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Annual *Connections*

Blackburn Institute

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA





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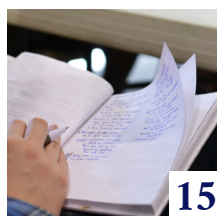
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Issue No. 2

Annual Connections is published each year by the Blackburn Institute staff in conjunction with our Annual Symposium. Please send address changes, updates, or ideas to:

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Director's Message

As the Blackburn Institute moves into its 21st year of programming at The University of Alabama, our Annual Symposium sets the stage for conversations about a significant challenge of leadership. The theme of this year's symposium, "Courage in Alabama," inspires us to examine, both within ourselves and around us in our larger community, the difficulty of taking progressive action in the face of adversity.

At the core of the Blackburn Institute's identity are the values that guide our work. We are a community of individuals drawn together to facilitate a diversity of opinion, to be called to action, to network across generations, and to instill a lifetime commitment to improving the state of Alabama. Each facet of this identity requires the "courage" to take action in some manner, whether in our professional, personal, or civic lives.

Far too often, we watch idly as conditions worsen, progress stagnates, and potential withers at the prospect of challenge, but there is, within ourselves, the "courage" to create change. This change, however, is not always easy and I am reminded of the

words of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when he said, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in the moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy." As citizens of the state of Alabama, we yearn to see improvements; as the current and future leaders of the state, we seek out potential solutions; as students, fellows, and supporters of the Blackburn Institute, we have made a commitment to implementing change.

Over the next two days, you will examine "courage" in one of five different settings: in your local community, in the judicial system, in politics, through direct service, and through faith. This theme continues with our content sessions, which present "courage" in contextualized examples of specific issues in Alabama: education, economic development, and prison reform. Through these instances, we can explore ways of applying our collective skills and

knowledge in practical ways. One of the questions frequently attributed to Dr. Blackburn



is, "What have you done for Alabama today?" This question challenges us to think about how we integrate civic action into our daily lives, but is silent on the barriers, real or perceived, that may exist. Taking action in a highly politicized environment requires courage; acknowledging you are not an expert and need assistance requires courage; seeking collaborators in uncharted territory requires courage.

Our community has the collective skills and experience to change the state; now recognize and foster "courage" in each other and use it as a catalyst for your mutual progress. ■

“ At the core of the Blackburn Institute’s identity are the values that guide our work ”



Amanda Bennett

Learning to Lead | Landon Nichols

Blackburn students come from every corner of campus, bringing with them a broad array of varying ideas, opinions, and passions. This assemblage of differing perspectives is part of what makes the Institute such a valuable and unique body, but our true organizational strength is defined by the quality of our people. One of the especially outstanding 2015 Blackburn Students is Amanda Kahlia Stone Bennett. She is a senior studying English and African American Studies from a small Atlanta suburb. Amanda has been writing since she was a child; a legacy that continues today in her role as Huffington Post Campus-Editor-at-Large for The University of Alabama. She aspires to be a tenured professor of African American Literature, and to always keep writing. Amanda was kind enough to answer a few questions for us:

What would you say has been your most meaningful experience as a member of the Blackburn Institute?

I particularly enjoyed the program that Bobbie Siegal prepared for Blackburn New Students at the 2015 retreat. The exercise gave us the opportunity to discuss the more subtle and implicit ways that race and class impact an individual's ability to succeed socially and economically, particularly in Alabama. The conversations that we were able to have after the activity were significant because they allowed us to think beyond our own individual and biased perspectives and, instead, develop empathy for the experiences of others.

What has been your most significant contribution to either the State of or the University of Alabama?

In April, I had the opportunity to present some of my research on misogynoir and the construction of African American female identity in a Tide Talk to a group of my peers. Much of my undergraduate research has focused on the degree to which certain voices are heard or dismissed in society, and I am glad that I was able to speak openly and



inform others of a perspective that is typically silenced in discussions of inequality in American society.

What does leadership mean to you?

