



Mihkyelle Cooper Receives MLK Student Leadership Award at Blackburn College

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CARLINVILLE - Blackburn College is pleased to announce that Mihkyelle Cooper, a senior majoring in Justice Administration, from East St. Louis is the recipient of the 2021-2022 Martin Luther King (MLK) Student Leadership Award. This award is

presented annually to a student who exemplifies the values of diversity and inclusion at the college.

The award was first presented in 2014 as a way to celebrate the exceptional community-based work Blackburn students were leading. The nomination process is coordinated by Dr. Margaret Lawler, Blackburn's Executive Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Office as well as the Diversity Committee, composed of faculty, staff, and students.

"Mihkyelle was a well-deserved recipient of this year's MLK Leadership Award award because she exemplifies dedicated leadership by role modeling the true essence of diversity, equity, and inclusion in everything that she does," Dr. Lawler explains, "As evidence of Mihkyelle's dedication and commitment, one of the nominations submitted in support of Mihkyelle stated: 'She has developed into a natural leader as evidenced by her role as the first black female General Manager. Mihkyelle is not afraid to speak up for what she believes is right.'"

Cooper had no idea that she would be nominated and was surprised when she was presented with the award during her badminton class. "I am very grateful for receiving this award. I even cried when they presented it to me," Cooper explains, "I want to say thank you to not only those who nominated me but those who have supported me in my journey at Blackburn College. I appreciate all of the time spent listening to me talk about my plans for the campus and my future and the initiative taken to put my goals into play. Without Blackburn I have no idea where I would be!"

Cooper serves in the most prestigious leadership position at Blackburn - as one of two General Managers of the College's unique student-led Work Program. While there are 10 federally-recognized work colleges in the country, Blackburn's program is the only one managed by students. The role of General Manager rivals some corporate CEO positions, providing dynamic hands-on leadership experience handling day-to-day operations and managing their classmates. Cooper works hard to advocate for her peers while making sure everything continues to run smoothly within the program. She adds, "I never imagined that I would receive this award and I would have been fine without it as long as my peers knew that I did all that I could for them and will forever be their biggest support system."

As the 2021-2022 award recipient, Cooper received a certificate stating her achievement, a \$100 prize, and will have her photo displayed with past recipients on the MLK Legacy Wall in the Demuzio Campus Center. All of the Blackburn College community congratulates Cooper on this achievement.

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. U.S. News & World Report recognized Blackburn College as one of the top Liberal Arts Colleges in the Nation for Social Mobility in their Best Colleges lists for 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.