

8 BC3 staffers gain leadership skills, defend Presidents' Cup

Dec. 10, 2018



Members of Butler County Community College's 2018 Western Pennsylvania Community College Leadership Institute cohort are shown with BC3 President Dr. Nick Neupauer after winning the Presidents' Cup on Monday, Dec. 10, 2018, at Treesdale Golf and Country Club in Gibsonia. From left, Ivory Dunlap, Mikayla Moretti, Neupauer, Jennifer Loue, Rich Benko, Annie Lindsay, Scott Richardson and Dr. Nichol Zaginaylo. Missing from photo, Bill Foley.

(Gibsonia, PA) Eight Butler County Community College employees graduated from the biennial Western Pennsylvania Community College Leadership Institute with what they say is invaluable insight into higher education, a plan to help BC3 students and the community – and with the college's second Presidents' Cup in a row.

Rich Benko, Ivory Dunlap, Bill Foley, Annie Lindsay, Jennifer Loue, Mikayla Moretti, Scott Richardson and Dr. Nichol Zaginaylo represented BC3 in the 10-month professional development collaboration among BC3, the Community College of Beaver County and Westmoreland County Community College.

The institute incorporates American Association of Community Colleges leadership competencies in organizational strategy; institutional finance, research, fundraising and resource management; communication; collaboration; and community college advocacy. The program intended to create the next generation of community college leaders includes themed sessions held at one of the participating community colleges or their related sites, and culminates with capstone project of a final paper and presentation with the Presidents' Cup in the balance.

“Participating in the institute not only provided me with an overarching understanding of leadership in the community college setting,” said Loue, BC3’s coordinator of access and disability services, “but also with practical ideas to bring back to my new position.

Each session provided Loue with an opportunity to “think about how I would apply what I was learning in the session to my new role,” she said. “The institute also afforded me the opportunity to develop new working relationships with my fellow BC3 cohort members as well as those from CCBC and Westmoreland.”

Zaginaylo, BC3’s associate dean of humanities and social sciences, said the institute allowed her to “truly develop my leadership skills, especially since I am new to a leadership role at BC3. I benefited from hearing multiple perspectives from presidents and staff from three different community colleges.”

Added Lindsay, BC3’s PECT and Praxis coordinator: “It was so introspective. I was able to understand my own personal strengths and weaknesses and realize it is OK for other people to come from different viewpoints because those different viewpoints are what make us stronger.”

“It was a crash course on all aspects”

Their sentiments confirmed the institute is achieving its goals, said Dr. Nick Neupauer, BC3’s president.

“To hear colleagues say that really validates the model, the curriculum, the speakers, the capstone project and the unique collaboration among the three institutions,” he said.

Moretti’s first institute session, at the Regional Learning Alliance in Cranberry Township in March, came only four months after she was named BC3’s director of special events and grants. Sessions elsewhere would follow through November.

“It was a crash course on all aspects,” Moretti said. “I’m still no expert, but I was able to learn things that I most likely would not have gotten the opportunity to learn otherwise. I also benefited from getting to know more people from BC3. Being able to learn about their specific roles made it become clear why we were put together as a group. Everyone had a different area of expertise and were able contribute that to our capstone ideas.”

Capstone projects were to “demonstrate participants’ mastery of skills acquired from sessions and participants’ comprehensive understanding of AACCC competencies,” according to its guidelines. The projects had to be “consistent with participants’ professional interests, align with their respective college’s strategic goals and yield a product, plan, initiative, event or process improvement that advances the college’s goals.”

“Achieving that common goal”

BC3's capstone project, titled "Addressing Food Insecurity through Agricultural Initiatives," included the establishment of a food pantry on BC3's main campus and the creation of a community garden to address results of a 2018 Wisconsin HOPE Lab study that revealed 50 percent of BC3 students experienced at least one form of basic needs insecurity in the past year, and that 38 percent had low or very low food security.