Frankly, being a leader means being humble. Having the humility to admit when you've made a poor decision or that someone else may have a better understanding of a topic or situation than you do is a deeply important quality to have as a leader. It's easy to associate being a leader with being in unquestioned control of a situation. However, the best and most effective leaders have the unique ability to listen to a large number of voices, opinions, and perspectives and generate creative and dynamic solutions to complicated issues. Leadership should encourage the creation of new ideas, not the perpetuation of old ones. ■



“Frankly, being a leader means being humble”

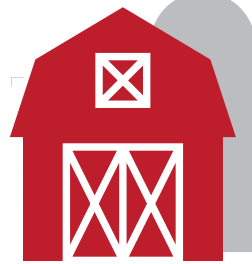
New Students

Out-of-State

14

In-State

21



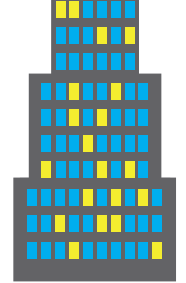
Rural

7



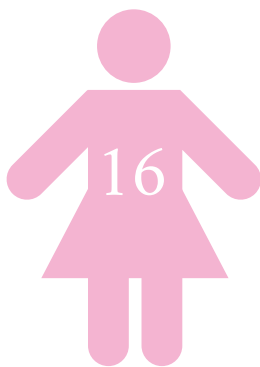
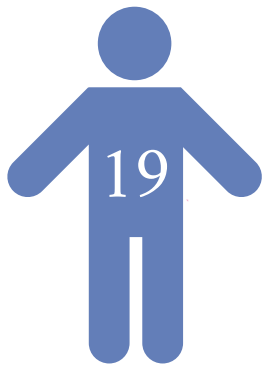
Suburban

14



Urban

14



Freshmen



Sophmores



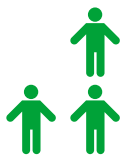
Juniors



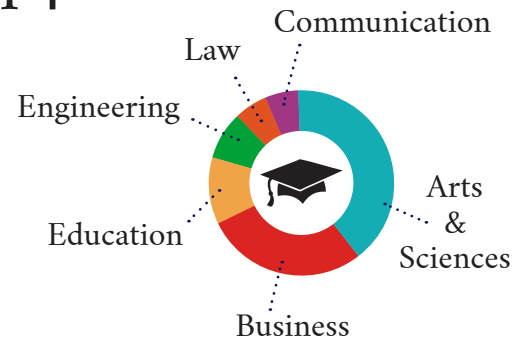
Seniors



Graduate



Law



2015 New Students

Row 1: Jordan Patterson, Meghan Dorn, Haley Siddall, Polly Ricketts, Christa Smith, Amanda Bennett, Lita Waggoner, Mary Katherine Clements, Katie Plott, Anne Matthews, Lillian Roth, Samantha Rudelich, Katherine Mauldin, Caroline Morrison, Caitlin Malone

Row 2: Samuel Pannell, Joshua Hillman, Jolyon Greene, John Roberts, Frank Foley, Michael Moore, Undrè Phillips, Douglas Craddock

Row 3: Terrance Lewis, Chisolm Allenlundy, Nathaniel Broadhurst, Elliot Spillers, Jeffrey Rogers, William Leathers, Ben Jackson, Andrew Cicero, Karter Smith

Not Pictured: Jonathan Joyner, Warner Thompson, Taylor Younginer



Curriculum Overview



The Vision

“My vision is to develop a community of ethical leaders who collaboratively accomplish good and noble ends. A good community is comprised of more than one generation; embraces transcending values that esteem each citizen; and creates a sense of oneness where individuals set aside personal gain, benefit, or goal for the sake of the group.”

- Dr. John L. Blackburn

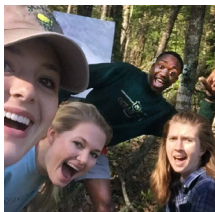


Overarching Values

Facilitating a Diversity of Opinion | by providing opportunities for students to experience all sides of issues impacting their communities as well as creating situations for open dialogue focused on fostering the resolution of issues rather than their mere identification.



