

# BC3's role "crucial" in pact between Seneca Valley High, Point Park University

Expansion of College Within the High School program to aid students, BC3 dean says

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Seneca Valley High School students are shown May 24, 2018, in BC3's College Within the High School introduction to philosophy class taught by Rebekah Grinnen.

(Harmony, PA) Butler County Community College's expansion of its College Within the High School program at Seneca Valley High School enables juniors and seniors to select from 10 additional courses and earn transferable credits that cost less than those from 41 other colleges and universities in western Pennsylvania, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

BC3 courses in college algebra, college writing, elementary statistics and principles of sociology are among those that in fall 2018 will join an existing introduction to philosophy class, one that

debuted in fall 2017 and one that Seneca Valley student Katherine Schrett said will greatly benefit her future as a policymaker.

“Philosophy has a lot of ties into politics,” said Schrett, a student in instructor Rebekah Grinnen’s College Within the High School class. “Philosophy is focused on thinking. And that will allow you to think more deeply about the world around you, and once you have a better understanding of the world around you, I feel like you can go into politics and do a lot better there.”

BC3 announced the additional courses available to Seneca Valley students as part of a three-way collaboration that includes Point Park University, Pittsburgh. An articulation agreement allows BC3’s College Within the High School courses to transfer to Point Park, and opens additional opportunities for those enrolled in the 1,000-student Seneca Valley Academy of Choice – the district’s cyber and arts program for those in grades seven to 12.

Fifty-five of those students attend the 10-year-old academy full time, Principal Denise Manganello said, with some enrolled in its ballet, tap, modern and jazz dance programs in the afternoons. Dance students who take BC3 courses and elect to attend Point Park are guaranteed an audition for one of 25 incoming spots in the university’s famed Conservatory of Performing Arts, according to Jonas Prida.

“Seneca Valley is a hub for regional dance,” said Prida, Point Park’s assistant provost. “And Point Park has a nationally renowned dance program. We were looking for some way to get dancers from Seneca Valley into Point Park with credits.”

## “BC3 helped make it possible”

Point Park ranked No. 8 among the Top 10 most represented colleges on Broadway in the 2017-2018 season, according to Playbill.com in August 2017. OnStage also ranked Point Park as No. 3 in a Top 10 list of bachelor of fine arts dance programs in the United States for 2016-2017. BC3 has been ranked the No. 1 community college in Pennsylvania in two consecutive surveys by Schools.com.

“BC3 helped make it possible because they had the crucial ingredient, which was access to Seneca Valley,” Prida said. “Point Park had no previous relationship with Seneca Valley. It would not have been possible without BC3. They were crucial.”

“Their role,” Manganello said of BC3, “was pretty much the leader.”

BC3 responded to a great opportunity to satisfy the needs of Seneca Valley and of Point Park, said Dr. Christian Ola, who with Robert Morris, BC3’s former BC3 dean of admissions, helped to create the agreement.

“It is our hope that Point Park and Seneca Valley will find BC3 to be a key partner in helping them reach students with an interest in not only the dance academy, but other great Point Park programs,” said Ola, BC3’s dean of business.

## Dean: BC3’s tuition represents significant savings

Seneca Valley students can also transfer credits from BC3’s College Within the High School courses to Point Park programs such as sports, arts and entertainment management; creative writing, photojournalism or its 100-percent online human resources management program, Ola said.

“Seneca Valley students enrolled in these courses pay BC3’s tuition, which is a significant savings for them and also gets them ahead before they even enter Point Park or another college,” Ola said. “It really is a win-win-win for Point Park, Seneca Valley and the students.”

Schrett’s classmates in BC3’s College Within the High School introduction to philosophy course agree.

“BC3’s credits will make college less-expensive,” Sydni Roller said, “and I can get ahead in my coursework.”

“It’s less-expensive,” Sarah Messick said, “and helps with the cost.”

“I won’t have to pay as much when I go to college,” Walter Scherer said.

BC3’s College Within the High School program is “more affordable,” Zack Kutchma said. “It allows me to get ahead and reduce my future workload.”

## Confidence grows through BC3 program

Saving costs is definitely a bonus, Manganello said, “but I think the confidence of taking a College Within the High School course is huge because they are then walking into college with credits.”

BC3’s credits transfer to public, private and online institutions. Its College Within the High School program will also offer courses to Seneca Valley students in computer information systems, general psychology, principles of economics, speech, trigonometry and functions, and world geography.

“Those are awesome for the other students,” said Messick, who graduated in May. “I hope they take up those opportunities.”

Approximately 435 students in 24 high schools in seven counties capitalized on BC3's College Within the High School program in the spring of 2018, according to Erin Cioffi, BC3's assistant director of high school programming.

They also gained academic confidence in completing college-level courses while in a high school setting, Manganello said.

“That is the piece that I think is instrumental to their success,” Manganello said. “Some of the students who might not have tried college will take one of these courses at a reduced rate and see that they can succeed. For so many kids that anxiety and that college fear is there, but if they take it in an environment in which they already feel safe, then they can see that they are strong enough to be a college student.”