

Blackburn Professor Joseph Welch Named ISMTA Teacher Of The Year

October 12 2023 11:20 AM



CARLINVILLE - Dr. Joseph Welch, Professor of Music at Blackburn College, has been named the 2023 Teacher of the Year by the Illinois State Music Teachers Association (ISMTA). Welch serves as Department of Music and Theatre Chair and Director of the College Choir. He teaches music theory, music history, aural skills, and arts entrepreneurship as well as giving applied lessons for piano. Previously, he was the recipient of Blackburn's Faculty Diversity Award in 2023 and was named Gateway Arch East Member of the Year in 2017. Welch will be honored for this award at ISMTA's November conference.

Welch was nominated for the award by Gillian Cerbin, President of The Gateway Arch East Chapter of ISMTA. They wrote, “Joe truly gives of his time and expertise to the furtherment of music across the whole community. Working tirelessly, he reaches across a diverse area both musically and demographically, always going beyond and always willing to step up for others. His style is understated, putting others first, never first to boast of his many achievements, but always looking to bring out the best in others with encouragement and skill. He is a true ambassador for the profession!”

Among Welch’s many accomplishments includes reimagining the Music program at Blackburn, which purposefully combines mastering performance talent and technical craft with in-depth entrepreneurial knowledge, preparing students to launch careers in the music industry after graduation. Modeled by real-world career experiences, students build their brands, create press kits, cultivate social media presence, and learn how to manage finances as freelance artists and independent contractors. The innovative program officially launched last year.

Continuing an active presence in the communities he grew up in, Welch also serves on the boards of Southern Illinois Young Artist Organization and Bunker Hill Education Foundation. He also trains young singers through the Opera Theatre of St. Louis Artists-in-Training program and performs in concert with Opera Edwardsville. As a choral accompanist, he plays for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra’s IN UNISON Chorus and serves as an Artist-in-Residence for Opera Edwardsville. Other recent choral accompanying credits include the SLSO’s Holiday Festival Chorus and St. Louis Children’s Choirs’ Young Men’s Chorus. Since 2019, Welch has served as Assistant Music Director for Variety Theatre, a one-of-a-kind musical theatre company featuring an inclusive children’s ensemble. Additionally, he is the founder and artistic director of St. Louis Art Song.

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.