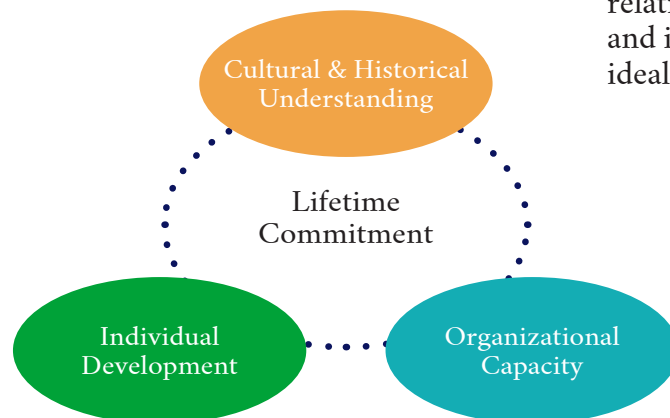
Being Called to Action | by inspiring active citizenship as individuals and collectively by identifying and implementing strategic initiatives for the common good.



Networking Through the Generations | by providing opportunities for students and fellows to engage in dialogue and personal contact with advisory board members, faculty, community leaders, scholars, and political leaders.



Instilling a Lifetime Commitment | by providing a rich collegiate experience so that, upon graduation, fellows are encouraged not only to continue to foster relationships with the Blackburn Institute and its members, but to also uphold the ideals of the Institute in their daily lives.



ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM



BLACKBURN INSTITUTE
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

During a weekend filled with opportunities to learn about issues of state and national concern, Blackburn Students, Fellows, and Advisory Board Members connect with one another and campus and community partners at the Institute's marquee event: the Blackburn Annual Symposium. The Annual Symposium is also the home of the Frank A. Nix Lecture on Ethical Leadership and the Gloria and John L. Blackburn Academic Symposium in alternating years.

Thanks to generous support from the Daniel Foundation of Alabama, members of the Blackburn Institute are given the opportunity to put the Institute's values into action by developing proposals for a project that will better their community. New Students work as small groups to turn their ideas for community improvement into reality as they compete for funding through the Daniel Community Scholars competition. Students and fellows are also encouraged to submit additional proposals to start sustainable community initiatives throughout the state.



SPRING NETWORKING DINNER



BLACKBURN INSTITUTE | DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

Formerly known as the D. Ray Pate Dinner, this premier event for the Institute is a time for reconnection, fellowship, and celebration. Held in Birmingham, the Blackburn Institute comes together for an evening designed to welcome its newest students, to congratulate its graduates, and to reaffirm the Institute's mission and values.

Signature Events

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Serving as an introduction to the Blackburn Institute, this weekend retreat gives the institute's newly selected students the opportunity to learn more about the Institute's mission and values and each other through a series of Alabama 101 sessions and exercises.



Burt Jones and Protective Life Travel Experiences provide opportunities for Blackburn to delve deeper into the understanding of Alabama's people, places, and history by visiting communities and exploring what comprises the culture of the state.



Through a variety of focus areas ranging from building a personal brand and networking to etiquette and résumé writing, these "how-to" workshops equip students with the skills needed to continue their success at The Capstone and beyond.



Discourse Dinners, Breaking Bread Collaboratives, and Hot Topics, Hot Pizza allow for members of the Institute to connect with university faculty, other campus groups, and each other through meaningful discussions on topics focused on the state and campus.

Matt Calderone, 2011

Blackburn Fellow, was an engaged student leader with a passion for serving others. In addition to being involved with Blackburn during his time as a student at the Capstone, Calderone served more than 33,000 students as president of the Student Government Association. He developed his passion for local government through his work with the City of Tuscaloosa where he was a member of the Mayor's Incident Command team after the April 27, 2011 tornado.

Now residing in Tuscaloosa with his wife Claire and their daughter Abigail Rose, Calderone works with The University of Alabama System Board of Trustees and represents District Four on the Tuscaloosa City Council. While balancing a busy professional schedule and a young family, Calderone's involvement with Blackburn has been steadfast by serving as a judge in the Daniel Community Scholars Competition and as a featured Alabama 101 speaker at the New Student Retreat.

