

Class of 2018, with 578 graduates, BC3's second-largest of century

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Left photo: Jason and Nicole Nagle, who met at Butler County Community College and were married in July, will graduate from BC3 on May 16. Jason will earn an associate degree in electronics technology, a workplace certificate in basic manufacturing, and a certificate in technical trades-applied technology. Nicole will earn an associate degree in business management and a certificate in business skills. Center photo: Autumn Gressly, left, of Saxonburg, will earn an associate degree in registered nursing and her daughter, Alexis, in criminology. Right photo: Jodi Grazier, of New Castle, a technical sergeant in the Air Force Reserve, will receive a degree in registered nursing, then be deployed out of country.

(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College's Class of 2018 will be its second-largest of the century with 578 students, and feature its most senior graduate ever; a newlywed couple; mothers who, with their children, will receive associate degrees; 128 members of an international academic honor society, and a four-year high of 28 student-veterans, one of whom is about to be deployed.

BC3's 2018 commencement exercises – during which graduates of its first class, the Class of 1968, will be recognized for their 50th anniversary – will be held in the Field House on BC3's main campus in Butler Township at 7 p.m. May 16.

Dr. Brian White, superintendent of the Butler Area School District since September and a native of McCandless, will deliver his first commencement address to a college audience.



Dr. Brian White will be the keynote speaker at BC3's commencement.

“The possibilities,” he said, “are open to them because they chose to further their education. There are incredible opportunities for them in the region and nationwide.”

William “Don” Thomas, 80, of Saxonburg, will be the most senior student to graduate from BC3 when he receives an associate of arts degree in history.



William “Don” Thomas, left, will be BC3’s most senior graduate ever. Krista Stroup, right, will receive an associate degree and two certificates.

Two to earn three in Field House

Jason Nagle, of Zelienople, is one of two students who will earn an associate degree and two certificates. Nagle will receive an associate of applied science degree in electronics technology, a workplace certificate in basic manufacturing, and a certificate in technical trades-applied technology. Krista Stroup, of Chicora, will earn an associate of applied science degree in office administration-medical; a certificate in medical coding and billing specialist, and a workplace certificate in Microsoft Office specialist.

Nagle’s wife of 10 months, Nicole, whom he met on BC3’s main campus, will earn an associate of applied science degree in business management and a certificate in business skills.

Also among those to graduate from Pennsylvania’s No. 1 community college in back-to-back Schools.com rankings are Alexis Gressly and her mother, Autumn Gressly, of Saxonburg. Alexis will earn an associate of arts degree in criminology and Autumn, an associate of applied science degree in a BC3 registered nursing program that in 2017 reported a 96 percent success rate of its graduates on the National Council Licensure Examination, which exceeds the state average of 84 percent.



Wendy Fischer, left, will receive a degree in registered nursing. Her son, Joshua, right, will receive a degree in biological science.

The Gresslys will be joined by mother and son Wendy Fischer and Joshua Fischer, of Freeport, who will receive an associate degree in registered nursing and in biological science, respectively.

Presidential Scholars Program nets first two graduates

BC3’s chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, Rho Phi – which has reached the ultimate five-star status in the 3.2 million-member international academic honor society – will be represented by 128 graduates wearing golden stoles atop their blue gowns.

Among Rho Phi members earning degrees will be Jen Kriess, of Butler, a recipient of the President's Scholarship and one of the first two graduates of BC3's Presidential Scholars Program. The full-tuition President's Scholarship is presented to students in the Top 10 percent of their graduating class at any of Butler County's eight public high schools – Butler, Freeport, Karns City, Knoch, Mars, Moniteau, Seneca Valley or Slippery Rock – and who enroll at BC3 the following semester. A cyber school student counted in those public schools' graduating classes is also eligible.



Jen Kriess, left, and Seth Queen are the first two graduates of BC3's Presidential Scholars Program.

Kriess will obtain an associate of science degree in business administration. Seth Queen, also of Butler and a student in the Presidential Scholars Program, will earn an associate of science degree in engineering.

Seven students, at Slippery Rock and Clarion universities of Pennsylvania, will receive from BC3 eight reverse-transfer degrees, an opportunity created in 2016 as part of an agreement among Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges and 14 Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education institutions.

Elizabeth Jane Wigton, of Butler, will receive two associate degrees from BC3 under the pact that allows university students who have earned at least 45 community college credits to apply for an associate degree from their alma mater.



Elizabeth Jane Wigton will receive two reverse-transfer degrees from BC3.

Wigton attended BC3 from 2013 to 2016 and will receive a bachelor of science degree in developmental psychology from Slippery Rock this spring. The intern in BC3's records and registration department will earn reverse-transfer associate of arts degrees from BC3 in psychology and in general studies.

A student must have enrolled at a PASSHE university within five years of leaving the community college and have earned at least 15 additional credits at a state system institution to be considered for the program.

13 precision manufacturer workers to receive certificates

Following Jason Nagle and Stroup will be 31 students who will receive either two degrees, two certificates or one of each.

General studies, with 71, is the most prevalent associate degree to be awarded to members of BC3's Class of 2018; business administration is second with 65; registered nursing, third, with 47; business management, fourth, with 44; and psychology fifth, with 43.

BC3's credits transfer to public, private and online institutions, and 75 percent of recent BC3 graduates are debt-free. In all, 557 associate degrees and 80 certificates will be awarded by BC3,

which has the highest salary-to-cost ratio among 42 regional universities and colleges, according to the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard.

Seventeen students will receive a certificate in medical coding specialist; 14 in medical assistant; and 13 in CNC programming. Thirteen employees of Oberg Industries, a precision manufacturer in Freeport, will receive apprenticeship technology workplace certificates as a result of a program instructed onsite by BC3.

BC3's 26-credit apprenticeship technology workplace certificate program, launched in fall 2016, is taught entirely at Oberg Industries, which is facing the retirement of 80 of its 650 local employees – machinists, grinders and CNC operators – within 15 years.

After earning R.N. degree, New Castle woman to be deployed

BC3, which for five consecutive years has been chosen as a Military Friendly institution by Victory Media, will graduate 28 student-veterans, including Air Force Reserve Tech Sgt. Jodi Grazier, 33, of New Castle, who will receive a degree in registered nursing and who this summer will be deployed out of country.

Loretta Maelynn Dawson, 19, of Sharon, will be the Class of 2018's youngest graduate at 19 years, eight months and 27 days. She will receive an associate of arts degree in psychology.

BC3 will also graduate Brittney Bianco, of Freeport, a setter on BC3's volleyball team, who in December was selected as BC3's 25th National Junior College Athletic Association All-American. Bianco finished her career at BC3 as No. 2 on the all-time assist list with 1,254 and will earn associate of arts degrees in criminology and in psychology.

BC3's Class of 2017, with 585 members – seven more than those in the Class of 2018 – was its largest since 2000.

BC3 President Dr. Nick Neupauer will welcome Class of 1968 members during a reception scheduled for 5:45 p.m. May 16 in the Alumni Quiet Room of the Heaton Family Learning Commons. Neupauer will also recognize BC3's first class during commencement.



Loretta Maelynn Dawson, left, will be BC3's youngest graduate in the Class of 2018. Brittney Bianco, right, will graduate as BC3's 25th NJCAA All-American.