



Vice President for Diverse and Equitable Student Life (VPSL)

Blackburn College in Carlinville, Illinois invites nominations and applications for the position of Vice President for Diverse and Equitable Student Life (VPSL). The VPSL is a key member of the President's leadership team. The VPSL will supervise and be responsible for the following areas that make up the Student life department: residence life, student activities, new student orientation, student diversity, campus safety, student life office management and Title IX. Reporting to the President, the VPSL will join the Blackburn College community during the spring semester.

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 and leadership experiences. As one of eight 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. 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. 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 does the real-life work experience provided by these jobs suit Blackburn graduates for success in employment and graduate school, but it also dramatically reduces the cost of a Blackburn education.



Blackburn is also distinctive in its long-standing commitment to access and affordability. The College utilizes an aggressive financial aid process, offers unique work opportunities for all students, works deliberately to keep tuition, room and board costs low and funds a myriad of institutional grants and scholarships that both recognize academic talent and meet financial need. Blackburn College is among the lowest priced private institutions in the region, by design. The approach to pricing is conservative and recognizes the financial barriers faced by the majority of our students. The net cost for many of our students is in line with charges at state funded colleges and universities.

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 a strong team leader, eager to work directly with students, and ready to lead in a collaborative environment.

FACTS ABOUT BLACKBURN COLLEGE



- The College, accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, completed the most recent accreditation review in 2010, and is preparing for its next visit in 2021. 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 majors in 17 disciplinary areas spanning the traditional liberal arts and sciences and select professional fields. The college implemented a new General Education program focused on critical skills in 2017, and started new academic programs in cyber security, game design, special education, early childhood education, and an education licensure only track in partnership with the Golden Apple Foundation.

- 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, cross country, club women's bowling, and club cheerleading. Blackburn participates in the St. Louis Intercollegiate Athletic Conference and has enjoyed many championships and outstanding player recognitions. As part of its strategic enrollment management initiative, the College has made recent investments to introduce new athletic teams of bowling and cheerleading while adding assistant coaches to certain existing teams to help recruit and retain student athletes.



- Tuition and fees total \$23,950 and room and board costs \$8,600. All working students receive a tuition credit of \$5,000 yielding a total cost of attendance of \$27,550 annually, making Blackburn one of the most affordable, private, four-year residential colleges in Illinois and among the lowest tuition rates in the United States.
- The operating budget for the College is approximately \$16 million. The financial aid discount for students is approximately 41%; additionally, the Work Program is largely underwritten by operational funds, federal support, and endowment income.
- 85% of students come from Illinois and nearly two thirds identify as first-generation students; 61% 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 twenty-five members and has guided the College as an independent board since its founding. The trustees are committed and support the College exceptionally well.
- The College is committed to sustainability, and its newest initiative in this area is its two-megawatt solar array that sits on 8 acres north of campus. The \$3 million array will be energized in December 2019 and will provide over 80% of the campus' electricity needs, while allowing the College to receive solar renewable energy credits from the state as the largest private college renewable energy initiative in Illinois.



STRENGTHS OF BLACKBURN COLLEGE

➤ U.S. News and World Report has listed the College as #10 for Social Mobility among National Liberal Arts Colleges. The Center for Education & the Workforce at Georgetown University listed Blackburn, among Baccalaureate Colleges with Arts and Sciences focus, #2 in Illinois for 10-year Net Present Value, #1 in Illinois for Earnings-Debt Return, #10 in the U.S. for Earnings-Price Return, and #11 in the US for Net Price.



➤ 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 11:1 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, 91% of full-time Blackburn College faculty members hold terminal degrees in their discipline with about 24% of courses being taught by adjunct faculty or full-time staff.



➤ Excellence in instruction is the primary criterion for the granting of tenure. Of our current full-time faculty members, 64% 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 for 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 and the rest of the college community.

➤ Fundraising is strong within the community and among a loyal base of over 6,000 alumni.

➤ The Board of Trustees and administration are diligent in their stewardship and responsibility to operate within available resources, as evidenced by low debt of \$7.5 Million and unrestricted reserves of \$9 Million.

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

THE POSITION

The Vice President for Diverse and Equitable Student Life is responsible for providing leadership and administrative oversight in support of the college strategic plan and priorities, especially for departments that encompass the student life department along with supporting campus and student diversity, equity and inclusion. 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 to both students and staff and are deeply committed to Blackburn's mission and vision. The interested candidate will demonstrate a sincere interest in and understanding of higher education, have a minimum of a Master's degree in College Student Personnel, Counseling, or a closely related field, although a Ph.D. is preferred.

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: residence life, student engagement, new student orientation, student conduct, campus safety, student life office management, and title IX. The VPSL provides key support for all campus equity committees, programs, initiatives, and compliance. The VPSL will collaborate with the Director of Student Success as the institutional co-leads on development and management of a data-informed, cross-departmental retention plan leading to increased student retention, persistence, and graduation.

