

Alumni Spotlight Featuring Ashley DeBerry



Ashley (Sprinkle) DeBerry, 33, of Blairsville, attended Westmoreland County Community College from 2014-2016 and is our featured alumna.

So what made DeBerry decide to attend Westmoreland after high school?

"I decided to attend WCCC because I wanted an affordable option to explore a new career field. I had previously gone to another Community College for Culinary Arts and I could tell there was something different about WCCC. After touring the school and seeing the opportunities offered, it was a no-brainer to enroll," says DeBerry.

While at the college, DeBerry studied and obtained her associate degree in Dietetic Technology and Nutritional Services Management. She was also co-president of Phi Theta Kappa, involved in the Student Government Association, and also a member of the Art Club. DeBerry furthered her education after graduating, obtaining bachelors and masters degrees from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in Nutrition and Dietetics.

When looking back at her college days, DeBerry does have a fond memory that sticks out.

“I think my fondest memory is going to Lobby Day in Harrisburg with Professor Culyba and a bunch of other students. It was really interesting to be able to tour the State Capital and meet other students from community colleges across Pennsylvania who also wanted to use their presence and voice to show how important community colleges are.”

DeBerry states, “It is so hard to pick a favorite instructor with all of the instructors that I had at WCCC being top tier. You could tell that they were highly educated and truly cared about their students.”

But if she had to choose, who would her favorite instructor be?

“If I had to choose one Instructor that truly was my favorite, it had to be Professor Shipley. Not only was she kind, but she was well-educated and my biggest cheerleader in becoming a registered dietitian. She really helped me to continue to believe in myself through my classes and applying for admissions at four year colleges to further me in achieving my career goals. I am truly thankful she was part of my WCCC experience,” exclaims DeBerry.

The college has prepared DeBerry for her current career by not only enhancing her knowledge in my field, but also by helping her to make lasting connections and building the self confidence to help her be the professional she is today.

“I currently work for Highmark Inc. as a health coach - dietitian. It was a long road to get to this point, but I completed my associate degree at WCCC and then went on to complete my bachelors at IUP. I took some time off in-between working in different roles from being a brand ambassador for HelloFresh, a manager at Whole Foods, and an

assistant food service director at Penn Hills School District. It was at the beginning of 2020 that I decided I wanted to go back to school and complete my internship and master's degree to be a registered dietitian. I worked at UPMC Presbyterian as a registered dietetic technician during the pandemic and started my master's program at IUP. A year later I was admitted into their Dietitian Nutritionist program and I worked as a part-time chef instructor for Common Threads throughout the program and still work for them per diem. I completed my degree in May of 2023. I then worked as a dietitian in Minimally Invasive and Bariatric Surgery before my current role at Highmark Inc. as a health coach - dietitian," states DeBerry.

In addition to her full-time career, she is also a member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics at the local, state and national level, as well as part of four of their interest groups: Dietitians in Weight Management, Dietitians in Integrative and Functional Nutrition, Disabilities in Nutrition and Dietetics, and the Cultures of Gender and Age. She is part of the Association for Size Diversity and Health.

DeBerry adds, "In the past, I was fortunate to be involved with the Commission on Dietetic Registration, serving on the nominating committee board, as the board chair for Registered Dietetic Technicians, and also as part of the Dietitian Examination Score Study."

In her free time, she has gotten back into reading, which she didn't seem to have much time for when she was reading so much academically. She has also been learning more about Integrative and Functional Nutrition and trying to incorporate some of what she has learned into her cooking and baking, which she still enjoys. She has also been trying to make more time to get back into her Yoga practice.

There are special people along the way that DeBerry would like to thank for their love and support.

"I would love to give my mom, Susan DeBerry, the biggest shout out because I would not be who I am today without her unconditional love and support. I also have a fantastic fiancé, Ben Ripple, who is one of my biggest supporters, and his two children, Noah and Max. We have three fur babies as well, Tianna (pug), Dustin (collie/lab) and Cali (cat). Also, I couldn't have done it all without the support of my best friend, whom I consider family, Chelsea Cannata," says DeBerry.

Her advice to current college students?

"My advice to current students at WCCC is to really look at the opportunities that the college offers and be open-minded about the opportunities that exist. WCCC has highly intelligent professors that give you a great education and really care about their students. Believe me when I say that if you take your education through WCCC seriously, you'll go far and achieve things you never thought you would."