

Zelienople teen youngest graduate in BC3's Class of 2021

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Julianna Bonnett, 19, of Zelienople, earned an associate degree in graphic design at BC3 @ Cranberry in Cranberry Township and is the youngest graduate in Butler County Community College's Class of 2021 by 12 days. Bonnett, shown Friday, May 14, 2021, is also among the 70 percent of graduates in BC3's Class of 2021 who will graduate debt-free.

(Cranberry Township, PA) It wasn't all that long ago that Julianna Bonnett used crayons, markers and pencils to reflect her ideas in Christmas, Mickey Mouse and Strawberry Shortcake coloring books.

The youngest graduate in Butler County Community College's Class of 2021 now uses Adobe Illustrator, Adobe InDesign and Adobe Photoshop and, with an associate degree in graphic design from BC3 @ Cranberry, is prepared to reflect her ideas in flyers, logos and newsletters.

Bonnett, 19, was born 12 days after Alexandra Cavolo, of Grove City, a fellow Class of 2021 graduate who earned a workplace certificate in entrepreneurship; and 45 years after John Dougan, of Kittanning, a 64-year-old who earned an associate degree in accounting.

Students such as Bonnett in BC3's 35 two-year career programs can develop the skills needed to enter the workforce immediately upon graduation.

"I'd like to get some experience in the workforce with graphic design," Bonnett said. "I want to get out into the real world."

That is where she said she will apply what she has learned at BC3 @ Cranberry about color theory – "People associate different meanings with different colors" – and about typography – "People associate different things with different fonts" – to create cohesive branding ideas for businesses.

BC3 @ Cranberry educators "very thorough"

Branding ideas for a traditional look, she said, may include "more muted colors, rich reds, greens or browns" and serif fonts with "details on the letters." Branding for a trendy look, she said, may include "a bright orange or a bright red, and maybe a modern, technical font."

Bonnett, who lives in the Seneca Valley School District, was homeschooled and graduated in 2020. She said she took classes in English, science and mathematics at BC3 @ Cranberry that applied to her pursuit of a diploma and to her associate degree.

She said she chose BC3 @ Cranberry to pursue graphic design because of its location and affordability, and found its educators to be "very thorough. They will tell you what needs to be changed, or what you might be doing incorrectly. And they will also uplift you. They're very encouraging. The teaching is very influential in how you are going to succeed. I really appreciate the teachers for all they put into their students here."

BC3 @ Cranberry's 66-credit graphic design program prepares students for careers as graphic designers, illustrators, web designers, layout artists, electronic illustrators and technical illustrators.

Bonnett's skills in what she calls "complicated" software programs increased at BC3 @ Cranberry from a four on a 10-point scale in Photoshop to an eight; from a one in InDesign to an eight; and from a two in Illustrator to a nine.

"It will definitely benefit me to know these programs," she said.

Graduating debt-free is "freeing"

Bonnett will also benefit by being among the 70 percent of graduates in BC3's Class of 2021 who will graduate debt-free.

"It's very freeing to know that you don't have debt," Bonnett said. "It takes a weight off your shoulders. You can have the freedom to explore whatever job you want. That's awesome. A lot of students can graduate debt-free if they go to BC3. A lot of my friends who go to a four-year-school can't say the same thing."

Bonnett is among the expected 461 students who earned associate degrees in career or in transfer programs, or certificates or workplace certificates in the college's Class of 2021.

She has twice been named to BC3's president's list and twice to BC3's dean's list.

BC3's president's list recognizes students who achieved a grade-point average of 3.75 or higher, and its dean's list, a grade-point average of 3.5 to 3.74 during a semester in which they attained at least 12 credits.

The college's 53rd commencement will be held May 19. BC3 is expecting to award 436 associate degrees and 46 certificates or workplace certificates, according to Becky Smith, BC3's associate director of records and registration.