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## Middle Bucks Institute of Technology approves accord with BCCC, Bloomsburg

By Gary Wechselblatt, staff writer 12 hrs ago

The Middle Bucks Institute of Technology's executive council unanimously approved an agreement with Bucks County Community College on Monday night that includes Bloomsburg University.

The accord will allow students at the county's three vocational technical schools -- Bucks County Technical High School in Bristol Township, MBIT in Warwick and Upper Bucks County Technical School in Bedminster -- achieve 30 college credits in high school and an associates degree a year later.

As part of the arrangement, Bloomsburg University will accept BCCC credits toward a bachelor's degree in business. This part led to a second agreement, which, in a 5-4 vote, calls on MBIT administrative director Kathryn Strouse to request the community college push for partnerships with the 13 other schools in Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education.

"I want Bucks to allow our students to go to any of these schools," argued council member Mark Miller of Centennial, president of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association.

Miller said that with colleges and universities "suffering a lack of enrollment, pushing one school over another is not what we should be doing."

His suggestion was supported by Mark Byelich and Bill Foster, of Council Rock, and John Gamble and Karen Smith, of Central Bucks. John Capriotti, of New Hope-Solebury, Beth Darcy, of Central Bucks, and Kati Driban and Chuck Kleinschmidt, of Centennial, voted against the proposal.

"If Bloomsburg is going to do this, other state schools should come to the table, make the same offering and get into the game," Capriotti said.

Miller said he didn't believe BCCC "has pressed as hard as they should" to get a deal with the other colleges and universities.

Darcy, president of the Central Bucks school board, said MBIT would be "overstepping our boundaries" by asking BCCC to negotiate with other schools. "I don't understand how that's become our problem here. ... If that was a for-profit company that's something else."

The deal, inspired by Bernard J. Wagenseller, executive director of Upper Bucks County Technical School, allows students to parlay their technical skills with the academic capability to run their own business or move up the management ladder with a company.

"We're already giving them technical skills," he said. "People go into trades and technical areas and they have great skills. But how often do they move up into managerial positions or own businesses? You have all the skills you need to succeed but don't know about things like payroll, workman's comp. Now the community college will provide that business education."

Under the agreement, BCCC will issue vo-tech students 20 credits for earning an advanced score on the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute plus four credits for completing 200 co-op hours. BCCC will also teach two courses, three credits each, at MBIT: Introduction to business entrepreneurship and business communication.

Strouse said tuition is \$440 per three-credit course. Bucks has agreed to pick up half of the cost with MBIT paying 25 percent. Students will pay \$110, or 25 percent.

Strouse said 25 MBIT students were given placement tests Monday by BCCC educators.

The boards of the Bucks County Technical High School and Upper Bucks County Technical School don't have to vote to approve the deal, Strouse said.

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