



# PRESIDENTIAL PROSPECTUS



COLLEGE  
**Blackburn**

Learn. Work. Earn.

Carlinville, Illinois

SEARCH FOR A PRESIDENT

# PROSPECTUS OF THE COLLEGE AND ATTRIBUTES OF A NEW PRESIDENT

BLACKBURN COLLEGE, CARLINVILLE, ILLINOIS

**BLACKBURN COLLEGE ANNOUNCES THE SEARCH  
FOR ITS NEXT PRESIDENT.**



Founded originally as a Presbyterian seminary by Gideon Blackburn in 1837, Blackburn College is the third oldest college in Illinois. In 1913, Blackburn distinguished itself 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 nine federally-recognized Work Colleges, all residential students are required to work at least ten hours per week on campus.

Blackburn’s Work Program truly makes the college unique, and participation is required for all residential students. It is the only student managed program in the country: with the help of an advisory Dean of Work, the student Work Committee is responsible for creating and implementing all Work Program policy and running all aspects of the program. They collect worker requests from across campus, prioritize those jobs to available student workers, and then conduct all student hiring, training, and disciplinary actions. This shared work environment creates a unique campus culture where everyone contributes to the community, working in all areas of campus ranging from dining and grounds to academic, business, and institutional advancement offices. Not only do the real-life work experience provided by these jobs uniquely suit Blackburn graduates for success in employment and graduate school, it dramatically reduces the cost of a Blackburn education. In the past four years 98% of graduates report full-time employment or graduate school six months after graduation. Most alumni cite the Blackburn Work Program as a great influence in their academic and career success.

## Blackburn Philosophy

### Vision:

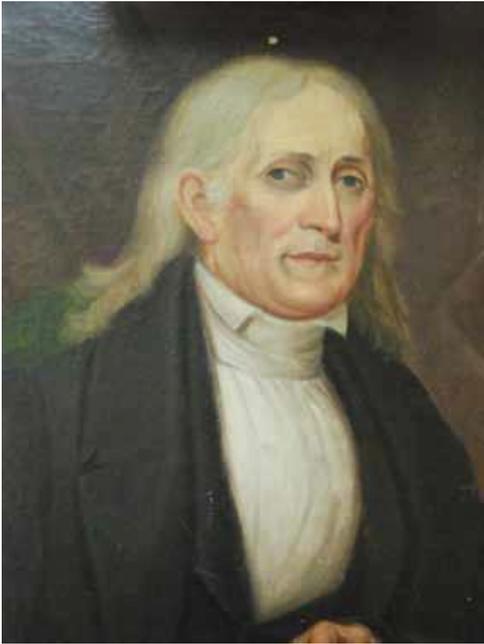
Blackburn College aspires to provide a distinctive and innovative model of American higher education, grounded in scholarship and student leadership, and cultivated through a community of integrated work, learning, and service.

### Mission:

Blackburn College links a rigorous and affordable liberal arts education with a unique student-managed Work Program preparing graduates for careers, community engagement, and lifelong learning.

### Values:

The Blackburn community values critical and independent thinking, leadership development, diversity and inclusion, service, shared governance, and moral responsibility.



Blackburn is also distinctive in its long-standing commitment to access and affordability. Its admissions standards insist on college-readiness, resulting in an average ACT of 21 and high school GPA of 3.35. In addition to merit-based financial aid, Blackburn focuses on need-based aid. In 2014 Blackburn introduced the Affordable Access Award (AAA) program, which allows students with a \$0 Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) on the FAFSA to attend tuition-free. This program was very successful in increasing Blackburn's enrollment, as well as the percentage of Pell-eligible and first-generation students while doubling the students of color to 22%. Funded in part by dedicated Blackburn donors, the concept of the AAA program was enhanced last year with two new programs: Macoupin Promise and Blackburn Promise. Macoupin Promise provides free tuition and fees to new high school graduates who live in Macoupin County and whose family income is under \$60,000 annually. Blackburn Promise puts Blackburn in the company of only 70 colleges and universities across the country by guaranteeing students that their EFC is the most they will pay toward Blackburn's tuition and fees, with room and board covered by the federal subsidized loan. These scholarship programs are attracting larger numbers of qualified students to Blackburn, without significantly exceeding discount targets.



Blackburn approaches these opportunities from a position of financial strength, with total net assets of about \$100,000 per student. For the past five years of published data, Blackburn's Composite Financial Index has been an average of 45% higher than the national median, and its endowment has grown substantially every year.



Dr. John Comerford, Blackburn's departing president, is now completing a successful five-year term of office, during which he led the College, with broad campus-wide support, toward great improvements at Blackburn. Recent capital improvements include a state-of-the-art fitness center, a welcoming Alumni Center, and renovation of the library into a remodeled 21st century learning center. Blackburn's faculty approved a post-tenure review policy, and four new academic programs to attract new students and better serve current students. In a comprehensive campaign completed in 2017, the College raised \$26 million and increased net assets to \$53 million, including \$33 million unrestricted.

