

# **Blackburn Announces New Degree Program To Strengthen Early Childhood Workforce In Illinois**

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CARLINVILLE — As part of an ongoing effort to address the shortage of qualified early childhood professionals in Illinois, Blackburn College is launching a streamlined pathway to earn a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. The fully online Current Workforce Early Childhood Degree Program is designed for working early childcare professionals who are seeking additional credentials and to complete a bachelor's degree in just two years.

This new degree is part of a broader effort through participation in the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) program to address the shortage of qualified early childhood educators in the state of Illinois. Created through IL Public Act 102-0174, the College will collaborate with other participating consortium members to improve pathways to degrees, credentials, and other licensure endorsements.

As a consortium member institution, prospective Blackburn students can apply for scholarships. PELL, MAP and a specially designated ECACE scholarship from the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) are available to cover the total cost of attendance, including books, fees, technology and transportation.

“Access to early childhood is an absolutely critical component in the development of children, which makes it essential for educators to have the best possible training for the field,” Dr. Cindy Rice, Blackburn Department of Teacher Education Chair, said. This program was developed to allow individuals to remain in their current paid position while completing a bachelor’s degree. “If you presently work in a daycare center, provide licensed care in your home, work with Head Start, or as a paraprofessional in a school setting working with children in pre-K to second grade -- you are a perfect fit for this opportunity. The only requirement is that you plan to continue working in the industry,” she explained.

Rice added, “Blackburn has always been committed to eliminating the barriers to a life-changing higher education. For early childhood workers, that means developing a flexible, online program to accommodate busy working schedules and ensuring federal and state assistance is available to reduce the financial burden of continuing education.”

Individuals who would like to learn more about Blackburn’s Current Workforce Early Childhood Degree Program are welcome to attend one of two free Zoom information sessions held on [Monday, June 20, 2022](#), and [Thursday, June 23, 2022](#), at 7:00 p.m. Learn more about the program, information sessions, admissions requirements and opportunities for financial assistance at [blackburn.edu/eceonline](http://blackburn.edu/eceonline).

### ***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 Illinois, #10 in the U.S.) and Net Price (#1 in Illinois; #11 in the U.S.). The Washington Monthly twice ranked Blackburn as the best baccalaureate college in Illinois.*