THE OPPORTUNITIES

Taking Enrollment to the Next Level

In the past few years, Blackburn has laid significant groundwork for such an advance by strategically making capital improvements, adding new academic programs, and launching scholarship and recruitment initiatives. 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. 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.

Retention and Persistence



Freshman retention over the past decade has fluctuated, but has generally trended upward and was 69% for the Fall 2019 cohort. 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 and persistence has been and will be a significant focus for the College. The Gardner Institute was retained in 2016 to provide expert guidance as Blackburn developed its retention initiatives, and the President led a wide-ranging spectrum of the Blackburn community in carrying forward recommended retention initiatives. Since Gardner, Blackburn has joined the ILEA Consortium of Colleges focusing on creating equitable experiences for all students. Retention, persistence, and enrollment growth are important components of the new strategic plan. The VPSL will continue work with the campus community and the newly developed Student Success Center to strengthen student support and success initiatives, as well as orientation, co-curricular, and residential activities.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The VPSL will be a strong voice of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). While not the point person for diversity on campus, the VPSL will work with the President and Cabinet to ensure that DEI issues remain paramount. In addition to on-campus training, approximately 25 faculty, staff, administrators, and Board members have attended a 2.5-day systemic racism program developed by Crossroads. To further accelerate progress, the President has appointed a task force to further diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts on campus, and we expect to initiate a college-wide review to identify and address inequitable policies.

As a college serving student from both rural and urban Midwest, many students arrive at Blackburn having little experience with racial, gender, or socioeconomic diversity. Blackburn's students have helped lead the institution forward in this area,

for instance identifying inequities within the Work Program. Students worked with faculty, staff, and administration to develop policies and procedures which have dramatically improved equity within the Work Program and its student leadership over the past three years. Blackburn is a member of the Illinois Equity and Attainment consortium, a partnership of 25 public and private colleges working together to eliminate racial and socioeconomic graduation disparities and increase graduation rates for African-American, Latino, and low-income students. The VPSL will work with the campus to implement the four-pronged plan to increase success and graduation of these groups on our campus.

Title IX

Blackburn has updated its Title IX policies to comply with recent Department of Education regulations. The VLSL will serve as the Title IX Coordinator, overseeing the Title IX policies and procedures at Blackburn, while working with the campus community to further refine our policies.

Strengthen Co-curricular activities to reinforce Work and Academic experiences

Blackburn provides strong academic, career, and leadership opportunities to our students through our curricular and co-curricular programs including athletics, student groups, and campus activities (Blackburn does not have social sororities and fraternities). There is significant overlap within these areas, such as common learning objectives within the Work Program and the General Education curriculum. The VPSL will have the opportunity to partner with the campus community to buttress key life skills by creating synergy throughout the Blackburn experience, intentionally reinforcing learning within the classroom, workspace, and co-curricular domains.



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. Particular attention has been paid to campus facilities and to maintaining affordability. While facility needs remain, and despite Blackburn's acceptance rate of approximately 56%, Blackburn students have many challenges that the VPSL will collaborate to address with partners throughout campus.

REQUIRED EDUCATION, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

- Master's degree in College Student Personnel, Counseling, or a closely related field. PhD preferred.
- Team-oriented with strong communication skills (verbal and written); ability to work well with others.
- Able to prioritize, organize and operationalize results using data and take action.
- Student-centered with experience in serving at-risk students.
- Demonstrated skills in working with, and successfully motivating, a team of employees to establish goals, implement plans, evaluate, solve problems, and meet deadlines. Goal-oriented.
- Demonstrated ability to problem-solve and trouble-shoot complex situations.
- High degree of professional discretion, integrity and good judgment.
- High standard of professional conduct, ability to maintain confidentiality, and the ability to establish credibility throughout the organization and with all stakeholders including the Board of Trustees, the President, Faculty, Staff, Students, Alumni and members of the President's Cabinet.
- Strongly motivated; a self-starter.

THE COMMUNITY

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 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. The College is within an easy drive, or Amtrak ride, of the urban centers of St. Louis and Springfield. 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.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications must include a letter of interest that includes a diversity statement describing what diversity means to you and why it is important, resume, and five professional references with email and telephone numbers (references will not be contacted without prior authorization from the applicant).

For full consideration, applications should be received by November 30, 2020. The search committee will continue its work until an appointment is made. Semifinalist interviews will be held December 16, 17, and 18, 2020.

Inquiries, applications, and nominations should be sent to: BlackburnVPSL@agbsearch.com

or directed to:

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SEARCH

Advancing Higher Education Leadership

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. Employment-based immigration sponsorship is not offered for this position.

For additional information about Blackburn College, please visit our website at www.blackburn.edu.