We caught up with Calderone to ask him a few questions about his time with the Blackburn Institute and his vision for the future of Blackburn and Alabama:

Matt Calderone

Values in Action | Mary Lee Caldwell, Ph.D.



How has your involvement with the Blackburn Institute changed over time?

While I appreciated and participated in Blackburn activities during my time at UA, I find myself wanting to become even more involved as a fellow. Through my work and service in the community, I see more than ever the need for more young people who have curiosity to find a need and the passion to collaborate with others to make a difference. The Institute prepares students to make that difference.

What lessons do you hope current Blackburn Students learn during their time on campus?

I hope Blackburn Students learn to embrace others who may

have a different opinion and work together to improve their community, finding strength in their differences. I hope the students learn that leadership comes in many forms and that serving others is the highest calling.

How do you think Blackburn Fellows can contribute to the Institute's values?

I believe the greatest way Fellows can contribute to the Institute is by setting an example for others, by living out the values of the Blackburn Institute, and by serving as mentors and a resource to students, fellows and the Institute.

What role do/can you see the Blackburn Institute playing in the State of Alabama?

The Institute's greatest opportunity to serve the State is by training future leaders. Fellows will go on to make a tremendous difference in our State in many ways. The Institute can help fellows hone their leadership skills and develop lifelong practices to equip them to best serve others. ■

“ I believe the greatest way Fellows can contribute to the Institute is by setting an example for others ”





Program Spotlight

New Faces, New Places, and Sweet Southern Graces | Mary Leib

Seats were claimed, luggage was loaded, itineraries were distributed, and our road trip began as the bus pulled off campus. An evening in Demopolis, followed by a day and a half in Mobile with another few hours reserved for historic Demopolis on the return trip, would place us back in Tuscaloosa Saturday evening. Each line on the schedule was an unexplored adventure and an opportunity to learn about new people and places.

As we soon learned, a Blackburn Institute travel experience is more than 39 students and fellows piled into a tour bus for hours at a time. It's more than munching on Gold Fish, Sour Patch Kids and oatmeal cream pies, while debating current events as I-20 whirls past the window. A Blackburn travel experience transcends merely achieving

educational goals and arriving at one final destination.

These trips begin with the belief that every place in Alabama deserves exploring, and by embracing the relationships we have and the unknown we can come to a more complete understanding of this state and our role within. Inevitably, where we find ourselves at the end of the journey varies, as we each arrive at different conclusions regarding what it means to be a citizen and serve our communities in the State of Alabama.

We unloaded at our first stop, the production site for the nation's supply of Foster Farms corndogs. We donned safety gear including shoe-coverings, goggles, gloves, hairnets and lab coats, and our eyes grew larger as equipment made thousands of corndogs all around us. It became clear



that this production facility was one of the few industries maintaining the surrounding economy. The importance of the relationship between industry and community was apparent when touring the Port of Mobile, and a mirror of it appeared when we spoke with the Mobile Mayor's office. We worked with the Mayoral staff to reason through the hard question of what to do after the city builds a cruise ship dock, and an unsuccessful season drives away the promise of business?

When visiting the USS Alabama (during Battleship Memorial Park's 50th anniversary celebration) and viewing "Selma" on opening weekend, we examined the relationship between Alabama and the rest of the world. While the "Mighty A" served our nation in World War II, "Selma" reminded us that a rocky past does not dictate the trajectory of our future. In both experiences, we were reminded that by placing ourselves in the shoes of others, we gain insight and understanding into their lives. From the newly sworn in police officers of Mobile, to the wealthy homeowners of the 1800s in Demopolis, the people of this state and each piece of their history are worth experiencing.

