

2018-19 Student Officer Application

Faith Barringer - Communications Director

Describe your past involvement with the Blackburn Institute.

I am a member of the 2017 Blackburn Class. During the last year I have gone through all of the new student curriculum, where I have deepened my understanding of what it means to be a leader, and broadened my knowledge about the state of Alabama. While this education will be instrumental to my future, I have also gained great relationships within the Blackburn community. These relationships have been instrumental in demonstrating the Blackburn values at work. I believe that my time as an active member of the Blackburn community is not done, and that acting as the Community Director will allow me to continue to foster these relationships.

Describe the impact you foresee having as a student officer.

I believe it's fair to say that I'm the "Photography Girl" of this Blackburn class. My history with cameras and photography most likely has identical roots with anyone my age: there were copious amounts of hours trying to get the perfect Myspace profile picture using a point-and-shoot camera. Thankfully my skills were expanded once I entered high school, and this past August marked my eighth year as an actual Photographer. I have served in numerous committees as a freelance photographer, a social media point person, or as a historian. If elected as Blackburn's Communication Director I would continue the current posts that are being published on our social media. In addition to these, I would like to add in photographs and other media to make the institute more personable. I believe that the heart of Blackburn is its members, and their stories should be shared more often. The other role of the Communications Director is direct communication with the new student class. Luckily I had Ryan Truitt as my Communications Director, so I have a good model to follow. I will strive to make information be easily acceptable and to create open channels for communication. As an avid question asker myself, I believe that I am up to this task.

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Shawn McGee - Communications Director

Describe your past involvement with the Blackburn Institute.

Having grown up in the tiny town of Killen, AL, I had little chance to experience diversity of any kind. However, my first year of involvement with the Blackburn Institute was a year of personal growth and broadened horizons. The Institute has introduced me to more new people, ideas, and concepts than I ever could have anticipated - and with each new experience I find myself more proud of my status as a Blackburn student.

Over the course of the past year, I have become completely enamored with the entirety of this organization; the people, the events, and the principles all hold a special place in my heart. I challenged myself to attend nearly every event and talk to every member I met who was associated with the Blackburn Institute. Ultimately, this helped me to develop a more full understanding of the values at the core of the organization. After numerous Friday Forums, retreats, travel experiences, small group meetings, Perspectives on Leadership events, and hours of working on homework in the office, I can honestly say that the Institute has had a permanent and hugely positive impact on my life and my college experience.

Describe the impact you foresee having as a student officer.

As a student officer, I would hope to have as positive an impact on the Blackburn Institute as it has had on me. As Communication Director, my attention would be focused on promoting positive publicity for the institute, both internally and externally. I would also strive to ensure open communication between Blackburn students, fellows, and advisory board members. Also, after discussion with fellow members of the 2017 student class, I would like to take steps to promote more sustained communication and dialogue between returning students and the new student class, and to promote more "mentorship" like interaction for the incoming class. I firmly believe that both groups would benefit from such interaction.

Outside of these goals, I believe that my photography, communication, design and writing skills would be highly beneficial to the Institute. In the past I have owned a photography business, served in a leadership position for several different organizations and non-profits, drafted emails and letters for an electrical company, and created logos and designs for an embroidery company. All of these skills would transfer over to the role of Communications Director and allow me to serve the organization to my fullest extent.

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Rubén Tarajano - Communications Director

Describe your past involvement with the Blackburn Institute.

Being a part of the Blackburn Institute for the past year has offered me the opportunity to form connections with individuals that I would have never been able to meet otherwise. I've had the honor to be immersed in the new student curriculum, as a member of the student class of 2017, and have met dozens of wonderful intellectuals who are a part of, or make possible the work of, the Blackburn Institute. In the process, I seemingly have become everyone's personal photographer. "Rubén, take my picture," has become a common phrase during the past few travel experiences, and it is one I have loved to hear. Not only have I been able to be a part of the typical parts of the new student curriculum, such as DCS project planning, small group discussions, and travel experiences, but throughout this process I have been able to capture some of the memories the institute has made possible.

Describe the impact you foresee having as a student officer.

Storytelling, in my experience, carries powerful weight. As Communications Director, I desire to increase the scope of this role by capturing the stories and perspectives of our students, fellows, and staff. In doing so, it will provide the opportunity for the Blackburn Institute to share the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of its members. Through this yearlong "Humans of the Blackburn Institute" project, individuals will be able to gain an understanding on the unique views and stories of our membership. Not only will this bring the Blackburn Institute closer in its ability to inform students, alumni, and those who support the institute of each other's interests, but it will also serve as a form of publication and advertising, allowing those who are not involved an "inside look" into the Blackburn Institute.

In addition, as a quick learner, I intend on further improving my skills in photography, videography, and editing, with the guidance of the previous Communications Director. In doing so, I believe I am amply qualified to fulfill this role and would be immensely grateful to the membership of the Blackburn Institute if given this opportunity.