

# **Dr. Mark Biermann Inaugurated As 18th President Of Blackburn College**

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CARLINVILLE - Blackburn College officially marked a new era of leadership celebrating the inauguration of Mark L. Biermann, Ph.D., as its 18th president. The Saturday, October 16 ceremony was live-streamed from Bothwell Auditorium and presented to a limited number of guests and family members in attendance. Featuring musical selections performed by members of the Blackburn Voices, the college choir,

led by Dr. Joseph Welch, the event included special greetings and remarks from Vice Chair of Blackburn's Board of Trustees Dr. Rochelle Henderson, College Marshal Dr. James Bray, Student Senate President Jameela Brown, Carlinville Mayor Sarah Oswald, and Alumni Board President Dr. Lisa Black-Gomez.

As part of the ceremony, Student Marshal Zachary Wieland and former Blackburn College President Dr. John Comerford presented Dr. Biermann with the presidential collar of office. Delegates representing other colleges and universities in attendance included Dr. Brian Hartley, Chief Academic Officer for Greenville University, Ms. Brittany Ash, Associate Dean of Labor at Berea College, and Dr. Jeffrey Aper, retired Provost for Millikin University and Blackburn alumnus. The presidential family also played a key role, with Mrs. Lois A. A. Biermann reading *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost as well as daughters Grace and Hope Biermann sharing biblical selections from Ephesians and Isaiah.

During his inaugural address, Dr. Biermann was reflective of the college's purpose and its ability to transform lives and communities. "Blackburn has a singular and distinctive feel. It is our mission. It is our culture. It is our focus on student development and growth. It is our compassion and tolerance. It is our love of learning. It is our care for each other. It is all of these things, and more. It is who we are."

One of 10 federally-recognized Work Colleges, Blackburn is the only program in the country exclusively managed by students. Integrating 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.

"We can offer what no one else can," Dr. Biermann continued. "We will continue to be a destination of choice. We will fill a niche need that no one else can touch. We will be that special place where a select group of students can experience a distinctly powerful educational and growth experience."

Dr. Biermann assumed the role of president in August 2020, following the successful completion of a national search. Prior to his arrival on the Carlinville, IL campus, he served as Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs at Valparaiso University, Chair of the Department of Physics and Astronomy at Eastern Kentucky University, the inaugural dean of the School of Natural and Applied Sciences at Taylor University, and as the Dean of the Faculty and the Vice President for Academic Affairs at Wartburg College. Additionally, he has been an assistant or associate professor of physics at Whitworth College, Buena Vista University, Houghton College, and the United States Naval Academy, where he first earned tenure.

Dr. Biermann concluded his remarks by sharing, “I have been deeply blessed to have spent most of my life preparing for or living out my calling in higher education. That calling has led me to Blackburn College.

“Thank you for the opportunity to lead in answering that call.”

### *About Blackburn College*

*Founded in 1837, Blackburn College is a four-year, Presbyterian-related, co-educational liberal arts college located in Carlinville, IL. U.S. News & World Report recognized Blackburn College as one of the top Liberal Arts Colleges in the Nation for Social Mobility in 2020, 2021, and 2022. 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.*