About Blackburn College

Blackburn College is the third oldest college in the state of Illinois, now in its 177th year. It began like many other colleges, a frontier school dedicated to preparing community leaders through a liberal arts curriculum. In 1913, however, Blackburn separated itself from other colleges by adopting the Self-Help Plan, now known as the Work Program, which solidified the College’s commitment to affordability and access. Today, Blackburn’s commitment to the liberal arts links outstanding classroom instruction with hands-on learning experiences. As one of seven federally-recognized Work Colleges, all residential students are required to work at least ten hours per week on campus. The Work Program, the only student-managed program, makes Blackburn distinct in several ways. It makes the college Illinois’ most affordable independent college, but more importantly the Work Program creates a unique campus culture where everyone contributes to the community. It also positions Blackburn graduates for success in employment and graduate school. Beginning this year, each student will develop a work transcript documenting their professional skills and growth. In this way, Blackburn is uniquely positioned to offer students a liberal arts education partnered with career development. Blackburn is also distinct in its long-standing commitment to access and affordability. Admissions standards insist on college-readiness, resulting in an average ACT of 21 and high school GPA of 3.5. In addition to merit-based financial aid, Blackburn is focusing on need-based aid. The Affordable Access Award (AAA) program allows students with a $0 Estimated Family Contribution on the FAFSA to attend tuition-free. This award program contributed to a 50% increase in freshman enrollment in just the last year; fall 2014 headcount is 591.

About the Position

The Provost plays two critical roles at Blackburn. The first is to serve as the Chief Academic Officer, building and supporting faculty, staff, and student learning experiences. Blackburn offers a traditional undergraduate liberal arts curriculum with select professional majors. It has 37 full-time faculty, 92% of which have terminal degrees, and 36 adjuncts (9 of whom are members of the College staff). 70% of classes are taught by full time faculty, and
The second role played by the Provost is as a collaborative, cross-department leader for the campus as a whole. As delegated by the President, the Provost will have responsibilities for institutional policies and practices beyond the academic program. The Board of Trustees and College employees understand the Provost is second only to the President, whose focus has largely been on enrollment growth and a new fundraising campaign.

The faculty is organized into three divisions, each with its own chair: Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Humanities. Within these divisions are 11 departments, each with its own chair. Staff departments reporting to the Provost include the Registrar, Work Program, Learning Commons, Technology Services, and Institutional Research.

Blackburn is a close-knit community, where faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends all feel a deep connection to and ownership for the College. This sense is enhanced by the College's longstanding commitment to shared governance, transparency, and trust. Any successful Provost at Blackburn must be open to feedback and ready to lead in a collaborative environment.

**Opportunities**

**Curricular Innovation** – The new Provost will lead the faculty as they plan and implement assessment data-driven curricular changes that could enhance the interconnectedness of student coursework, build linkages between curricular and co-curricular learning, and promote student success and retention.

**Work Program** – Blackburn’s student-managed Work Program is its most distinctive element, an advantage the College seeks to leverage more intentionally with a holistic student development model that emphasizes integrated and relevant student outcomes. This transition will require a great deal of leadership as every member of the faculty and staff who supervises students adjusts to a broader understanding of their role as an educator.

**Market Alignment** – The focus at Blackburn for the next several years is on growing enrollment in the residential undergraduate program. The College has capacity for up to 30% more students; 7% total enrollment growth between fall 2013 and fall 2014 indicates that such a goal is possible. To achieve it, the Provost will need to harness faculty expertise and energies to foster effective recruitment strategies and grow academic programs.

**New Student Populations** – While the current focus is on traditional undergraduate students, many at the College recognize the need to explore ways to serve additional cohorts of students, open new revenue streams, and widen Blackburn’s reach. Efforts in this regard will be modest in the short-term, but the Provost and others will need to begin building a framework for the future.

**Student Success** – Blackburn’s commitment to serving students with financial need positions us to be an important national model for expanding the percentage of Americans with college degrees. While all students pass admissions and college-readiness standards, first-generation and low-income students bring special needs for which Blackburn must provide. The Provost will be a primary leader in developing programs and systems to increase and sustain retention and graduation rates.
Carlinville, Illinois

Blackburn is located in Carlinville, a city of 6,000 that offers a small-town feel. The community has award-winning public schools, a picturesque downtown square, and numerous seasonal festivals. The city is located 50 miles from St. Louis and 45 miles from Springfield, Illinois. Thus, larger-city cultural, shopping and other opportunities are within easy reach for residents of Carlinville while they enjoy a low cost of living and family-friendly, small town environment.

Because Blackburn and Carlinville are interconnected, the Provost is expected to help cultivate local relationships and participate in campus and community programs and events. While it is not required, willingness to reside in Carlinville is strongly preferred.

Qualifications

The successful Provost at Blackburn will possess many talents and experiences. Among them:

- An earned terminal degree (doctoral degree preferred)
- Excellent background in teaching, service, and research and/or creative work that would qualify the candidate for tenure at an institution like Blackburn
- Experience in and appreciation for the small liberal arts college experience in American higher education
- Demonstrated effectiveness in administrative and leadership capacities in a college or university, including familiarity with enrollment management, business and finance, student affairs, physical plant, marketing, performance evaluation, state and federal certification and accreditation processes
- Demonstrated commitment to transparent leadership, shared governance and amicable conflict resolution
- Demonstrated commitment to making American higher education affordable and accessible
- Experience with curricular development and assessment
- Commitment to & understanding of the Work Program as a central part of Blackburn’s educational mission and as a model for leadership in higher education
- Strong record of attracting, selecting, retaining, and advocating for outstanding faculty and staff members
- Experience with student academic support programs, instruction and information technology, developing programs to attract new student populations, and other revenue streams

Application Process & Timeline

Nominations and applications may be sent to:

Provost Search
Blackburn College
700 College Ave.
Carlinville, IL 62626
hr@blackburn.edu

Applications should include a curriculum vitae, cover letter describing the candidate’s experience as relevant to the position, and the contact information for three or more references.

Applications will be reviewed by the Search Committee on a rolling basis, with the primary review occurring on October 30.

The names of candidates will not be shared publicly and references will not be contacted until three or four finalists are named. Confidential inquiries are encouraged.