

Butler Eagle

2 BC3 graduates will earn 3 degrees

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BUTLER TWP — Two Butler County Community College students turning their tassels this week will have earned a half dozen degrees combined.

Jessica Lauer, 30, will have associate degrees in business administration, business management and human resource management; and Zach Staebler, 19, will have degrees in chemistry, math and engineering.

Both soon-to-be BC3 alums are transferring to four-year schools to continue their studies, and each has been on unique educational paths.

Lauer took her first class at BC3 in 2006. Since then, she's changed her studies from elementary education, to pre-nursing and then to business.

She also enlisted in the Army and had her now 5-year-old daughter, Ava. She was deployed to Kuwait for most of 2013, and is still actively involved in the Army Reserves. She also has worked at Concordia Lutheran Ministries as a certified nursing assistant for 10 years, but was promoted this month to a manager-in-training in the human resources department.

"I'd like to one day be an administrator of a facility, and Concordia's growing," Lauer said.

"I want to be the boss," she said with a chuckle. "I want to be in the know, I want to be making decisions.

"I've worked at the bottom for so long. ... I've just seen people work so hard at the bottom, and I'd like to work my way up, and hopefully, make changes that can improve what happens at the bottom."

On campus, she was involved with BC3's Veterans Club. She recently completed an internship in BC3's human resources department, and her daughter just graduated from the college's Children's Creative Learning Center.

"She did an awesome job here," said Linda Dodd, executive director of human resources at BC3.

"When she does something, she puts her mind to it."

While Lauer said her intent originally wasn't to receive three degrees, she earned 137 credits from BC3 over the years. Typically, 120 credits are required to graduate from a four-year school. "The more titles I can put after my name, perfect. I'll take it. It's more I can put on my resume, too," Lauer said.

Lauer is taking advantage of one of BC3's degree completion programs. She'll be taking Franklin University classes on BC3's campus to study business administration with a focus in health care management. She's set to graduate with her bachelor's in December of next year.

Meanwhile, Staebler, a California native, moved to the area two years ago and enrolled at BC3 around the time his mother relocated here. His original intent was to go to Penn State University, but \$40,000 in yearly out-of-state costs motivated him to look elsewhere.

Of BC3, he said, "It's low cost, and the classes are pretty good for the amount you pay for. And all of the classes I did take here were really good. A lot of people suggested it to me, too. Plus they have a lot of transfer options."

He'll attend Youngstown State University in the fall to study chemical engineering. He decided to study three subject areas — math, chemistry and engineering — because it will give him a more solid foundation of what he'd like to pursue in the future. Also, many of the classes overlap.

"They kind of intertwine a little bit, but one focuses more on the practical aspects, and the other focuses more on the theoretical aspects. I like both," he said.

During his two years on campus, Staebler did work study with the school's Fab Lab, short for digital fabrication, working with 3D printers and other digital engineering instruments. He's also had a paid internship with Butler Technologies, and works at McDonald's on the weekends.

So with three degrees, he has three jobs to match. All of those jobs paid for his tuition, he said. Mike Aikens, a professor of engineering technology and Staebler's work-study supervisor, said, "He has really blossomed and grown as a student and as a young man.

"I know he's going to do really well. What's really nice is he has helped us get started with the Fab Lab. He has a little legacy here.

"I'm really going to miss him."

Staebler is motivated in his academic pursuits, too. He someday hopes to earn a doctoral degree in industrial chemistry or chemistry.

"This is a personal goal. So it's more for myself. And I like being educated," Staebler said.

"The more I know, the better I feel in general. And plus, if you know more when you're applying at the engineering aspects, you can make better designs.

"So, then again, I'd also like to go into research because engineers also go through research and development. So nuclear engineering also does that."