

The Blackburn Institute is a leadership development and civic engagement program specifically focused on improving the state of Alabama. Through its work with students, alumni (Fellows), and Advisory Board members, the institute develops a network of leaders who have a clear understanding of the state's challenges. Selected students participate in a one-year curriculum of activities and events, after which they continue their involvement for their remaining time at the Capstone.

Upon graduation, participants earn recognition as Blackburn Fellows and begin their work through professional and civic involvement in their home communities and throughout the state, both individually and through the Fellows Involvement Network (FIN). Supported by an Advisory Board of established leaders committed to the state of Alabama, the Blackburn Institute promotes change through an intergenerational network that learns from the past, takes action in the present, and plans for the future.

The Blackburn Institute is named in honor of Dr. John L. Blackburn. A nationally renowned leader in higher education, Dr. Blackburn served as dean of men at The University of Alabama and was instrumental in the University's peaceful integration in 1963. In 1994, The University of Alabama's Division of Student Affairs formed the Institute to foster Dr. Blackburn's belief that people link strategic actions through the generations for progressive and ethical change.

"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

The mission of the Blackburn Institute is to develop a network of diverse leaders who understand the challenges facing the state of Alabama and the nation and who are committed to serving as agents of positive change.

In working to fulfill this mission, the Blackburn Institute is guided by four overarching values:

- **Facilitating a diversity of opinion** by providing opportunities for students to experience multiple 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, alumni, 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.

At the core of the Blackburn experience is the curriculum that guides new students through their first year with the Institute. This curriculum is designed to reinforce leadership development, learning, and civic outcomes aligned with overarching values of the Blackburn Institute. Starting with their selection in the spring semester, new students are guided through a one-year curriculum that introduces them to the vision, mission, and values of the institute; builds their personal and professional skills; provides them with opportunities for authentic relationship-building with possible mentors; engages them in civic work to improve the campus or Tuscaloosa community; and challenges them to actively listen to and understand diverse points of view.

The new student curriculum consists of several mandatory events, including:

- New Student Orientation and Social;
- D. Ray Pate New Student Retreat;
- Spring Networking Dinner;
- Annual Symposium;
- Burt Jones Rural Travel Experience;
- Daniel Community Scholars Presentation and Reception;
- Protective Life, Drummond Company, and Vulcan Materials Company Government Experience; and
- Small Group Values Discussions.

These core elements combine with other optional activities to form the foundation for a lifetime of commitment after graduation:

- Perspectives on Leadership – Offers unique insights into the work of leaders in a variety of settings
- Blackburn EATs (Engages Alabama Topics) – A lunchtime discussion group that puts national issues into a local context by examining them through the lenses of the state and local municipalities
- Ongoing Advisement – Throughout the first year in the program, students meet with a designated advisor for coaching sessions and long-term career and civic planning, which continue at the student's discretion until graduation and beyond
- Civic Project Funding – To further engage returning students and alumni (Fellows), opportunities for funding are available to support civic projects in the Tuscaloosa community and throughout the state

Advisory Board Member Expectations

General Expectations

1. Know and understand the purpose of the institute's mission, values, goals, and programs.
2. Engage in meaningful discourse, seek to understand other points of view, and model the same behaviors for students and Fellows.
3. Serve in leadership positions or undertake special assignments when able to do so.
4. Suggest nominees for the Advisory Board that live the values of the institute, represent a diversity of opinion and personal background, and wish to invest in the long-term positive development of students.
5. Bring dedication, collegiality, and a sense of humor to the board's meetings, events, and deliberations.

Board Meetings and Institute Events

1. Prepare for and participate in board and committee meetings. The advisory board meets twice a year, immediately preceding an annual networking event (April) and an annual symposium (August).
2. Attend other institute events as scheduling allows.
3. Ask timely and substantive questions, while also supporting the majority's final decision.
4. Maintain confidentiality of the board's executive sessions.
5. Present updates on committee work or other relevant information to the board when asked to do so by the Chairperson or Director.
6. Suggest agenda items periodically for board and committee meetings to ensure that multiple points of view and constituent needs are addressed.

Relationship with Staff

1. Counsel the Director and offer support based on your skills, knowledge, and experience.
2. Make requests for staff assistance through the Director, so staff work load, project priority, and task assignments can be managed appropriately.
3. Refrain from asking staff to make exceptions to policy, without prior consultation with the Director.

Avoiding Conflicts of Interest and Partisanship

1. Avoid conflicts of interest and disclose any possible conflicts to the Chairperson in a timely fashion.
2. Maintain independence and objectivity and openly act in a manner consistent with fairness, ethics, and personal and professional integrity.
3. Understand and support the non-partisan nature of the institute's work. The Blackburn Institute as an entity does not take a stance on political actions or policies, rather it seeks to build a network of engaged individuals that take civic action to improve the state based on their own values.

Fiduciary and Fundraising Responsibilities

1. Read and understand the organization's financial statements and otherwise help the board fulfill its fiduciary responsibility.
2. Contribute to the institute's programming and board's activities through annual dues, payable by December 31 for the following calendar year. Annual dues for board members under the age of 35 at the start of the calendar year (January 1) are \$500; annual dues for all other board members are \$1,000.
3. Consider any additional current or planned giving according to personal means.
4. Assist the Finance Committee, Chairperson, and Director by implementing fund raising strategies through personal influence with others (e.g. corporations, foundations, and individuals).