The Blackburn College Board of Trustees invites expressions of interest in the opportunity for leadership of this historic liberal arts college.

## FACTS ABOUT BLACKBURN COLLEGE

- The College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, completed the most recent accreditation review in 2010, and is preparing for its next visit in 2020. The College also holds institutional memberships in the Council of Independent Colleges, the College Entrance Examination Board, the Federation of Illinois Colleges and Universities, the Associated Colleges of Illinois, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, and the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities.
- The College offers the Bachelor of Arts degree with over 50 majors and emphasis areas from the traditional liberal arts and sciences to select professional fields. The college implemented a new General Education focused on critical skills in 2017, and started new academic programs in agribusiness, arts administration, cyber security, and game design.
- The College is a member of the NCAA Division III and offers athletic competition in twelve sports including, basketball, baseball, softball, tennis, golf, volleyball, soccer, and cross country. Blackburn participates in the St. Louis Intercollegiate Athletic Conference and has enjoyed many championships and outstanding player recognitions.



- Tuition and fees total \$22,410 and room and board costs \$7,900. All working students receive a tuition credit of \$5,000 yielding a total cost of attendance of \$25,310 annually, making Blackburn one of the most affordable, private, four-year residential colleges in Illinois and among the lowest in the United States. The average cost of attendance this Fall is \$8,828, comparable to several of the regional state universities.
- The operating budget for the College is approximately \$15 million. The financial aid discount for students is approximately 37%; additionally, the Work Program is largely underwritten by operational funds, federal support, and endowment income.
- 89% of students come from Illinois and over a third are first generation students; 63% are classified as low income (i.e. Pell-eligible).
- Blackburn enjoys the distinction of being the only college campus in the United States to have been largely built by its students. Blackburn students have built ten campus buildings and alumni express pride in the buildings they helped construct as part of the Work Program.
- The Board of Trustees has thirty members and has guided the College as an independent board since its founding. The trustees are committed and support the College exceptionally well.

## STRENGTHS OF BLACKBURN COLLEGE

➤ *U.S. News and World Report* has listed the College as the #2 Best Value in the Midwest and the College is listed #31 in *Washington Monthly's* 2017 listing of National Universities – Bachelors, including #25 in social mobility. The John Templeton Foundation has recognized Blackburn College as one of America's leading character building colleges.

➤ The College has a strong sense of community based on faculty, staff, and student collaboration in work, academics, and college-wide decision making; shared governance plays a key role in the college culture.

➤ A low student/faculty ratio of 12:1 encourages faculty mentoring and research; students participate equally with faculty and staff on major committees.

➤ The faculty members at Blackburn College are dedicated to the liberal arts model and the college mission; are strongly committed to shared governance; and are dedicated to establishing strong mentoring relationships with students.



➤ Currently, 92% of full-time Blackburn College faculty members hold terminal degrees in their discipline with about 28% of courses being taught by full- or part-time adjunct faculty.

➤ Excellence in instruction is the primary criterion for the granting of tenure. Of our current full-time faculty member, 63% are tenured. Faculty members provide advice to students on courses, majors,



internships, and career options. Faculty members also encourage and participate in student research through junior and senior seminars, research grant projects, and conference presentations.

➤ The College's Learning Commons provides free academic support to most 100 and 200 level courses, and offers writing assistance, academic skill development, and student success programs to all students.

➤ Professional staff members are dedicated to the college mission, provide a strong asset of work experience in higher education and business, and work with faculty to strengthen the student educational experience.

➤ Cabinet Officers of the College are a talented group of professionals who are successful in their areas of responsibility and who work well with one another, with the current president, and with the rest of the college community.

➤ Fundraising is strong within the community and a loyal base of over 6,000 alumni. The Board of Trustees and administration are diligent in their stewardship and responsibility to operate within balanced budgets.

➤ The Board has a history of mutually respectful, committed, congenial, and productive relationships among its members and with its College Presidents.

# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AT BLACKBURN COLLEGE

## Taking Finances and Enrollment to the Next Level

The most significant opportunities facing the College are in the areas of finances and enrollment. In the wake of its successful \$26 million comprehensive campaign, Blackburn is in a strong financial position. However, for an enrollment-dependent institution to advance to the next level sustainably, the College must increase the size and consistency of its enrollment. In the past few years, Blackburn has laid significant groundwork for such an advance by strategically making capital improvements, new academic programs, and scholarship and recruitment initiatives, including the Blackburn Promise to meet 100% of all students' financial need, including tuition-free education for many. Now is a great opportunity for new leadership of Blackburn College to advance enrollment to a sustained level of 700 or more. Blackburn is a rarity in American higher education - a model that combines long-term financial strength, affordability, high academic quality, and focus on serving first generation and low-income students.

