

# Blackburn College Receives \$4.8M Grant for New Athletic Center

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CARLINVILLE - Blackburn College has been awarded a \$4.8 million grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity. Blackburn will utilize the funding to help create and construct the College's new \$6+ million indoor athletic practice facility, which broke ground in May.

With over 40,000 square feet of space, the building project is part of a comprehensive effort to provide Blackburn students and the community greater access to expanded

athletic and recreational facilities. Announced earlier this year, the Winning Together campaign for athletics and enrollment aims to build a critical new chapter of the College's legacy.

The efforts will better meet Blackburn's needs, providing essential space for existing NCAA Division III athletic programs to increase the number of athletes recruited but also allow for an expansion of the athletic offerings. For the entire campus community, the new facility will provide a space for intramural and recreational opportunities and instruction related to academic programs, including physical education and sports management.

The new facility will also increase access to athletic facilities for Carlinville and Macoupin County. Blackburn's current facilities are already in continual use for campus needs, making it challenging to offer space for community use. The new building will provide space for new opportunities for the surrounding communities, including youth sports, summer camps, and facilitating large gatherings.

"We pride ourselves on offering a high-quality experience for all Blackburn students," said Kim Camara-Harvey, Athletic Director at Blackburn College. "The grant and the state-of-the-art building will further elevate our abilities to support student-athletes, connect with the surrounding communities, and enhance the profile of the College."

This project will mark one of the most significant investments Blackburn has made into its athletic facilities, and the new building will be the only practice space of its kind for midwestern NCAA Division III schools. Located on the north end of campus, it will feature a 200 x 120-foot turf field, retractable batting cages, a golf performance center with simulators, and a putting and chipping green.

New locker rooms, coaching offices and athletic training space in the facility will serve as the home base for Blackburn's golf, softball, baseball and soccer programs, as well as for the College's newly established men's and women's wrestling teams, which are slated to begin competition during the 2023-2024 season.

In addition to the new building, the \$7.7 million campaign will modernize this historic Dawes-Woodward Complex. Constructed in 1913, it is a living monument to the students who built it brick-by-brick as part of the school's unique Work Program. The Dawes project – which will include a new basketball and volleyball court, roof replacement, HVAC upgrades, and a revitalized entryway – will relieve the pressure off Dawes and allow it to continue serving as an integral part of campus life. Winning Together will also transform the tennis courts into a racquet, pickleball and outdoor basketball complex.

“The vital role athletics plays in attracting new students to Blackburn – and keeping them here – cannot be overstated,” said Glen Krupica, Winning Together Campaign Manager. “While these enhancements will help our dedicated coaching staff build and strengthen athletic teams, they also enhance the experience for our Work Program and academics. Student-athletes are more invested in Blackburn, with higher GPAs, retention, and graduation rates, and, for every volleyball player or golfer we recruit, we are also recruiting an artist, a business major, or a future educator.”

For more information regarding the Winning Together campaign, please visit [blackburn.edu/winningtogether](https://blackburn.edu/winningtogether).

### **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 has recognized Blackburn College as one of the best colleges in the Midwest region for 2024. Blackburn also earned a top-ten ranking for social mobility. Blackburn has been listed as a top performer for social mobility each year the list has been published. The Washington Monthly ranked Blackburn first in Illinois for performance by students receiving Pell Grants in 2022 and 2023. The publication has twice ranked Blackburn as the best baccalaureate college in Illinois.*