Advisory Board Members

First Name	Last Name	Employer
Zack	Ashbee	The Ashbee Group of Wells Fargo Advisors
Norman	Baldwin	Retired - The University of Alabama
Jenna	Bedsole	Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C.
Gloria	Blackburn	Retired – Community Leader
Michael	Briddell	City of Montgomery
Kyle	Buchanan	Helen Keller Hospital
J.W.	Carpenter	Birmingham Education Foundation
Mary Margaret	Carroll	Fine Geddie
Prince	Cleveland	EBSCO Industries
Sue Bell	Cobb	Next Generation Consulting, Inc.
John	Covington	Chesapeake Consulting
Bradley	Davidson	Southern Gentry, LLC
Milton	Davis	BL Harbert International
David	Donaldson	Vulcan Materials Company
David	Ellwanger	Retired - The Center for American and International Law
Ben	Foster	Vulcan Value Partners
Boots	Gale	Regions Financial Corporation
Macon	Gravlee	Retired – Foodway, Inc.
John	Hammontree	Reckon by AL.com
Robert	Harris	BancorpSouth Bank
Cornelia	Heflin	Abroms & Heflin Capital, LLC
Russ	Henshaw	Madison Street Wealth Advisors - Raymond James
Martin	Houston	Alabama One Agency
Jennifer	Jenkins	JJPR, LLC
Bryan	Jones	Crowne Health Care
Doug	Jones	United States Senate
Terry	Lamar	Hoover City Schools
Frank	Lassiter	Protective Life Corporation
Matthew	Lewis	Arbor Springs Health and Rehabilitation Center
Mary	Lieb	Cogent Strategies
Peter	Lowe	G.W. Jones & Sons Real Estate Investment Co.
Mark	Martin	Build UP
David	Mathews	Kettering Foundation
Warren	Matthews	Burr & Forman LLP
Isaac	McCoy	Stillman College
Amanda	McCracken	PNC Bank
Stephen	McNair	McNair Historic Preservation, Inc.
Rosalind	Moore-Miller	The University of Alabama

Martha	Morrow	EyeCare Professionals
Rick	Myers	HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology
Taylor	Nichols	State of Alabama, Office of Information Technology
Marjorie	Nix	Retired – Community Leader
Bill	O'Connor	Campaign for Alabama
Andres	Peña	Kaufman & Killen, Inc.
Chuck	Price	City of Birmingham
Pat	Reynolds	Loyola University New Orleans
Gina	Rigby-House	Aflac
Joe	Ritch	Sirote & Permutt
John	Saxon	John D. Saxon, P.C.
Rashmee	Sharif	Cigna
Bobbie	Siegal	Retired – Civic Leader
Christian	Smith	The University of Alabama at Birmingham
Joan	Smith	S-RAM Dynamics
Lynwood	Smith	United States Court
Will	Sorrell	Samford University (Master of Divinity and MBA Candidate)
Donald	Stewart	Donald W. Stewart, P.C.
Mashonda	Taylor	Woodlawn Foundation
Lou	Thibodaux	St. Thomas Episcopal Church
Robert	Turner	Vernon Chapel A.M.E. Church
Lynne	Valley	Berry Millsaps Properties
Joshua	White	Regions Financial Corporation
Tameka	Wren	BBVA Compass
Jackie	Wuska	United Way of West Alabama

Executive Committee and Officers

Gordon	Martin	Alabama Power Company (<i>Chairperson</i>)
Mike	House	Hogan Lovells (<i>Past Chairperson</i>)
Holly	Piper	Civic Leader (<i>Vice-Chairperson</i>)
Alex	Smith	A. Smith Consulting, LLC (<i>At-Large Member</i>)
Marion	McIntosh	Honda Manufacturing of Alabama, LLC (<i>Secretary</i>)

Ex-Officio Member

Riley	Jamie	The University of Alabama
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Temporary Sabbatical

Carol	Patterson	Retired – Civic Leader and Entrepreneur
Tom	Patterson	Retired – Civic Leader and Entrepreneur

ANNUAL *Connections*

2017

...UNTIL JUSTICE ROLLS D
AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LI

INSTITUTE FOUNDATIONS	4
SOFT LANDINGS PROGRAM	8
GROWING TO FEED	12



Cover details:

*Dwyer Freeman (student),
Michael Briddell (advisory
board), Andrea Hayes (student),
and Camille Carr (student)
reflect over the Civil Rights
Memorial in Montgomery*



Division of
Student Life
Blackburn Institute

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each year by the Blackburn Institute
staff in conjunction with our
Annual Symposium.

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IN THIS ISSUE

2017

Director's Message	3
Our Foundations	4
Advisory Board	5
Student Spotlight	6
Student Selection	7
Soft Landings	8
Fellows Network	9
Fellow Spotlight	10
Project Funding	11
Growing to Feed	12
Network Growth	14
Save the Dates	15



"My vision is to develop a community of ethical leaders who collaboratively accomplish good and noble ends."

**Dr. John L.
Blackburn**

Each spring, the Blackburn Institute welcomes into the fold a new class of students and transitions graduating students to their roles as Blackburn Fellows. We formally recognize these community transitions each year at the Spring Networking Dinner as our students, Fellows, and Advisory Board members come together to form new relationships, celebrate each other, and share updates on our lives. These are the moments

when I see the strength of the Institute's network most clearly.

Without hesitation, our community welcomes new members, understanding they will be part of a shared experience that will shape their time at The Capstone, expose them to new points of view, challenge them to take action, and foster a lifetime commitment to Alabama. At the same time, we remind graduates that they are not leaving the Institute, merely stepping into a new role, and have the support of a community both in Alabama and throughout the United States.