## Retention

Freshman retention over the past decade has fluctuated, but generally trended upward. Likewise, six-year graduation rates in recent years have been inconsistent, though in line with other schools serving low income and first-generation students. Given the high cost of attrition to Blackburn and its students, improving retention has been and will be a significant focus for leaders of the College. The Gardner Institute was retained in 2016 to provide expert guidance as Blackburn developed its retention initiatives, and the new president lead a wide-ranging spectrum of the Blackburn community in carrying forward recommended retention initiatives.

## Advances in the Work Program

The student-managed Work Program is Blackburn's greatest asset and continues to offer necessary operational support for the institution. The incoming president will engage the Dean of Work and student managers in developing program revisions to provide equitable and representative work experiences and processes for both incoming and returning students while further strengthening the value of the work experience.

## Meeting Institutional Needs

During the past several years, the College has focused resources on projects that will attract and retain students and bring alumni donors back to campus, particularly campus facilities and affordability. While facilities needs remain, and despite Blackburn's acceptance rate of approximately 60%, the student demographic that is served has many needs. The new president will work with the campus to advance the strategic planning, financing, and building of capital and personnel improvements that better attract, serve, and retain a student enrollment of 700 while retaining the mission of access and affordability.



## ATTRIBUTES SOUGHT IN THE NEW PRESIDENT

### Essential Traits

- **An inspirational and entrepreneurial leader**, who is innovative; visionary; dedicated to academic integrity, strong work ethic and egalitarian culture; and skilled in working with the institution to identify and implement opportunities to improve the institution's ability to achieve its mission.
- **Strong dedication to fundraising** and community friendship-building in order to acquire the resources needed for the College's future development and its mission to serve and fully meet the financial need of low-income and first-generation students.
- **Deep commitment to the College's student-managed Work Program:** providing strong support, guiding program improvements, and participating effectively in the Work Colleges' Consortium.
- **Administrative experience** and excellent communication skills: conversant with financial issues facing colleges and universities, and able to manage the fiscal affairs of the college in cooperation with the Board of Trustees and other campus constituencies.
- **A strong commitment to provide an affordable, rigorous education to underserved students.**
- **The good character** to serve faculty, staff and students as a role model for the highest standards of academic achievement, professional integrity, and commitment to diversity.

### The successful candidate also will:

- be committed to shared governance and be dedicated to operating with broad campus involvement in planning and implementation of policies and operations.
- possess long-range strategic planning skills with the leadership to inspire confidence in those individuals who help carry out the college's mission.
- be able to gain support for changes that challenge some of the key traditions of the campus.
- be skillful at building agreement and cooperation among many constituencies of the College to advance the institution.
- have appropriate credentials, ideally including scholarship and teaching as part of their background and experience.
- be committed to extensive interaction with students and to be a visible and active presence on campus.
- function as a liaison between the College and governmental agencies or elected officials.

## PROCESS OF APPLICATION

The presidential search committee will begin review of applications on September 7, 2018 and will continue its work until an appointment is made. Applications must include (1) a comprehensive letter of interest that addresses how the candidate meets the Search Committee's preferred qualifications and the institution's opportunities for leadership, as described in the search prospectus, (2) a complete curriculum vitae, and (3) five professional references with e-mail addresses and phone numbers provided. (References will not be contacted without prior permission from the applicant).

Applications should be submitted electronically (MS Word or Adobe PDF) to the chair of the Search Committee, Dr. Hazel Loucks, at [BlackburnPres@agbsearch.com](mailto:BlackburnPres@agbsearch.com). AGB Search in Washington, DC is assisting the Blackburn Presidential Search. Nominators and prospective applicants may contact executive search consultant Dr. James A. Davis at [james.davis@agbsearch.com](mailto:james.davis@agbsearch.com), (540) 539-9415.

For additional information about Blackburn College, please visit the websites at [www.blackburn.edu](http://www.blackburn.edu) and [www.agbsearch.com](http://www.agbsearch.com).

Blackburn College is located in Carlinville, Illinois, a town of 5,700, between Springfield, Illinois, and St. Louis, Missouri. The College enjoys a very positive relationship with the community. Carlinville has been called one of the "Best Small Towns in America," and is also the seat of Macoupin County, home to the majestic Macoupin County Courthouse. Carlinville offers a slice of small-town Americana, with excellent public schools, brick streets around the town square, many parks, and historical homes and buildings, all within an easy drive, or Amtrak ride, of the urban centers of St. Louis and Springfield.

*Blackburn seeks to build an inclusive faculty and administration that can engage the interests of a diverse population; underrepresented persons are strongly encouraged to apply. The successful applicant must provide proof of authorization to work in the United States. Blackburn College is an equal opportunity employer and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, gender identity, sexual orientation or any other characteristic protected by law.*



[www.blackburn.edu](http://www.blackburn.edu)