

Butler Eagle

By The Book

BC3 president takes academic approach to leadership

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By Ed Biller

BUTLER TWP — The president of Butler County Community College has spent most of his career as an educator, so his academic approach to leadership is understandable.

Nick Neupauer said he embraces both transformational leadership and reverse pyramid leadership, and defers to the textbook definition of leadership provided by Pulitzer Prize-winner James MacGregor Burns, rather than any he can himself provide.

“Leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation,” Neupauer said, quoting Burns.

“(Followers) feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect toward the leader. They are motivated to do more than originally expected.”

A 1985 graduate of Lincoln High School in Ellwood City, where he played football and baseball, Neupauer freelanced as a sportswriter for the Beaver County Times while pursuing his journalism degree at Pennsylvania State University, where he graduated in 1989.

But, after two years as a full-time sportswriter, Neupauer was motivated to do more and ended up accepting a graduate assistantship at Clarion University.

“When I was at Clarion, I started liking being back at a college/university scene,” he said.

Neupauer decided fate would determine his future after Clarion: He applied to the doctorate program at West Virginia University, as well as some sports information jobs at various colleges, and figured he would go with whoever called first.

In April 1993, a representative from WVU called Neupauer to offer him a teaching assistantship, complete with tuition, in its doctorate program.



Butler County Community College President Nick Neupauer looks over documents in his office with assistant Julie Sheptak. Neupauer is vice president of the Pennsylvania Commission of Community Colleges and will take over as president of that organization on July 1. JUSTIN GUIDO/ BUTLER EAGLE

“About 15 minutes later, Northeastern Illinois University called to offer me an SID job. Just 15 minutes separated the course my life could have taken,” he said.

Neupauer honed his leadership skills from 1993 to 1996 at WVU with course coordinator duties being among his responsibilities. He was expected to supervise up to 22 graduate and undergraduate assistants, as well as prepare and distribute tests.

Neupauer then took a job as an untenured faculty member at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., where he successfully won a seat as chairman of the communications department.

“I like working with people from different backgrounds, with different personalities, and getting those individuals to work together toward a common goal,” he said, adding that “there's a clear distinction between being a leader and simply managing.”

A key point of leadership, Neupauer has learned, is gauging “the mental state of the receiver,” a practice regularly honed when interacting with BC3 staff, students, alumni and donors, as well as the public, various education boards and commissions and elected officials.

“Oftentimes, where administrators go wrong, is they take a one-size-fits-all approach to leadership,” Neupauer said.

By 2006, Neupauer was vice president of BC3 and decided to join Leadership Butler County's class that year. He was unashamed to admit that, in addition to the drive of personal improvement, he had designs on the president's office, whether at BC3 or elsewhere.

“I wanted an introduction into a variety of service opportunities and board opportunities,” Neupauer said.

“It also presented me with the opportunity to learn a more about Butler County, which is a lot more diverse than people think.”

Neupauer said he was “extremely honored” to be chosen as speaker of the Class of 2006, but accolades, awards and job titles only serve as further motivation.

“Formal titles mean absolutely nothing. If you go into a situation thinking you will be granted respect by a title, you are sorely mistaken. Respect must be earned based upon action,” he said.



Fate played a role in the transformation of Nick Neupauer from sportswriter to academic administrator. Neupauer is president of Butler County Community College, a title he has held since 2007.
JUSTIN GUIDO/BUTLER EAGLE

Neupauer's role as president of the public-funded two-year college requires that he apply both

transformational leadership, by which “you make individuals better than they thought they could be,” and inverted pyramid leadership, in which “you are working for your people.”

“I really try to go above and beyond the managerial component and stress the leadership,” he said.

“I really hope that, through my actions, I can earn that respect as president of BC3.”

Neupauer's actions include numerous examples of community service, as he is a past president of the Butler County Chamber of Commerce, a past chairman of the American Heart Association in Butler, and has served on boards for Community Development Corporation of Butler County, the Community Health Clinic and United Way of Butler County's Red Apple Awards, to name a few.

Neupauer also is a member of the Rotary and vice president of the Pennsylvania Commission of Community Colleges, the latter of which he will take over as president on July 1.

Still, he is an academic at heart, and the great importance Neupauer places on community service can be explained through another textbook definition.

“One of the easiest leadership models to comprehend is social learning theory, modeling behaviors,” he said.

“Not only can (community service) involve myself and my family, but it can bring the college into play.”

Nicholas Neupauer

Age: 46

Address: Slippery Rock

Family: Wife, Tammy, and two daughters, Paige, 17, and Meredith, 15

Job: President, Butler County Community College

Company: BC3, 107 College Drive, Butler, PA 16002

Business: BC3 offers 63 associate degree, career, and transfer programs.

Employees: 223 full-time employees, 1,036 part-time, 16,000 alums and 3,301 students, full and part-time

Leadership Is:

“Leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation. (Followers) feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect toward the leader. They are motivated to do more than originally expected.”

Neupauer quoting Pulitzer Prize-winner author James MacGregor Burns.

Inspiration:

Jim Rankin, his high school football coach.

“He was able to get me and my teammates to do things we never thought of. Even at age 46, I still reflect on some of those principles: hard work, practice and commitment.”