Returning for the fall semester, we once again come together to share company and knowledge with each other. The theme of the 2017 Annual Symposium is "...and Justice for All" and the content will challenge our community to confront several of the ways in which true justice is denied some in our society. Understanding our past, examining our present, and envisioning the future are all required to create true change and we come together to accomplish, in the words of Dr. Blackburn, "good and noble ends." Our hope is that the work started

at the Annual Symposium continues into the year for students, Advisory Board members, and Fellows alike.

The last year has been a successful one for the Blackburn Institute and I look forward to all we can accomplish in the coming year. Both the Summer Mentorship Experience and the Perspectives on Leadership series, piloted in 2016-17, are set for expansion in 2017-18, adding greater depth to the curriculum as well as a greater reach of our programs to all students at The University of Alabama.

I share with you in this magazine some members of our community, a glimpse of their work, and their aspirations for the future. Please join me in supporting their continued success and I invite you at the same time to deepen your own commitment to the values of the Blackburn Institute. Make the written words a living mission in your professional and civic lives and continue to work for the state of Alabama.

Roll Tide,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John L. Blackburn".



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

Mission

The mission of the Blackburn Institute is to develop a network of diverse leaders who understand the challenges facing the state of Alabama and the nation and who are committed to serving as agents of positive change.

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.

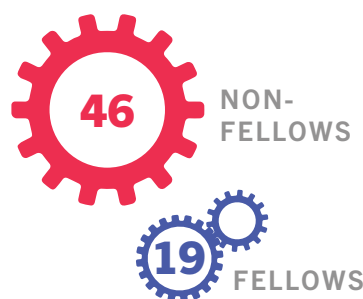
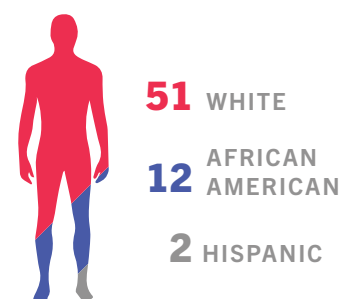
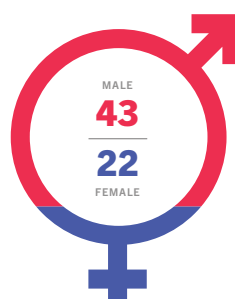
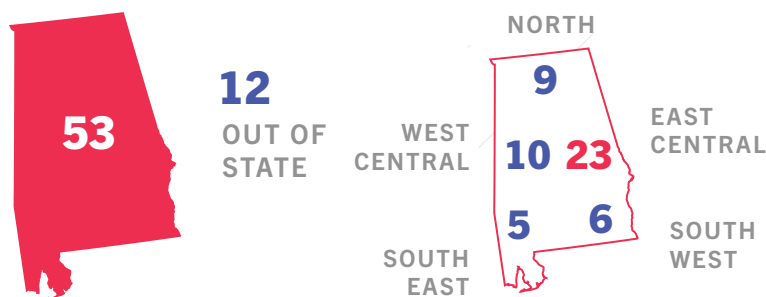
Instilling a Lifetime Commitment

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.

2017 ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

ZACK ASHBEE
 NORM BALDWIN
 JENNA BEDSOLE *
 LYNNE BERRY VALLELY
 GLORIA BLACKBURN
 MICHAEL BRIDDELL
 KATIE BRITT *
 KYLE BUCHANAN *
 JULIAN BUTLER
 MARY MARGARET CARROLL
 PRINCE CLEVELAND *
 SUE BELL COBB
 RAY COLE
 MARK COOPER
 JOHN COVINGTON
 KATHLEEN CRAMER
 BRADLEY DAVIDSON *
 MILTON DAVIS
 DAVID DONALDSON
 COREY EALONS *
 DAVID ELLWANGER
 WENDY EVESQUE
 BOOTS GALE
 ROBERT HARRIS III *
 CORNELIA HEFLIN
 MIKE HOUSE ^
 SANDRAL HULLETT
 DOUG JONES
 BRYAN JONES
 PETER LOWE
 GORDON MARTIN
 MARK MARTIN *
 DAVID MATHEWS

MARION MCINTOSH ^*
 STEPHEN MCNAIR
 RAY MILLER
 ROSALIND MOORE-MILLER
 MARTHA MORROW
 VICTORIA NABORS *
 TAYLOR NICHOLS *
 LEROY NIX *
 MARJORIE NIX
 JONATHAN NOLAND
 WILLIAM O'CONNOR
 LARRY O'NEAL
 CAROLYN PATTERSON
 TOM PATTERSON
 ANDRES PEÑA *
 ALEJANDRO PEREZ
 HOLLY PIPER ^
 ERIC PRUITT *
 JOE RITCH
 MICHELLE ROTH
 JOHN SAXON
 BOBBIE SIEGAL
 LYNNWOOD SMITH
 CHRISTIAN SMITH *
 JOAN SMITH *
 WILLIAM SORRELL *
 DONALD STEWART
 LOUISE THIBODAUX
 TRACY THOMPSON
 ROBERT TURNER *
 JUDSON WELLS
 JOSHUA WHITE *



^ BOARD OFFICER
 * FELLOW

As of 08/01/2017

Nominate a Board Member

Nominations for Advisory Board members are actively solicited from current and past board members, students, and Blackburn Fellows. These nominations are reviewed by the Leadership Development Committee and, after initial conversations, forwarded to the Advisory Board for a vote by the full board. In keeping with its values, the Advisory Board strives to be a diverse body, representative of the state of Alabama, that can ensure “the Blackburn Institute maintains sufficient civic, business, political, and financial resources to carry out the mission of the institute.”

