

# Award recipients praise BC3 for “strong foundation,” promising futures

April 9, 2018



MaryAnn Steinmiller, of Butler, a history major at Butler County Community College, is shown with her mother, Lisa Steinmiller, on April 9, 2018, in Harrisburg, where MaryAnn was honored for being chosen to the 2018 All-Pennsylvania Academic Transfer Team.

(Harrisburg, PA) While history major MaryAnn Steinmiller is fascinated by the past, she is savoring the present and, like Chris Slay and Alyssa Nusser, embracing a future shaped by a decision to attend Butler County Community College.

“We are living in history at this moment,” Steinmiller says from the Lancaster/Gettysburg/Carlisle banquet room within the Harrisburg Hilton, where she, Slay and 44 other students statewide are about to be honored as selections to the 2018 All-Pennsylvania Academic Transfer Team.

White tee lights bobbing atop the waters within 16-inch transparent vessels at 27 tables are the focal point of guests seated at the All-Pennsylvania Academic Transfer Team awards banquet. But the crowd of 270 will soon turn its attention to the 46 students who have earned a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.5 while completing at least 36 credits at one of the state's 14 community colleges.



“Don’t take the moment for granted,” Steinmiller says, “because someday someone could be studying it.”

Erin Slay, of Butler, is shown with her husband, Chris, a social work major at Butler County Community College, on April 9, 2018, in Harrisburg, where Chris was honored for being chosen to the 2018 All-Pennsylvania Academic Transfer Team.

As selections, their continued studies will be funded by two-year full-tuition scholarships at any institution within the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

“I am super proud of her,” Lisa Steinmiller says of her daughter. “She has had a dream to study history and had her plan of going to BC3. And then to Slippery Rock (University of Pennsylvania). And through this award, she can do it.”

## History major credits inspiring instructor

Slay says his selection, and the banquet, are “completely surreal. If you would have asked me a year ago if I would be here, I would not have believed it, the idea of earning a scholarship and being among so many distinguished people. There is a part of me that feels like I don’t belong. And there is a part of me that feels right at home.”

Erin Slay’s 36-year-old husband and the father of their three children ages 3 to 5 “was willing to give up his career,” she says, “and let me work full time while he has been watching the children during the day and going to school full time and online.

“I am really proud of all the effort he has put into this.”

Nusser is among eight students statewide selected to the 2018 All-Pennsylvania Workforce Pathways Team, whose members must have completed at least 12 credits at a Pennsylvania community college, have earned a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.5 and plan to enter the workforce after earning a certificate or associate degree.

To be eligible for the All-Academic Transfer and Workforce Pathways teams, students must also be members of Phi Theta Kappa, a prestigious international academic honor society with 3.2

million members in nine nations. They must also author an essay describing the most significant endeavor they have undertaken since enrolling in a community college, and describe how they applied academic or intellectual skills gained from their education to benefit their community college, community or society.

Steinmiller wrote about her creation of BC3's first history club; Slay, about a transcendental moment in a sugar cane village in the Dominican Republic; and Nusser, about learning in Atlanta what she calls a ground-breaking, newly patented hair-cutting system and at 18 years old becoming the youngest certified cosmetologist in the United States to have passed its course-ending test.



Alyssa Nusser, of Cranberry Township, a technical trades-cosmetology management option major at Butler County Community College, is shown on April 10, 2018, in Harrisburg. She was honored for being chosen to the 2018 All-Pennsylvania Workforce Pathways Team.

Steinmiller, of Butler, attended Knoch High; Slay, of Butler, attended South Kitsap Senior High in Port Orchard, Wash.; and Nusser, of Cranberry Township, attended Seneca Valley High. They were among the 578 students who in May were members of BC3's 50th anniversary commencement class.

Steinmiller, like Slay, plans to apply the All-Pennsylvania Academic Transfer Team scholarship to Slippery Rock University, where she will pursue bachelor's degrees in history and anthropology and he, in social work.