"The opportunities that surround these two interconnected concepts is endless," Loue said. "Food, and in particular, nutrient-dense foods, are vital in any person's continued development. We have an obligation to our students and the communities we serve to ensure that we are not just 'giving a man a fish.' We are teaching him how to fish."

A food pantry could be located in a BC3 classroom building and the community garden, on a 3-acre tract of land in the southeast corner of the college's main campus, according to the cohort's presentation.

"Not only will this help to solve the issue of food insecurity, but I also think it will bring the community together," Lindsay said. "When you work the land and build this garden together, it is achieving that common goal."

Benefits to the project, Moretti said, "are endless.

"It provides students with resources that may make their lives easier," she said. "When completing a degree, you often don't think that one of the barriers will be having food. But after doing the research, we found this is a problem that affects a larger majority of people in our county than I would have expected.

"A very important aspect of our project is giving students a resource to help them and to do so in a way that doesn't make them feel ashamed. Also, the opportunity to feel the accomplishment of possibly growing or making their own, nutritional foods will do great things for a student's confidence."

A "divide-and-conquer approach"

In addition to a food pantry and community garden, the BC3 cohort proposed inviting local farms to donate overages to be distributed in the food pantry and establishing an Entrepreneurship Academy cohort that merges business, agriculture and social awareness.

As part of the capstone project, cohorts submitted a needs analysis and literature review, and worked on their final report – and a presentation that would be given before a crowd of approximately 70 that included alumni from the 2016 Western Pennsylvania Community College Leadership Institute and members of their respective college's Cabinets.

"We used a divide-and-conquer approach, in which we worked as a team to develop a plan to gather research," Zaginaylo said. "We then divided the research gathering evenly among the

group, according to each person's strengths and interests. After analyzing the data as a group, we worked on a plan to share the data – through both a formal research paper and interactive and engaging presentation.”

BC3's presentation was styled as a television talk-show format, with video presentations and live interviews – and was awarded the Presidents' Cup by judges Brian Hayden, CEO of the Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School; Jeff Prokovich, vice president of advancement, Grove City College; and Dr. Jim Ice, executive director and dean of the College of Professional Studies at Carlow University.

“I got a huge smile after the announcement,” Zaginaylo said.

“I heard Nichol say ‘Yes!’ and looked back to her and realized that we had won, and it felt like an instant relief,” Moretti said.

“There were lots of hugs given all around,” Loue said.

Added Lindsay: “I was not only excited that we won, I was excited before the announcement was made because BC3 had this amazing idea.”

That amazing idea may be reflected in the 10-pound, gold-plated Presidents' Cup that each member of the cohort will own for one week in 2019 – and possibly in BC3's master plan.

“What I like about the Presidents' Cup competition is that it is pursued in concert with the president, a vision, a strategic plan and a master plan,” Neupauer said. “So it was important going into both of our capstone projects that it be something that could be used, not just something that would sit on a shelf.”

Benko is BC3's interim bookstore manager; Dunlap, an academic counselor, retention specialist and assistant professor; Foley, coordinator of news and media content; and Richardson, director of campus police and security.

“The presentation exceeded expectations,” Neupauer said. “In comparison with the first year's cohort, I thought the other two institutions really raised their game. I knew in order for us to claim back-to-back Presidents' Cups that it would need to be a great presentation. And my colleagues did not let me down as president nor did they let the college down. It was just fantastic.”

As were members of the Presidents' Cup-winning 2016 BC3 team, who developed a plan for a health clinic on BC3's main campus, an idea reflected in the master plan for the proposed Victor K. Phillips Nursing and Allied Health Building, Neupauer said.

Sean Carroll, Karen Jack, Michelle Jamieson, Stephanie Long, Jessica Matonak, Matt Miller, Erika Nail and Renee Piovesan represented the 2016 BC3 team.

Carroll is director of BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing in New Castle; Jack, KEYS Project director; Jamieson, associate director of the BC3 Education Foundation; Long, adjunct instructor; Matonak, executive director of communications and marketing; Miller, interim director of information technology; Nail, assistant professor; and Piovesan, vice president for academic affairs secretary.