There are few students who have the privileges we have as members of Blackburn. From knowledge, to conversation, to opportunity, we learn through travel experiences that the more we work to understand other communities, opinions and beliefs, the better we can understand our own. ■

Year in Review



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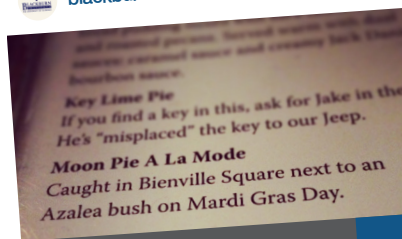
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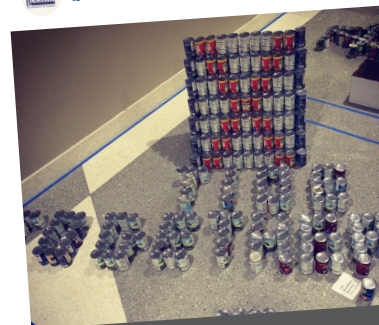
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Lou Thibodaux

A Lifetime of Leadership | Candace Peters

The Venerable Dr. Louise R. Thibodaux, a graduate of Mount Holyoke College (B.A., English), the University of Southern California (M.A., Occupational Therapy), and the University of Alabama at Birmingham (Ph.D., Medical Sociology), has spent the last 8 years faithfully serving on the Blackburn Institute's Advisory Board. Thibodaux learned about the institute through her good friends and board members, Tom and Carol Patterson, who spoke highly of Dr. Blackburn and the tremendous impact he had on students. From their influence and meeting Dr. Blackburn himself, she could sense the importance of his legacy and desired to follow in his footsteps.

Thibodaux, a true example of servant leadership, participates in all aspects of the Institute from working with students and fellows to taking on a leadership role within the board. She assisted the board by serving as an at-Large member of the Board's Executive Committee (2014-2015) and as a Co-chair for the Bylaws Committee. Since 2011, she participated in the student selection process as a member of the Interview Panel and by offering essay prompt suggestions for the written application. She currently works with the Fellows Involvement Network which she sees as an extension of her work

with student selections. She says "Not everyone is going to be able to give 100% to Blackburn the year they leave campus. Life happens. The trick is to identify the people whenever they can jump in and make sure that they find the experiences and support that they need when they need it."

We asked Thibodaux a few questions about her service on the board and in the State:

What would you say has been the most meaningful experience as a member of the Advisory Board?

This may sound strange, but taking a leadership role in our recent revision of the By-Laws was probably my most meaningful experience. Most people think of By-Laws as something dull and inert, but that's not the way it was for me. As the committee debated how we would create structures to support Dr. Blackburn's vision, the whole project took on a life of its own. I'm really proud of the way that it all came together.

What are your views on servant leadership and/or lifelong learning and how have you integrated those factors into your personal life and/or the Blackburn Institute?

I have always had a penchant for learning and am not afraid to try new things. I joined the UAB faculty in 1971 to teach in the first

