

HERMITAGE

BC3 expands campus at LindenPointe

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By Joy Leiker, *Herald Staff Writer*

Butler County Community College unveiled its newest Pennsylvania campus Thursday night, days before 330 students move into the new classrooms and labs at LindenPointe for the spring semester. The end of construction marks the quadrupling of space for the local BC3 campus, and Thursday night school officials were excited to show off the new digs.

Now with eight classrooms, two computer labs and a science lab, the study spaces are among the bright spots of the new building. But for students like Yusra Alhadi, who is about to start her fifth semester at the Hermitage college campus, the highlight is something more unusual — lounge space. Ms. Alhadi, born in America and of Yemeni descent, is working toward her associate degree in psychology. Well known by administrators and teachers alike, Ms. Alhadi said she was frank when asked what students needed most. “We need couches,” she said.

While other students retreat to their cars or run errands when they have breaks between classes, Ms. Alhadi said she’s stuck on the campus located in the technical business park. On Thursday, as she gave others tours of the building, the building was bright with light shining from the large windows, visitors filled many of the chairs and couches she was so excited about.

For Bill O’Brien, vice president of continuing education and the college’s off-campus sites, it’s the growth in Mercer County that’s the most striking of all. The school came to the county in 1997 with classrooms in the Mercer County Career Center and Mercer High School. “Everybody told us we had to go to the Shenango Valley,” O’Brien said.

BC3 eventually moved to 4,000 square feet in the technical park, then last year took over another 4,000 square feet. But students, and eventually staff, filled every corner. And even now, with 20,000 square feet of space, O’Brien said the college has its eye on its next expansion — 4 acres next door.

The space was impressive to current students and potential students alike. Bonnie Kochis of Greenville will start her second semester Tuesday. A business management student, Ms. Kochis said she came to see the new computer lab. “I’m taking intro to computers,” she said, admitting to being a bit intimidated by technology. For Johanna Reed of Sharon, the new building seemed comfortable, and that was important, she said. At age 51, the bus driver and single mother is thinking she needs to do something to improve herself. “I’m wanting to do better.”

Ms. Reed added, “But at my age I don’t want to go for a four-year degree. I pass by this place all the time.”