



Blackburn College Receives Recognition For Commitment To Effective Urban Forest Management

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CARLINVILLE – Blackburn College has received a 2020 Tree Campus Higher Education® recognition from the Arbor Day Foundation for its commitment to effective urban forest management. With a long history of leading in sustainability, Blackburn is the only college in downstate Illinois to receive this honor.

The Tree Campus Higher Education® program honors colleges and universities for effective campus forest management and for engaging staff and students in conservation goals. Blackburn College achieved the title by meeting Tree Campus Higher Education's five standards, which include maintaining a tree advisory committee, a campus tree-care plan, dedicated annual expenditures for its campus tree program, an Arbor Day observance and student service-learning project.

Nick McKorkle, grounds supervisor at the college, said he was very honored to receive this award from the Arbor Day Foundation. "It is a wonderful recognition to all those individuals who have worked so hard to make the Blackburn College campus a beautiful place." McKorkle explained that a lot of attention to detail also goes into the campus' tree maintenance program including making sure that trees are planted in the right place, as well as choosing the right tree selection. "We've dedicated nearly 445 hours toward tree maintenance on campus in the last year. This includes the planting of 116 trees which are from 19 different family classifications, 48 different types of cultivars, and 79 pollinators. I am very proud to say that all of these hours are from the campus grounds department where student workers make up the entire workforce. Very few outside contractors are used to complete these projects. We are also very thankful for the generous donations toward the program from our alumni as well as the assistance during the planting days we received from the college's Sustainability Club students."

"Tree Campuses and their students set examples for not only their student bodies but the surrounding communities showcasing how trees create a healthier environment," said Dan Lambe, president of the Arbor Day Foundation. "Because of Blackburn's participation, air will be purer, water cleaner and students and faculty will be surrounded by the shade and beauty trees provide."

Kathy Ruiter, data services administrator at Blackburn, also serves as the Sustainability Committee chair. She explained that this campus committee works on environmental efforts and ongoing campus beautification projects. They also promote environmental studies and awareness at the college as well as around the Carlinville community. Ruiter also works with preserving pollinator habitats and her efforts were instrumental in the college and town being recognized by the Foundation as a Tree Campus and a Tree City USA. She explained that throughout the years many individuals have worked hard on these efforts and stated, "We must thank Biology Department chair Dr. Jim Bray, Grounds Supervisor Nick McKorkle, the student grounds crew, student volunteers and our devoted alumni for making our campus beautiful and more sustainable."

The Arbor Day Foundation has helped campuses throughout the country plant thousands of trees, and Tree Campus Higher Education colleges and universities invested more than \$51 million in campus forest management last year. Last year, Tree Campus Higher Education schools collectively planted 39,178 trees and engaged 81,535 tree planters.

About Blackburn College

Founded in 1837, Blackburn College is a four-year, Presbyterian-related, co-educational liberal arts college located in Carlinville, IL. One of only nine federally-recognized Work Colleges, Blackburn has the only program in the nation fully managed by students. Balancing academic rigor and experiential learning, each student at Blackburn gains tangible experience and develops critical skills while contributing to their community and building a resume while earning their degree. In their 2020 Best Colleges Rankings, U.S. News & World Report recognized Blackburn College as one of the top 10 best Liberal Arts Colleges in the Nation for Social Mobility. The Center for Education & the Workforce at Georgetown University ranked Blackburn as a top performer for Earnings-Price Return - 209% (#1 in IL, #10 in the U.S.) and Net Price (#1 in IL; #11 in the U.S.). The Washington Monthly twice ranked Blackburn as the best baccalaureate college in Illinois.