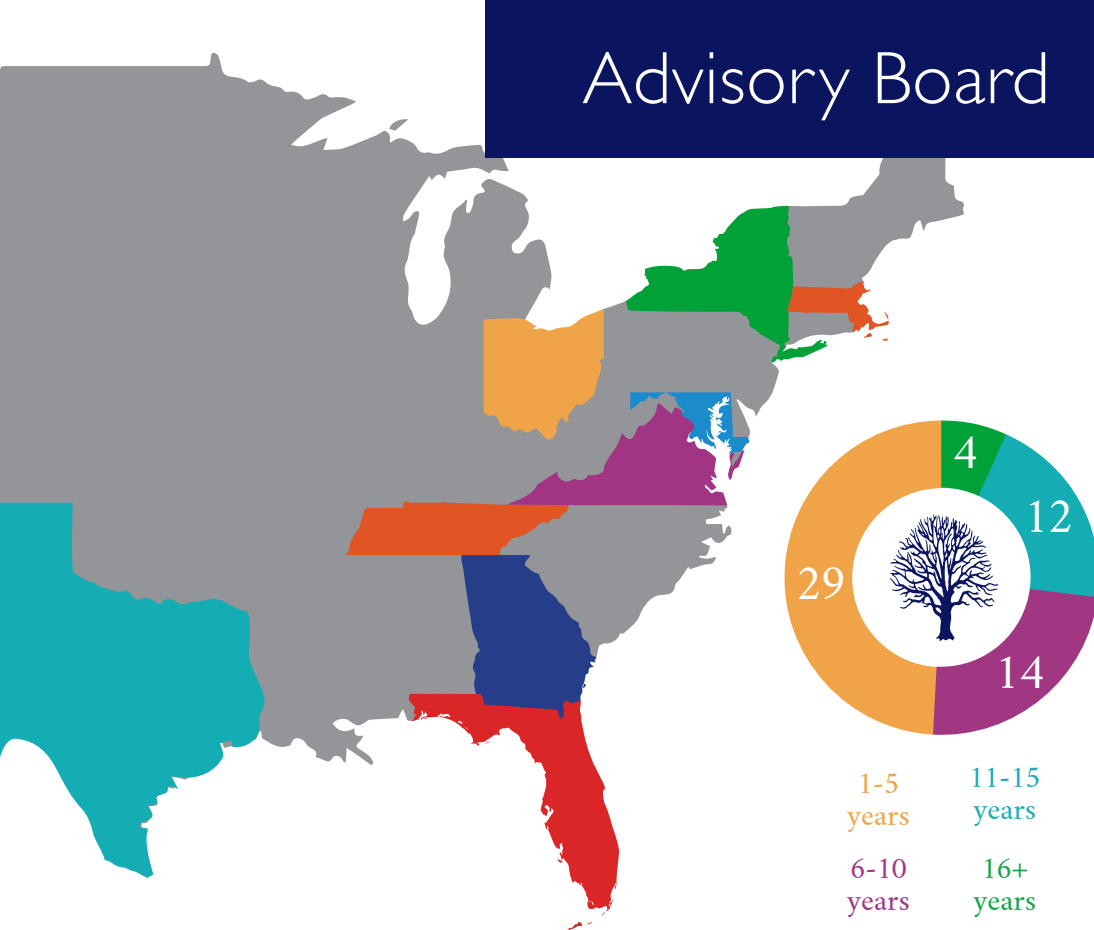
occupational therapy program in Alabama. I was part of the original team that changed The Jefferson County Tuberculosis Sanatorium in Birmingham into Lakeshore Rehabilitation Facility. I was one of the first Episcopal deacons to be ordained in Alabama. Shortly after that I was appointed as Archdeacon. But being "first" can become a trap if you don't realize that your real job is to empower others to follow their dreams. I believe that the real secret of leadership is to act like a trailblazer, clearing out the underbrush so that others can follow.

What has been your most significant contribution to the State of Alabama?

I wish I could point to one specific contribution and claim it as my own. Maybe the thing that I do best is to stay faithful, optimistic, and open. All change takes time; large-scale structural change takes a very long time. Many of the problems Alabama faces can only be solved if we put aside our differences and commit to work together. I believe that what Margaret Mead said is right-- that a small group of thoughtful and committed citizens working together generates a force that can change the world. I want to be on that winning team. ■



Advisory Board



Birmingham	23
Tuscaloosa	8
Montgomery/ River Region	7
Huntsville	6
Gulf Coast	1
Northeast Corridor	2
Blackbelt	2
Shoals Region	1

Membership

J. Norman Baldwin
Jenna Bedsole
Lynne Berry*
Gloria Blackburn
Katie Boyd Britt
Kyle Buchanan
Julian D. Butler*
Cheree Causey
Prince Cleveland
Sue Bell Cobb
Ray Cole
Mark Cooper

John Covington
Kathleen Cramer*
Bradley Davidson
David Donaldson
Corey Ealons
J. David Ellwanger
Cleophus "J.R." Gaines
Fournier "Boots" Gale
Mike House**
Sandra Hullett
Ann Jones
G. Douglas Jones

Peter Loftis Lowe, Sr.*
Gordon Martin**
Mark Martin
F. David Mathews
Marion McIntosh**
Ray Miller
Leroy Nix
Marjorie Kay Nix*
Jon Noland
William O'Connor
Larry O'Neal
Carol Patterson
Tom Patterson
Alejandro Perez
Holly Piper**
Redding Pitt
Eric Pruitt
Joe H. Ritch*
John D. Saxon

Bobbie Siegal
Don Siegal
Jim Simon
Joan R. Smith
Lynwood Smith
Victoria Starks
Donald Stewart
Leonard Stolar
Chris Strong
Andre Taylor
Louise Thibodaux
Tracy Thompson
Kevin Turner
Robert Turner
R. B. Walker
Jim Wilson III

*Term begins Jan. 2016
**Board Officers



Looking Ahead to 2015-2016

A Bright Future for Blackburn | R. Mac Griswold, Ph.D.

