

Blackburn College Announces Reimagined Bachelor's Degree Program In Music

July 21 2021 3:33 PM



CARLINVILLE - Beginning in fall 2022, Blackburn College will offer a new bachelor of arts degree in music with specializations in piano and voice performance. This innovative academic program, which will be distinctive to Blackburn, is designed to prepare students with music performance skills and provide in-depth entrepreneurial knowledge needed to launch professional careers in the music industry.

Dr. Joseph Welch, professor of music at Blackburn, explained that the new music major “is a complete reimagining of music at Blackburn” and he emphasized that no other college in the area offers this type of degree. He said, “While most music degrees are focused exclusively on only refining performance skills, Blackburn’s program will include this traditional content plus classes on entrepreneurial skills a student needs within the field. The program is modeled by real-world career experiences. Students will have business competence to enter the workforce upon completion of their undergraduate degrees. It will be enhanced by Blackburn’s state-of-the-art performance facilities, the current faculty, and the college’s unique student-led work program. It’s an individualized educational environment not found in most schools. Our mission is to nurture students into graduates with income-producing skills.”

Dr. Mark Biermann, president of Blackburn College, said, “Music has played a significant role at Blackburn for decades, both because of our strong academic program and also because of the ways that our students share their gifts with our campus and local communities. I am excited that we will be offering this new, innovative opportunity to better prepare students who want to pursue professional music careers.”

As part of this reimagined degree, Blackburn will embed entrepreneurship throughout a student’s entire college experience, helping to build a variety of essential tools for a music industry that is always evolving. Welch added, “The curriculum will provide our students with the opportunity to produce their own quality brands, marketing tools, social media presences, websites, headshots, and press kits. Students will learn how to manage their finances as a freelance artist, including budgeting for inconsistent income and filing taxes as an independent contractor.”

He explained that the nature of performance degrees in music necessarily focuses on the individual performer more than a large ensemble experience. Opportunities will be created for students to highlight their musical skills during live, stage-based performances on campus. Solo performance opportunities at all-campus events such as convocations will be more prominent, and students will also have the opportunity to provide background music before and after these events. For the final senior project, each student will be responsible for launching their business plan and incorporating the music planned for their senior recital.

“Additional activities planned to support this new major will create a more vibrant cultural life for the campus, and the surrounding community,” Welch said, “Guest artists will be invited to perform at the college. These guests also will conduct master classes in which students will perform and receive feedback. The Blackburn concert series is planned to include a fall event in October with performances highlighting upcoming concerts throughout the year. In November, the department will produce opera/musical theatre scenes. This new event will be a formal, gala-like evening allowing students the

opportunity to perform in a staged production. Also, the community will be invited to join members of the choir for a Christmas caroling event in early December. Christmas at Blackburn will round out the Fall semester retaining all of our campus' characteristic traditions. The spring events at Blackburn will include a recital in March and music and theatre majors producing a student musical in April. The final event for the school year will be a choral concert."

Blackburn's undergraduate auditions will begin in January 2022. The college's piano and voice faculty will tour during this time, providing masterclasses and recitals, and allowing prospective students to meet with instructors. Welch stated that this type of interaction is the most important component for a musician when choosing a college. Enrollment for this new curriculum will begin in the fall of 2022. A successful audition will be required for students to be admitted to the new music major.

For additional information, interested individuals may contact Dr. Joseph Welch at joseph.welch@blackburn.edu.

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 ten 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 by contributing to their community, all while building a resume and 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.