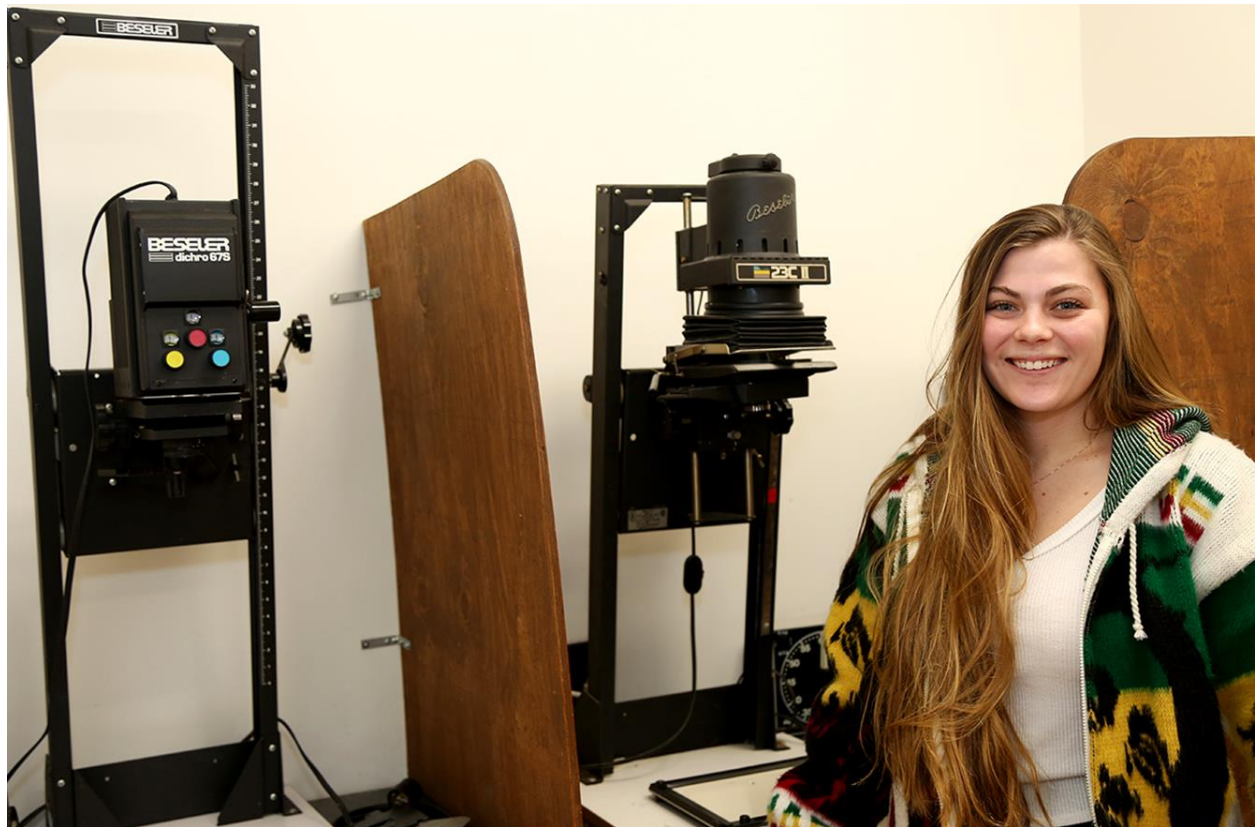


Grad credits BC3 @ Cranberry education for skills in creating popular studio

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Macey Wright, of Mars, is shown Feb. 28, 2020, in a photography studio at BC3 @ Cranberry in Cranberry Township. The 19-year-old, who began experimenting with her mother's camera five years ago and started her own business in 2019, will graduate debt-free this month from BC3 @ Cranberry with an associate degree in photography.

(Mars, PA) Butler County Community College's Class of 2020 will eclipse 560 graduates for a fourth consecutive year, and features a 61-year-old disabled veteran, an entrepreneurial 17-year-old, justice- and beauty-minded aspirants with two associate degrees and one certificate, and a woman who four years after experimenting with her mother's camera applied skills she learned at BC3 @ Cranberry to establish a business.

BC3's Class of 2020 includes 563 graduates, 518 of whom will receive associate degrees in career or transfer programs, and 71 of whom will receive certificates or workplace certificates that take one year or less to complete.

Earning the first of what she expects to be two associate degrees in career programs is Macey Wright, 19, who ascribes the popularity of her self-named home photography studio in Mars to talents she's gained through learning editing software and honing equipment skills at BC3 @ Cranberry, and to the faculty's preparation of students to enter the workforce.

"There are certain things I would not know if I did not have the BC3 education," said Wright, who began taking portraits as a 14-year-old of her friends, and of siblings Abbi, Jake, Alli, Noah, Mitchell, Eli and Evan by using her mother Julie's digital camera. Instructors "prepare you for every possible scenario in the professional world."

"Business is going really well"

Wright will be among the 70 percent of BC3 graduates who are debt-free when she receives an associate degree this month in photography, a 65-credit career program offered at BC3 @ Cranberry. She intends to earn a second associate degree, in the 66-credit graphic design career program, from BC3 @ Cranberry in May 2021.

Students in BC3's career programs can develop skills to enter the workforce immediately upon graduation.

Wright did it before graduation.

She has been hired by individuals to take portrait photographs for formal occasions such as proms and weddings, and by school districts to take action photographs in sports such as football and basketball.

"Business is going really well," Wright said of her year-old studio. "I wasn't expecting to get so much business, and with being a full-time student, I definitely was overwhelmed a bit."

But not by facing a student loan.

"Money has always been an emotional factor for me," Wright said. "I am trying to make my future as stress-free as I can possibly make it. Trying to plan ahead financially is important to me. It always has been. I want to save for my business."

Wright has three times made BC3's president's list, an honor for students who attain a grade-point average of 3.75 or higher, and said she excelled as a result of BC3's 15:1 student-to-faculty ratio.

"I really thrive in those small classes," Wright said. "That was also a big factor for me (in choosing BC3). I thought that it was the best route for me, and being right in our community is so much better for me than being in a big university. It is the best possible decision I could have made."

Among 31 student-veterans, BC3's most senior graduate in 2020

Kathleen Cashaw, 61, of Butler, a disabled veteran, is the college's most-senior graduate in the Class of 2020, with an associate degree in BC3's medical assistant career program. She is also one of 31 student-veterans in BC3's Class of 2020.

Saylee Grinnen, 17, of Wampum, is the youngest.

Grinnen is among nine students in the 2-year-old Riv-Ell Entrepreneurship Program for Lincoln and Riverside high schools. The program, a collaborative effort among BC3, the Community College of Beaver County and the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce, blends classroom learning with real-world experience. Students who complete the program earn 16 tuition-free, transferable credits and a BC3 workplace certificate in entrepreneurship.

Students from Valencia and Kittanning earned two associate degrees and one certificate. Victoria Berzonski achieved degrees in criminology and in emergency services-police services option, and a certificate in emergency services-corrections option. Sara Peters earned degrees in business management and technical trades-cosmetology management option, and a workplace certificate in entrepreneurship.

BC3 will also graduate its second class of presidential scholars; 126 members of its Rho Phi chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, an international academic honor society; and 16 members of Delta Theta, its chapter of Kappa Beta Delta, an international honor society for business students.

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. Courses in the college's 26-credit apprenticeship technology workplace certificate program, launched in fall 2016, are taught entirely at Oberg Industries.

BC3 @ Cranberry offers four career programs and six transfer programs.