Blackburn College in Carlinville, Illinois invites nominations and applications for the position of Vice President for Finance and Administration (VPFA). The VPFA is a key member of the President’s leadership team, contributing to overall institutional strategy and operations. The Leadership Team consist of the Provost, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Vice President and Dean of Student Life and the Director of Marketing and Public Relations. This individual will lead and direct the budget process and will provide administrative support and advice to the Finance and Audit Committees of the Board of Trustees. The VPFA will supervise four directors and has responsibility for the Business Office, Physical Plant, Financial Aid and Auxiliary Operations. There are 20 full-time staff members in these areas. Reporting to the President, the VPFA will join the Blackburn College community on or before January 1, 2016.

The 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 in the country, makes Blackburn distinct in several ways. It not only makes the college the most affordable independent college in Illinois, 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 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 (total fall 2014 headcount was 591).

The Position

The Vice President for Finance and Administration (Vice President) is the chief financial officer of the College. She or he is responsible for leading professional, support, and student staff as the institution seeks to ensure current and future strength in its programs and financial position. Candidates should be proven leaders, strategic thinkers, and seek pragmatic, creative solutions to challenges. Candidates should be collaborative leaders that are serious about their role as mentors and are deeply committed to Blackburn’s mission to serve students who “have everything but money.” The successful candidate will demonstrate a sincere interest in and understanding of higher education, have a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree, although a Master’s degree is preferred, and evidence of continued professional development.

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 of pride is enhanced by the College’s long-standing commitment to shared governance, transparency, and trust. Any successful Vice President at Blackburn must be open to feedback and ready to lead in a collaborative environment.

The Primary Responsibilities

The Vice President reports directly to the President and provides vision, leadership and administrative oversight for a department that encompasses the following: financial operations, plant operations (including capital project management), purchasing, insurance and risk management, auxiliary services (college store, post office, food service, laundry and conference services) and financial aid. A key member of the leadership team, the Vice President is responsible for the management of financial accounting and reporting, long-range planning and managing the College's assets, debt, the College farms (as directed by the Board of Trustees) and capital projects and budgeting. One of the key liaisons with the Board of Trustees, the VP advises the Board on the full range of policy, strategy and operations matters.
REQUIRED EDUCATION, SKILLS, ABILITIES:

- Master's Degree from an accredited college or university with emphasis in business administration, financial management or related fields, OR a Bachelor's Degree, CPA certificate AND at least ten years of experience in financial management.
- Excellent communication and organizational skills and resourcefulness.
- Demonstrated ability to organize and prioritize projects.
- Ability to plan, develop, implement and direct the organization's fiscal function and evaluation performance.
- Ability to evaluate and to provide strategic advice on the impact of the introduction of new programs/strategies.
- Ability to establish professional relationships and interact effectively with diverse constituencies.
- Demonstrated success in developing financial strategies to support capital improvement projects and to fulfill institutional long-range planning goals.
- Experience developing administrative operating procedures and regulations.
- Demonstrated skills in working successfully with a team of employees to establish goals, motivate, evaluate, solve problems and meet deadlines.
- Demonstrated experience with computerized information and financial systems and their use in analysis and reporting.
- High degree of professional discretion, integrity and good judgment.
- High standards of professional conduct, ability to maintain confidentiality, and ability to establish credibility throughout the organization and with the Board as an effective developer of solutions to business challenges.
- Higher education experience preferred, but not required.

The Opportunities

*Building on Success*

The College’s increased focus on first-generation and low-income students has led to enrollment growth. Applications have nearly doubled in the past two years and the new student class has grown by nearly 50%. Challenges with yield and retention are leading to new strategies, but it seems that Blackburn is well positioned to serve more students in the future.

Blackburn is also about to go “public” with a record-setting fundraising campaign. With over $16 million raised, we are well on the way to a $25 million goal to enhance buildings, scholarships, academic programs, the Work Program, and our annual fund.
There is also strength within the Finance and Administration area. Stable and capable staff in the financial area have led to new multi-year budgeting models, financial aid programs, investment management, and banking relationships. The campus community and the Board of Trustees view the financial management of the College positively thanks to the work of the previous VP and the staff.

**Investing Forward**

The President and Board of Trustees have sought to invest in the momentum of the College. Plans are moving forward to enhance faculty/staff compensation, the campus physical plant, and other programs. The VPFA’s leadership in these areas will be essential to their success.

As the College seeks further opportunities to invest, the VPFA will need to be able to provide sound financial analysis and advice. New programs, facilities, and positions are under consideration and require an informed and disciplined approach.

**Connecting to the Mission**

Blackburn College offers a Vice President for Finance and Administration a unique opportunity to be connected to the College’s mission. Through a strong shared governance system and mentality, the VPFA will become familiar and involved with all the College’s programs – not just the financial area.

As a Work College, Blackburn also offers all its staff the opportunity to teach and mentor students in their everyday work. Students staff our offices, clean our buildings, and run our labs. A successful VPFA will relish the opportunity work directly with undergraduates on a daily basis.

The Blackburn campus community is also quickly growing in diversity, and we are actively seeking candidates who can reflect and relate to our student body.
Forging Relationships

Blackburn College has a very strong sense of campus community, thanks to its mission orientation and small size. We have the great benefit of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and Trustees who are deeply engaged in thinking about the future of the College.

This level of engagement requires a successful VPFA to be present in the community, building individual relationships and working with others as we make decisions about our shared future. The ability to ensure that decisions are made in a collaborative environment is essential.

The Community

Blackburn is located in Carlinville, a city of 6,000 with award-winning public schools, a picturesque downtown square, numerous seasonal festivals, and a quaint, small-town feel. 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, tight-knit community and a family-friendly, small town environment.

Because Blackburn is such an integral part of Carlinville, the Vice President 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 preferred.

The Application Process & Timeline

The Vice President for Finance and Administration search process will involve continual review of applicants until the position is filled. For full consideration applications should be complete by September 18, 2015; however, applications will be received and considered until the position is filled. Applications must include a letter of interest, resume and five professional references with email and telephone numbers (references will not be contacted without prior authorization from the applicant). Applications and nominations should be sent electronically (MS Word preferred) to: blackburnfinance@agbsearch.com

The search is being assisted by:
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Blackburn College is an equal opportunity employer