<http://blackburninstitute.sa.ua.edu/people/advisory-board/nomination-selection-process/>



STUDENT Spotlight

Amber Scales

Amber Scales is a junior double-majoring in Public Relations and Theatre, with a minor in Political Science, and serves as the Student Vice-Chairperson of the Blackburn Institute. She is on the pre-law track and has ambitions to attend law school after completion of undergrad. On campus, she serves as a member of Capstone Men & Women, the Director of Multicultural Affairs in the Student Government Association, and a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. She is a passionate student with strong interpersonal skills who excels in critical decision making.

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

I first realized the great impact the Blackburn Institute was having on me during the Protective Life Government Experience. Having difficult discussions with my peers prompted some self-evaluation. The experience helped me not only to grow as a leader and student, but also to engage in materials surrounding some of the most pressing issues in the state of Alabama. This first dive into the many problems facing the state forced me to consider what I was doing to help and if it was enough. The Institute values active citizenship and after taking time to reflect on the travel experience, both the educational sessions and discussions with fellow students classmates, I knew I wanted to do more in the Institute. This was one of the reasons I decided to run for Vice Chairperson and it has greatly shaped my outlook on community involvement. Intentional advocacy and activism will shape this campus and the state and both are elements I want to contribute to the Blackburn Institute.

How has the Blackburn Institute impacted your perspective on leadership?

The Blackburn institute has strengthened my value of diversity in its many forms. Students at The University of Alabama come from all 50 states and 77 different countries. We are from communities both rural and urban and have differing socioeconomic status and political ideologies. Our

ethnicities and personal identities range as well, but these are the things that make both our campus and state great. Learning to understand an opinion contrary to one's own and empathize with an experience that is outside of your immediate understanding is vital to being both a good leader and citizen. Sunday Sundaes, our monthly discussion programs focused on issues of concern to the state and country, are always an amazing experience. I enjoy having a designated time to join together as a community and listen to each other's viewpoints. With various majors, interests, and personal experiences, every student has a unique take on the discussion topics and I always leave with a deeper understanding of contrasting opinions. The Blackburn Institute has taught me to listen to understand and always give the proper weight to a person's story.

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

When students come into the Institute, they bring individuality. No one else has had their exact upbringing, views, and experiences. That type of diversity is what creates a space for the values of John L. Blackburn to persist. Our students are leaders, change agents, and problem solvers. These skills allow them to interact with their respective cohorts, Fellows, and Advisory Board members creating a community that can make an incredible impact. Dr. Blackburn recognized the power of students on a college campus and I hope we continue to uphold that legacy.

What role do you see the Blackburn Institute playing on campus?

It is my hope that the Blackburn Institute becomes a place students can go to discuss policy, politics, and potential solutions to the problems facing both the state of Alabama and this nation. In an increasingly polarized world and campus, it is so important to maintain a space for open dialogue and discussion. The Blackburn Institute allows students of differing opinions, backgrounds, and experiences to learn from one another. Our network of students, Fellows, and Advisory Board members spans the state and nation, allowing students to connect both with other aspiring change agents on campus and mentors in fields of public service and beyond. Campus is full of people like our incredible faculty, staff, administrators, and visitors, but students are special. On a college campus, so much of the culture is created by students. Blackburn students can be found in various leadership positions and organizations across campus. We can help create a campus culture that promotes an open dialogue aimed at fostering understanding and lasting solutions. We can actively respect alternative views while still being able to unite for the common good. The work of the Institute is needed now more than ever and I hope we continue to enhance the student experience while giving back to our community and elevating our campus.

What lessons do you hope current and future Blackburn students will learn while on campus?

It is my hope that both current and future Blackburn students learn that our campus is vast. Opportunities are everywhere and a comfort zone is not serving you, but holding you back. When I first arrived at Alabama, I wanted to do everything and more, but on a campus of 37,000 people, finding a place you feel you can truly make an impact is difficult. It's easy to feel lost in the crowd and end up back in the known, whether that is an old sport, hobby, or club. It is vital to keep those old passions, while finding the new ones. When I joined the Blackburn Institute I was supported and taught the skills to help me navigate campus and create meaningful change. College can be a difficult time, but finding friends like my fellow students in the institute and using their skills, talents, and ability to make a difference is something for which I am incredibly thankful.

Student Selection Process for the Blackburn Institute

NOMINATION

From early November to early January, students may self-nominate or be nominated by a member of the university's faculty or staff, Blackburn Fellows, Students, or Advisory Board members.

APPLICATION

In mid- to late-January, nominated students complete an application consisting of one essay question, which is evaluated anonymously by a panel of Blackburn Fellows, Advisory Board members, Students, and campus staff members.

GROUP INTERVIEW

All applicants participate in a small-group interview with other applicants in mid-February. The panel of observers for the group interviews will typically consist of two Blackburn students, plus one additional member of the Blackburn community (staff, Fellow, or Advisory Board member).

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

A combined score from both the application essay and group interview performance is used to determine the students selected for individual interviews, which are conducted in late-February by a panel of Advisory Board members, staff, students, and Fellows.

<http://blackburninstitute.sa.ua.edu/people/students/nomination-selection-process>



SOFT LANDINGS PROGRAM

By Rashmee Sharif

Rashmee Sharif earned both her undergraduate and graduate degrees from The University of Alabama, double majoring in management and Spanish as an undergraduate and earning an MBA in 2013. As an undergraduate, she was heavily involved in numerous service and international activities on campus. From 2006–2008 she served as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where she studied International Relations and Spanish. Prior to obtaining her MBA, Rashmee was an instructor at the University, teaching courses in Global Studies from 2008–2012. Additionally, she was a Study Abroad Director, leading Alabama students to Bangladesh's Grameen Bank for three consecutive summers. Now a Change Manager with Cigna's Operating Effectiveness team, Rashmee lives in Birmingham and is enjoying life in sweet home Alabama with her husband.

