

Butler Eagle

Grads head to next step

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Butler County Community College held commencement exercises Wednesday. About 500 students earned degrees and more than 200 took part in ceremonies at the Field House. A story on the BC3 Student of the Year is on Page 5. DAVE PRELOSKY/BUTLER EAGLE

BUTLER TWP — The Field House at Butler County Community College hummed with excitement Wednesday night.

Cheering came from family and friends as students walked across stage, and graduates celebrated with high fives, hugs and well wishes.

The college this year gave degrees to nearly 500 students with more than 200 of them walking at their graduation.

Commencement speakers used anecdotes from their own lives, from their time at BC3 or from their careers to show that graduating is simply the first step in achieving one's life goals.

“In any journey, the most critical step is getting started,” said Elizabeth Bolden, keynote speaker and CEO of the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges. “Some people never begin. Runners reflect that dead last is better than did not finish, which trumps did not start. You are to be congratulated for getting started. And, on finishing.”

Integrity, perseverance, and having a solid foundation, particularly at BC3, were among the many themes addressed for graduating students, friends and family.

“The foundation I received here at Butler Community College was the nuts and bolts ... throughout my career. It provided me a launching pad for every job that I received. It was essential to every position that I held,” said Andrew McDowell, the 2014 Distinguished Alum speaker, who graduated from the parks and recreation program in 1989.

“There's no doubt that there's a challenging job market today. Some of you may be concerned, but I'm here to tell you that you shouldn't be,” he said. “The foundation that you received here at this college will provide the launching pad that you need to take off.”

Tanner McCaw, an honors graduate student speaker, addressed stereotypes that come with attending community college, and how those assumptions couldn't be further from the truth.

“Some people say that attending community college is the easy way out. Or it's for people who couldn't get accepted into a four-year college,” he said.

“Well, I'm here to tell you that they're wrong. It's at a community college where you find students just like you, who not only go to school full time, but who also have one, sometimes two jobs. Or who have the responsibility of raising children. Or who even have the role of taking care of an elderly loved one. Any one of these situations is no easy task.”

McCaw said he will attend Slippery Rock University this fall to major in accounting.

Among this year's 498 graduates, 10 are veterans, 17 received two degrees, and they varied in age from 19 to 68.