Moving forward with the Blackburn Institute requires our own brand of courage to evolve in some respects. Throughout our entire network, both short- and long-term planning is occurring to ensure the success of our endeavors.

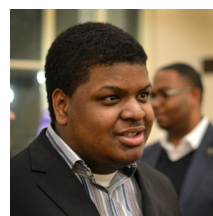
First, the student experience is undergoing changes and growth through updates to the curriculum. Students will engage in an extended, 4-day travel experience that is slightly modified in structure and preparation, allowing for students to share a common experience and to learn about issues in the state during periods of preparation and debriefing. After their first year with the institute, Blackburn Students continuing their experience will be challenged to advance their own personal development through selected activities within the Institute. These students will then be able to mentor the new students, facilitate communal discussions, and assist with

planning the new travel experiences, among other tasks. Finally, work is under way to define a new program for summer mentorship experiences that will connect Advisory Board members and fellows with students to meet a variety of learning and development objectives.

Second, fellows are responding to the call to action, both internally to our organization and externally to the State of Alabama. Renewed efforts on behalf of the Fellows Involvement Network (FIN) have resulted in focus groups on short-term goals to strengthen fellows' connections to each other and students. More than 75 Blackburn Fellows gathered at 5 events this summer to renew relationships and commitments and planning is already being discussed for 2016. Finally, the group is preparing for their next generation of leadership through an officer election process in spring 2016.

Third, our Advisory Board is invested in improving current operations, while also keeping an eye to the future. The Leadership Development Committee is committed to the recruitment, training, and development of individuals that can help us achieve our mission. A new board member orientation to better inform and support new members of our community is in development for launch in fall 2015. In addition, the board is focused on a long-term development plan that will provide fiscal support for the deepening of students' and fellows' experiences.

As we move forward this year, I ask that you recommit yourself to our work. Answer the call to serve; engage with the institute; offer your time, experience, skills, and resources; model the values of Blackburn to students and each other; and consider every day, "What have you done for Alabama today?" ■



Important Dates

Oct. 9 | Open House

Oct. 28-31 | Travel Experience

Nov. 9 | Faculty/Staff Reception

Nov. 10 | Nominations Open

Nov. 16 | Daniel's Competition

Jan. 14-16 | Travel Experience

Jan. 20 | Nominations Close

Jan. 25 | Interest Session

Feb. 16-18 | Group Interviews

Feb. 25-27 | Individual Interviews

April 1-2 | New Student Retreat

April 18 | Networking Dinner

Get Social



@BlackburnUA



@BlackburnInstitute



[www.facebook.com/
TheBlackburnInstitute](http://www.facebook.com/TheBlackburnInstitute)



blackburninstitute@sa.ua.edu

“The Blackburn Institute is unique in its ability to equip young people with the essential skills and perspectives required to be thoughtful change agents in their communities”

- Caroline Morrison, 2015 Blackburn Student

Looking Forward; Giving Back

As we move into our 21st year, we hope that you will consider giving to the Blackburn Institute. Designed to instill the Institute's four overarching values, the Blackburn Student and Fellow experience is only achieved through generous donations from our supporters. Thanks to contributions, 20 classes of Blackburn Students have been able to participate in dynamic programming, to explore different communities within our state, and to develop meaningful relationships within our intergenerational network. Please consider giving so that future generations of Blackburn Students can be involved in this unique experience. Let us continue to work towards turning Dr. Blackburn's vision into a reality. Give today by visiting <http://blackburninstitute.ua.edu/institute.cfm>.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA[®]

Division of
Student Affairs
Blackburn Institute