What is the Soft Landings program and how did it get started?

One of the goals of Fellows Involvement Network (FIN) is to connect Fellows with each other to facilitate "networking through the generations." In line with this broader goal, the objective of the Soft Landings program is to get a recent graduate in touch with a Fellow in the city to which they are moving. The idea came from both recent graduates that wanted to feel part of their new Blackburn community and from Fellows that wanted to offer their knowledge and experience to new Fellows. We piloted the Soft Landings program last year and continued it in summer 2017. Our hope is that once the a connection is established, the Fellow can advise the recent graduate on places to live, suggest restaurants, introduce them to others, or help with getting established in other ways.

Is this only for recent graduates or can others benefit from it?

Since Fellows may face these transitions multiple times in their lives, we want to make the program accessible to anyone at any time. If you're starting a new job, beginning graduate school, or doing anything else that bring you to a new location, we want the FIN to serve as a resource during your time of transition.

What are some ways that the Soft Landings program can help recent graduates make the transition from a Blackburn student to a Blackburn Fellow?

We want to ensure that newly pinned Fellows are aware of and take advantage of the Blackburn network available to them. In addition to possibly receiving support on the ins and outs of a new city, we hope that these relationships develop into collaboration opportunities for shared

interests and friendships. Additionally, there is a strong sense of community among students based on their class years and this program can help them acclimate to the larger community of Fellows.

How does the program help Fellows strengthen their commitment to the values of the Blackburn Institute?

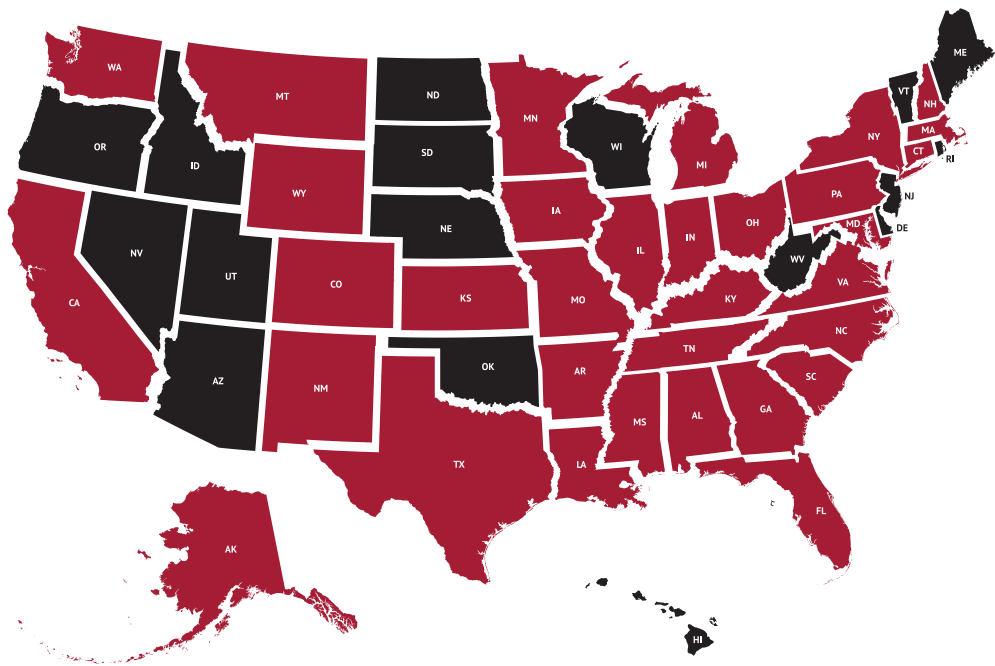
Blackburn Fellows are at various stages of life and can often get busy with their careers and families. The Soft Landings program allows them to remain connected to the Institute in an impactful way that is not a major time commitment. It also exposes Fellows to new members of our community that have recently completed the Blackburn curriculum and are ready to take action. By coming together, whether for social activities, discussions of Alabama issues, or career advice, Fellow can affirm their commitment to the Institute's foundation.

What is the best way to get involved?

For graduating students, complete the survey you received from the Blackburn Institute in the summer after you are pinned. This updates your post-graduation plans, contact information, and other details with the Institute, but also provides information to the Soft Landings program coordinator who can then try to match you with Fellows in your new community.

For Fellows, whether you are seeking assistance in a new community or want to offer your guidance to others, email the Blackburn Institute (blackburninstitute@sa.ua.edu) with your name, location, phone number, email address, and current biography. This information will be shared with the Soft Landings program coordinator to find an appropriate match for you.

WHERE HAVE FELLOWS LANDED?



