

# Blackburn College Earns Distinction For Commitment To Green Spaces On Campus

March 1 2022 10:32 AM



CARLINVILLE – Blackburn College has received 2021 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 currently the only Illinois college or university in the St. Louis region to be named a Tree Campus USA. Blackburn first received this honor in 2013 and has been annually recognized since 2018.

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 honored to receive this recognition from the Arbor Day Foundation. "We have dedicated many hours towards trees and their health. Our goal of planting 115 trees over a 5-year period was met three years ahead of schedule in April 2021. Despite meeting this goal, we have continued to incorporate more trees throughout campus as we remove older trees due to decline and mortality. In total, we spent roughly 382 hours on tree maintenance and planting in 2021, with 266 of those hours involving students."

He continued, "During Earth Week, Beautification Day, and Homecoming we not only connected with Blackburn students and alumni but also engaged with the community to talk a bit about trees and how to properly plant them. These are good opportunities for us to share all the great things we are accomplishing and also to teach people about proper tree selections, planting, and maintenance. We have had a lot of help from students working in the Grounds department as part of Blackburn's Work Program, as well as students from the Sustainability Club and Work Committee with our trees. Their efforts will be appreciated far into the future."

Organizations, like Blackburn's Sustainability Club, work hard to motivate people to be more mindful of the campus, the environment and the greater community. This includes volunteer-based events, like campus and highway trash pick-ups, plant sales, and their newly constructed campus garden that will be accessible to the public this summer. Dr. James Bray, Biology Department Chair and Sustainability Club faculty advisor, spoke about the importance of the Arbor Day award. "This continued recognition shows the commitment of the college to long-term sustainability on our campus and the community at large. Blackburn's efforts are to continue the longevity of campus life for not only future students, but future generations of Carlinville."

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. "This year, we planted 14 trees which were a mix of natives, ornamentals, and a few lesser planted varieties. Diversity is important when it comes to our urban forests. Too many of one variety is an open invitation for insect pests and diseases to devastate entire populations. When we are able to

incorporate different varieties, we have not only a more beautiful environment but also a healthier one. Consideration should be given to tree populations by having no more than 10% of a particular species, 20% of any genus, and no more than 30% from any family.”

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 \$148 million invested in campus forest management from 392 schools across the country. In 2020, Tree Campus Higher Education schools collectively planted 26,562 trees, and 30,693 campus students were engaged.

"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."

### *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.*