow BC3 students the opportunity to earn a bachelor’s degree with cost-saving benefits on BC3’s main campus through courses offered online, in the classroom, through ITV or as a hybrid.

Her long-term goal, Roush says, is to become a therapist who focuses on biblical counseling “and working with children in foster care and group homes.”

Roush, the mother of a 7-year-old son and 2-year-old daughter, expects to have her third child in early September.

History-making recognition “feels amazing”

The five-minute drive to BC3 @ Armstrong from her home is what initially attracted her attention, Roush says. The Ford City site is also 28 miles closer than BC3’s main campus in Butler Township.

“And the flexibility and affordability of classes,” she says, “made it convenient for me.”

Roush says she has developed better study habits through her experience at BC3 @ Armstrong and has “learned to participate much more in classes.”

Being one of the first two students who attended BC3 @ Armstrong to graduate “feels amazing,” Roush says. “I feel very accomplished and proud of myself. I would highly recommend BC3 @ Armstrong because of the convenience, the one-on-one time with the instructors thanks to the small class sizes, and the affordability of credits.”

BC3’s tuition is less expensive than that of 24 regional colleges and universities, the Pittsburgh Business Times reported in January. BC3 also has an 18:1 student-to-faculty ratio.

Schall says his foundation in math and accounting improved during his studies at BC3. He also took several courses at BC3’s main campus.

“Both my algebra and trigonometry professors taught at a rate that I was capable to keep up with,” Schall says of Lori Wisniewski and Karen Evans, respectively. “Dr. Stacy Davis gave me my base in accounting. She was good at helping me understand and she taught with a lot of enthusiasm.”

As did instructor Brad Pflugh with his history lessons.

“I really enjoyed stories of the Civil War and listening to the effects it had and still has on the country,” Schall says, “and listening to how Pittsburgh came to how it is today. I enjoyed stories of World War II and the American people of the age and the effects that came along with ending the war.”

BC3 “made way more sense”

Schall says he was also interested in the events that led to the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall.

“(Pflug’s) enthusiasm, depictions with maps to help visualize, detail, obvious interest in the subjects and sense of humor is what I would say brought it all to life,” Schall says.

Schall, who works up to 30 hours a week in a bank, says his decision to attend BC3 @ Armstrong was based on its affordability and accessibility.

“It made way more sense than any other school to start at,” he says. “It at least made more sense to go there when the classes were available and fit into my work schedule. It also made working easier.”

Schall plans to study finance or economics at The Pennsylvania State University’s Behrend campus in Erie or Clarion University of Pennsylvania – and says he will miss Zapp.

“Karen made me feel like I could accomplish anything,” Schall says. “She tends to find the good in most anyone. She would always do her best to help me find out what I wanted to do and then she did her best to help me make it happen.”

BC3 @ Armstrong’s credits in business administration, general studies and psychology can be transferred toward bachelor’s degrees at public, private and online four-year colleges and universities.

Also, students who complete an associate degree at BC3 @ Armstrong in business administration or psychology can transfer with junior standing to any Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education institution, such as Clarion, Indiana, Slippery Rock and Edinboro universities of Pennsylvania.

In addition to La Roche College, BC3 also has bachelor’s degree completion partnerships with Chatham University, Pittsburgh, in communications-public relations, and nursing; Clarion University of Pennsylvania, in accounting; Franklin University, Columbus, Ohio, in business administration; Indiana University of Pennsylvania, in early childhood education and special education; and the University of Pittsburgh in administration of justice.

BC3’s other off-campus sites are located in New Castle, Hermitage, Brockway and Cranberry Township.