United States
583

Abroad
8

East Central - 142

Blount, Calhoun, Chambers, Clay, Cleburne, Coosa, Jefferson, Randolph, Shelby, St. Clair, Talladega, and Tallapoosa Counties

West Central - 86

Bibb, Chilton, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Marion, Perry, Pickens, Sumter, Tuscaloosa, Walker, and Winston Counties

North - 42

Cherokee, Colbert, Cullman, DeKalb, Etowah, Franklin, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marshall, and Morgan Counties

South East - 35

Autauga, Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Coffee, Covington, Crenshaw, Dale, Dallas, Elmore, Geneva, Henry, Houston, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Montgomery, Pike, and Russell Counties

South West - 20

Baldwin, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Marengo, Mobile, Monroe, Washington, and Wilcox Counties





FELLOW Spotlight

Al-Karim Gilani

Al-Karim “Al” Gilani is currently pursuing a MD at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. He holds a BS in Chemical Engineering, MS in Chemical Engineering, and an MBA from The University of Alabama. Al has been exploring the economic impacts of federal student aid programs in rural communities, especially those in Alabama. He currently holds roles at The University of Alabama’s Education Policy Center, the United States Department of Education, and the Alabama and Mississippi Community College Policy Fellows Program. During his time at The University of Alabama, Al co-founded the Serbia Fellowship Experience and the Alabama chapter of HOSA-Future Health Professionals as an undergraduate student and served as the Men’s Education Coordinator of the UA Women and Gender Resource Center as a graduate student.

In spring 2017, Blackburn Fellow Al-Karim Gilani applied for funding under the Daniel Community Scholars program to conduct research and analyze data on Pell Grants, need-based awards for college students that are subsidized by the federal government. He proposed working with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the College Promise Campaign founded by Former Under Secretary of Education Dr. Martha Kanter, the United States Department of Education, and The University of Alabama's Education Policy Center. It was necessary to work with these organizations and units so as to catalogue and quantitatively assess the impact of Pell Grants on graduation rates and rural development. Mr. Gilani intended to analyze the graduation rates and economic impacts by public higher education sector, congressional district, and state, with a special focus on Alabama. Results were anticipated to allow stakeholders and special interest groups to advocate for Pell Grants as the most important human resource development policy tool for adults in rural communities. In the executive branch, the intersection of educational achievement and economic development would prove valuable when determining rural development strategies; in the legislative branch, congressional representatives would be able to see at the district level the impact of Pell Grants on community growth and development.

The following excerpted and edited entries from Mr. Gilani's work journal highlight some of his work through June 30. His preliminary findings will be discussed in a session with Dr. Stephen Katsinas, professor of higher education and political science and director of the UA Education Policy Center, at the Blackburn Institute's 2017 Annual Symposium.

Week of 5/22

I was in Tuscaloosa this week, starting the Education Policy Center's collaborations with former Under Secretary of Education Dr. Martha Kanter, currently executive director of the College Promise Campaign of the Joe and Jill Biden Foundation. As part of the collaboration, we made arrangements to access Federal Student Aid data sets that we needed from a partner organization. In addition to hosting Dr. Kanter in Tuscaloosa, I also worked with the Education Policy Center's staff to refine the data points we intended to extract from the sets. This week involved many discussions around project design and how best to tell the story of low-income Alabama students and how reducing the Pell grant would affect this subset of students and disproportionately affect states like Alabama. To make this story apparent, we realized that we needed to figure out the economic impacts of Pell and to analyze the data by congressional district to make it more interesting to our elected officials. I also met this week to discuss the plan with Dr. Mary Jolley, UA alumna, former administrator, and life-long advocate on issues related to children and families, health, education, literacy, and job creation. Dr. Jolley was also Congressman

Carl Elliot's Chief of Staff and was a key player in the enactment of the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which became the nation's first student aid program.

Week of 5/29

I worked out of the College Promise office in Washington, DC this week, as Dr. Kanter allowed me access to the FSA data sets from a partner organization. Most of the challenge this week was ascertaining which institutions were located in which congressional districts. For example, while the Tuscaloosa/UA-area is composed of 2 congressional districts, only one of these districts is credited with having the Pell federal dollars that are utilized at The University of Alabama. Using the extended 9-digit zip codes of each institution in the state, I began using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), on which Dr. Stephen Katsinas had trained me, to determine the institutions located in each district.

Week of 6/5

This week, I used the aggregate data to find the total Pell contributions to each congressional district in Alabama. I also spent time this week

following up with the meetings that the presidents and administrators of the 39 community colleges from Alabama and Mississippi had with leaders of Congress, Acting Under Secretary of Education Lynn Mahaffie, and Acting Assistant Secretary of Postsecondary Education and of Policy and Innovation Kim Ford. This week also marked the solidified position of Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos to reinstate the year-round Pell for FY17, not only continuing the program for the fiscal year, but expending it through summer term awards. This federal and congressional administration heard the message from Alabama and Mississippi that Pell grants drive the economies of rural America, and the reaction of this Administration was to expand generously the program.

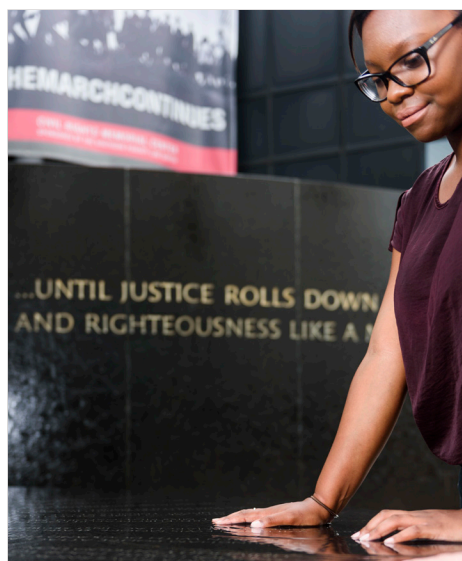
Week of 6/12

I took preliminary steps to connect Pell Grant contributions to economic impact in individual districts. One promising way to demonstrate economic impact would be to connect the Pell investment to the labor force that satisfies the labor needs of the local industry. We specifically want to pinpoint career and technical education (CTE) fields in Alabama that are

directly recruiting their employees from the pool of Pell Grant recipients. We started by looking at Mercedes-Benz and determined that one third of their employees hired in the last year were Pell Grant recipients. I have decided to use some of these case studies to demonstrate the fact that Pell creates the labor force that our economy in Alabama needs. I have also decided to send some of our Pell data to a contact who can use predictive modeling to ascertain the actual economic impact of Pell, especially in our more rural districts of Alabama.

