

Butler Eagle

BC3 adds program to support industry

Students train for positions in gas field

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BUTLER TWP — **Butler County Community College** is working to train people who want to work in the Marcellus Shale natural gas industry.

Bill Lucas, energy adviser at BC3, said the college has a three-phase approach.

“It's a multifaceted approach,” Lucas, the retired president of Equitable Gas, said.

The first phase involves working to add gas industry classes and programs.

Classes for the new energy production technology program began in September.

The program offers an industry introduction course, a technical math course, a process control and instrumentation course, and an industrial management course.

Students taking the program can take all 24 credits and receive a certificate, but Lucas also said people can take one or two courses, not for credit, just to get more experience.

Lucas said each class has about eight to 10 students.

For programs like this, Lucas said there are some traditional students, but also students with



Instructor Chuck Kaczmarek of Renfrew instructs student Christopher Smith of Butler and other students at a natural gas roustabout class at Butler County Community College. Participants learned safety, gas meters, hand tools and pipe fitting during the three week course. The classes began over a year ago. BC3 is working on new programs related to the development of natural gas.

bachelor's degrees looking for more experience, and students who are unemployed or underemployed and are looking for a new career.

“It's our view that the face of the traditional student ... may change,” Lucas said.

Within one to three years, BC3 would like to see the program lead to an associate degree. “We've talked about that,” Lucas said.

A year ago, with a federal Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant, BC3 began adding roustabout training, a welder's helper course and an OSHA class, in response to the need for gas industry jobs.

Lucas said about 85 percent of the people who have taken roustabout training and had planned on going into the gas industry have found jobs. He said the first phase of BC3's plan is finished, for the most part, though it will change as needed.

A second phase includes the renovation of some labs in the science and technology building so they are more applicable to the gas industry. So far, Lucas said about \$150,000 has been spent modifying labs.

He said BC3 hopes to have this finished by the end of 2015.

The third phase would involve adding gas industry training facilities at the college's public safety and training center. These would include areas for backhoe training and leak simulation training.

He said the second and third phases should cost about \$2.5 million to \$3 million, and would be paid for with support from the gas industry.

Lucas said the state Public Utility Commission has endorsed the plan and several companies have expressed some interest in using the college as a regional training center.

Even later, Lucas said he would like to see a mock well site built on campus for training.

Lucas said BC3 is unique because it's campus has room to grow, and it is near highways with lodging and food nearby. He said this could lead gas companies to come to the campus for training.

He said XTO Energy already has established a partnership with BC3, and has taken students to visit one of its plants in Penn Township.

He said the college is not doing any “front line” research on new extraction methods or new ways of using gas.

Lucas hopes that companies in the gas industry become more comfortable in working with BC3 and bring research projects to the college.