## Expectations at BC3 "exceeded" in every way

Steinmiller received 30 students' signatures as part of the process to create a BC3 history club, of which she became president over a membership that met bimonthly and organized volunteers to clean Cooper Cabin, near Cabot, one of the first Pioneer homesteads in Butler County.

Slay, a social work major at BC3, wrote about a childhood of relative poverty, how he thought he "knew about the ugly side of life," and a February 2017 trip to the Dominican Republic that changed his perspective.

"I was excited at the prospect of seeing another culture and going to a poor country to 'help' people," he wrote in his significant endeavor essay.

He found himself practicing his rudimentary Spanish with locals and “vividly” recalls standing in the middle of a sugar cane village – “the most dire poverty I have ever seen with my own eyes.”

Its residents lived in huts, without electricity, running water, and with “garbage everywhere,” he wrote, “and yet there was a peace about this place that I could not describe. Before the trip I was proud of myself for going to another country to ‘help’ people who were worse off than me. But in this moment I felt inferior.

“These were the most content people I have ever seen in my life. In my arrogance, I was reduced to a pile of tears. They had figured something out that I could never see until that moment. I thought wealth and security equaled happiness and contentment. It was in that moment where I learned that peace has little to do with circumstance, and everything to do with how you choose to view life.”

“If it had not been for my education, and the attempt to broaden my horizons, I think I would still be blind to my own ignorance.”

His experience at BC3, Slay says, has also been eye-opening.

“When I started at BC3, I did not realize the magnitude of, first of all, how great the education would be,” he says. “I just kind of thought that I would go to school and I would take some classes and like some, and not like others. The one thing that blew me away is the fact that all of the instructors that I have met, all of the students I have met, have completely exceeded my expectations in every way possible.

“If I did not have an affordable educational facility 10 minutes from my house, I would probably be a senior citizen without a college degree.”

Steinmiller said she is going to miss her instructors, who “really helped me find my passion of learning, and really helped me to come out of my shell.”

Instructor Deborah Kruger, Steinmiller says, “really took me under her wing and she saw that I had something for history. And so she said, ‘Attend this convention. Borrow this book.’ She really got after me to follow my passion and gave me that extra push.”

## “Attending BC3 has opened my eyes”

Nusser followed the footsteps of her mother, brother, sister and aunt to BC3 and hopes to one day stand aside clients as a full-time hair stylist, a career path sparked by a ninth-grade visit to Butler County Area Vocational-Technical School.

“The cosmetology program caught my eye,” she says, “and I loved it.”

She says she also loves “making people feel more confident and beautiful in their own skin.”

That includes Girl Scouts in Troop 20074, Cranberry Township, to whose members she gave a presentation on how to take care of their hair and face, how to use makeup and style their hair; and attending a five-day “Head Shape Matters” course in Atlanta.

“I knew this was going to be an investment toward a career I would soon start,” Nusser wrote in her significant endeavor essay. “Even though I don’t have years of experience cutting hair, the newly patented system went against everything I was taught about hair cutting in beauty school, and that was mind-blowing.”

She learned a scientific method of hair cutting that is tailored to each individual head shape to ensure balance, Nusser wrote.

“By using this new method, it will benefit people when getting their hair cut,” Nusser wrote. “Not everyone’s head has the same shape, so every haircut needs to be cut at different angles to achieve the shape desired.”

She, like Steinmiller and Slay, is also embracing a future shaped by a decision to attend BC3.

“What I enjoyed most about BC3 is the friendliness of all the professors,” Nusser says, adding that her education benefited from the convenience of taking most of her classes at BC3 @ Cranberry in Cranberry Township, and her ability to graduate debt-free.

“Attending BC3 has opened my eyes to departments of a salon that I wouldn’t have known about,” Nusser says, “and makes my education stand on a strong foundation that I can build on.”