Week of 6/26

I continued to analyze the aggregate data to also include contributions by congressional district for Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana. I was exploring report structures that would include findings on economic impacts, the possibility of College Promise programs for low-income students, and the impact of Pell Grants on the Alabama transfer process and retention and graduation rates. It is important to include each of these pieces, since there are many stakeholders involved in all of these particular components of the overall higher education landscape in Alabama.



Apply for Fellow Project Funding

In order to maintain the high quality of projects, it is strongly suggested Fellows make consistent progress during an initial 3-month planning phase, starting early in either September or February. The process of developing a project proposal requires Fellows become familiar with a community, speak with leaders in that community, understand its assets and needs, work collaboratively to develop potential solutions, and identify the resources necessary to implement a project.

Project proposal deadlines are November 15 for projects starting the following spring, summer, or fall and April 15 for projects starting in the following fall or spring.

<http://blackburninstitute.sa.ua.edu/student-curriculum-programs/daniel-community-scholars-program>



Growing TO FEED

By: Andrea Hayes

Andrea Hayes is a senior at The University of Alabama studying Public Health and Healthcare Analytics and serves as the Student Chairperson of the Blackburn Institute. While at UA, Andrea has worked to get her fellow students involved and connected to communities throughout Tuscaloosa. She has been actively involved in the Center for Service and Leadership as a volunteer, as well as an Assistant Team Leader for Green Bama. She is also a member of Eta Sigma Gamma, a health education and promotion honorary society, which is heavily involved in Holt Community. Of specific interest to Andrea is food access throughout the United States and healthcare reform. After graduation, Andrea hopes to work in public health advocacy and health policy for the state of Alabama.

Each year, groups of members from the new student class of the Blackburn Institute identify and research issues of concern to the local community, work with community partners to design interventions, develop budgets and plans of action, and compete for funding. The selected group then leads the implementation of the project by the larger class. The projects are funded through a generous endowment provided by the Daniel Community Foundation of Alabama.

The Daniel Community Scholars (DCS) project implemented by the 2016 class of Blackburn students resulted in two small community gardens located in Holt, Alabama, a community less than 5 miles from The University of Alabama. This project began at the D. Ray Pate New Student Retreat, where the class was divided up into DCS work groups. Akiesha Anderson, Caitlin Cobb, Carson Ford, Phuong Nguyen, and I all sat around on the floor tossing around areas of interest and issue ideas. Topics included ranged from prison reform to college preparation to food insecurity. Ultimately, we decided on food insecurity in segments of the Tuscaloosa community. Moving forward from the retreat the group began researching food insecurity and its impact in the Holt area.

Research compiled by Akiesha Anderson revealed that every county in Alabama has at least one food desert, affecting a

total of 1.8 million Alabamians, according to the American Heart Association. A food desert is an urban or rural area where the availability of affordable, healthy, fresh food is limited. After looking more closely at the Tuscaloosa area, we identified two food deserts, one in the Holt community and one in Alberta City. In the issue research phase of our project, we also identified that one primary way to address food insecurity is through the creation of "alternative food systems," such as farmers markets, food stands, and/or community gardens. Knowing the project requirements and the budget constraints of the DCS project, this felt like a feasible area in which to work and with many possible positive outcomes.

With this information now in hand, we began to compare the communities and identify possible partners within each area. We decided to work with Holt over Alberta City due to three main factors: Holt was larger, had fewer food options than Alberta, and had more potential community partners.

Due to my prior experience working with programs in the community, I knew that the churches within Holt served as a major community force and represented a great opportunity for possible community partners. With this in mind, we wanted to ensure that the churches approached represented Holt's diverse community. We selected

Hurricane Baptist, a predominantly African-American church, and SOMA, a non-denominational church with a Hispanic ministry, and reached out to the leaders in each community. Each of the churches was heavily involved in the planning of the project. They helped decide that a community garden was the best project to pursue and provided ample information on the construction of the gardens.

The hardest part about the entire project was coordinating all the moving parts. Most materials needed to be delivered prior to the build date while some materials, such as soil could not be delivered until the day of or plants that needed to be housed at a different location. None of this could have been accomplished without the churches' flexibility and willingness to aid with storage. Additionally, the staff of the Blackburn Institute served as sounding boards and provided guidance when we did not have enough experience.

As much as the project leveraged our time, energy, and organizational skills, the ultimate success depended on community knowledge and leadership. Constructed in mid-April by Blackburn students, other students from The University of Alabama, and volunteers

from each church community, the gardens have been a tremendous success. They started to produce food in the early summer, including crops of summer squash, zucchini, tomatoes, bell peppers, banana peppers, and watermelon.

At this point, the church congregations have the greatest access to the food produced, but the long-term plan at both churches is to explore an expansion of their gardens as the ones built in collaboration with the Blackburn Institute become more established. In addition to serving as a source of fresh and nutritious food for the community, both gardens are maintained by local youth, creating an educational opportunity which ensures a sustainable future for these gardens. As the gardens grow, the churches intend to set up food stands to help increase food access throughout the Holt community.



