

Blackburn College Celebrates Classes Of 2020 and 2021 At Commencement Ceremonies

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CARLINVILLE - On Saturday, May 15, 2021, Blackburn College in Carlinville, IL held four commencement ceremonies on the campus' Hudson Quad honoring nearly 200 graduates from the classes of 2020 and 2021. These events marked the 151st and 152nd Commencement exercises for the College.

Dr. Mark L. Biermann, president of Blackburn, shared remarks with everyone in attendance and gave the charge to both graduating classes. "I ask that you go forward into our world in the spirit of that thankfulness. Help those you encounter. Build up those in need. Seek to make this world a better place to live for all people. Live and give fully and generously. We are so proud of you, and we are honored that Blackburn College is your alma mater."

The day included remarks from Class of 2021 president Allison Kromray, Class of 2020 president Marcellus Polk (presented during the ceremony by Student Marshal Noelia Martinez-Voigt), and featured guest speaker Jennifer Shelby. An active member of the Blackburn Board of Trustees since 2012, Shelby shared with graduates that being adaptable to change and comfortable with your choices are "skills that will set you apart."

“Learn who you are, love and accept that person, and follow your dreams,” Shelby said. “Whether they are on a narrow and logical path that you’ve already planned, or your path is full of twists and turns, you never know what life will offer up. Always be ready to adapt and willing to change course.”

During the ceremony, special recognition was given to Taelor Prince. Tragically, while taking her final courses, Prince passed away in 2020 following a battle with cancer. In honor of Prince’s dedication to her education and the many ways she impacted the Blackburn community, the faculty awarded her a Bachelor of Arts degree and the College presented a diploma to Prince’s family.

Students from the class of 2021 received their diplomas at the first three ceremonies. The final ceremony of the day was held to recognize students from the class of 2020 who had previously received their diplomas last year but were unable to participate in an in-person event due to the pandemic. The ceremonies, which were divided into four smaller groups, allowed for appropriate social distancing measures to take place and offered students the opportunity to have additional guests in attendance.

One additional “graduate” for the Class of 2021 was acknowledged during the ceremony by President Biermann. Dr. Mark Armstrong, professor of chemistry and the college marshal, graduated into retirement following the day-long celebration. “While most of you have spent about four years here, one “graduate” today multiplied that by 10 and has spent the past 40 years here at Blackburn,” Biermann said. “We will miss Dr. Armstrong, but he knows where to find us.”

All ceremonies were live-streamed for those unable to make it to campus. These events and copies of the commencement programs are available at <https://blackburn.edu/graduation/>

Class of 2020: 84 Students

- Student Marshal: Noelia Martinez-Voigt
- Senior Class President: Marcellus D. Polk
- Valedictorian: Rhett Thomas Blankenship
- Salutatorian: Carlie Janelle Trybom
- Salutatorian: Joseph Thomas Schlarman

Class of 2021: 101 Students

- Student Marshal: Ethan Mensing
- Student Class President: Allison Kromray
- Valedictorian: Kayla Nicole Lammy
- Salutatorian: Lindsey Francis Malott

Additional Information:

- College Marshal: Dr. Mark Amstrong
- Invocations / Benedictions: Dr. Carter Aikin
- Commencement Speaker: Jennifer Shelby, Blackburn Trustee
- Charge to Graduates: President of Blackburn College Dr. Mark Bierman