"Constructed in mid-April by Blackburn students, other students from The University of Alabama, and volunteers from each church community, the gardens have been a tremendous success."



2017 Class of Blackburn Students



- ROW 1** Austin Halverson, Baily Martin, Hani Razavi, Pedram Maleknia, Rachel Ramey, Rutland Patterson, Wen Walsh, Mollie Wade, Kyle Van Frank, Shannon Driscoll
- ROW 2** Patrick Reynolds, Mae Crumbley, Jay Little, Kalan Lett, Jasmine Phillips, Marissa Navarro, Faith Barringer, Erica McNaughton, Jordan Richardson, Asia Monet Hayes, Matthew Tedford
- ROW 3** Reid Jenkins, Lacey Cencula, Quinika Bradley, Omer Bensaadon, Jackson Gunter, Anne Lehmann, Jeffrey Jones, Lance McCaskey, Christine Allen, Olivia Howell, Rubén Tarajano
- ROW 4** Houston Wingo, Richmond Gunter, Jackson Bryant, Rebecca Griesbach, Jalen Drummond, Sydney Gabrielson, Alyssa Barefield, Ryan Dowdy, Keegan Allen, Shawn McGee, Norris Davis

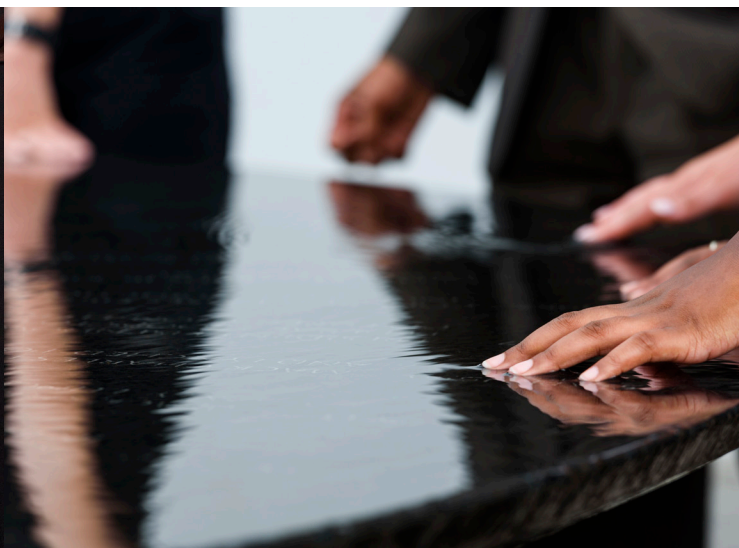
Not Pictured Megan Wingbermuehle

2017 Pinned Fellows of the Blackburn Institute



- ROW 1** Samantha Rudelich, Danielle Cassady, Taylor Younginer, Chandler Shields, Anne Matthews
- ROW 2** Erin Mosley, Caroline Morrison, Tucker Martin, Mary Lieb, Terrance Lewis, Maddy Lewis, Dana Sweeney, Ryan Coleman
- ROW 3** Chris Lancaster, Jonathan Joyner, Dalton Beasley, Nathaniel Broadhurst, Kelsei Coleman, Douglas Craddock, Josh Hillman, Peyton Hicks, Rob Grady

Not Pictured Akiesha Anderson, John Wilson Booth, Patrick Fitzgerald, Josh Fuller, Catie Malone, Jordan Patterson, Haley



AUGUST
25-26 Annual Symposium and Fall Advisory Board Meeting

JANUARY
19 New Student Applications Open

SEPTEMBER
7, 13, 19, 25 Small Group Values Discussions
Diversity of Opinion

JANUARY
29 New Student Applications Close

OCTOBER
5, 11, 17, 23 Small Group Values Discussions
Intergenerational Networking

FEBRUARY
1, 7, 13, 19 Small Group Values Discussions
Lifetime Commitment

OCTOBER
13 Homecoming Weekend
Open House

FEBRUARY
1-12 New Student Essay Review

OCTOBER
25-28 Burt Jones Rural Community Experience
East Central Alabama

FEBRUARY
13-15 New Student Group Interviews

NOVEMBER
2, 8, 14, 20 Small Group Values Discussions
Taking Action

FEBRUARY
22-24 New Student Individual Interviews

NOVEMBER
13 New Student Nominations Open

FEBRUARY
26 New Student Class Announcement

NOVEMBER
13 Daniel Community Scholars Poster
Presentations and Reception

MARCH
4 New and Returning Student Reception

NOVEMBER
28 New Student Interest Session

MARCH
23-24 D. Ray Pate New Student Retreat

JANUARY
11-12 Protective Life Government Experience
Montgomery, AL

APRIL
16 Spring Networking Dinner and Spring
Advisory Board Meeting

JANUARY
16 New Student Interest Session

AUGUST
24-25 Annual Symposium and Fall Advisory
Board Meeting

JANUARY
18 New Student Nominations Close

LOOKING FORWARD; *Giving Back*

After more than 20 years as a nationally recognized student leadership development and civic engagement program, the Blackburn Institute is entering a new phase in its realization of Dr. Blackburn's vision. This transition will result in a more structured network to support Fellows' endeavors for local and statewide action. As the 25th anniversary of the Institute approaches in 2019, this recommitment to Dr. Blackburn's vision will honor his work at The University of Alabama and the lasting gift of his legacy for our community.

Whether adding to an existing endowed fund, creating a fund to support new programs, or providing general support to the Institute, donors can help shape the experience of Blackburn community members for years to come. Make your one-time or recurring contribution today at:

<http://blackburninstitute.ua.edu/giving>

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