

# ANNUAL *Connections*

2019



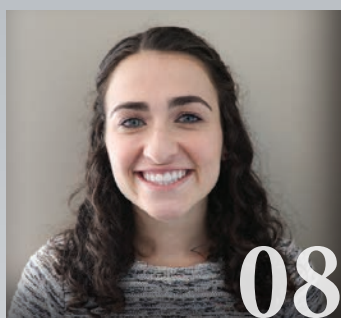
**CAPSTONE CREED**  
AS A MEMBER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA COMMUNITY,  
I WILL PURSUE KNOWLEDGE; ACT WITH FAIRNESS, INTEGRITY,  
AND RESPECT; PROMOTE EQUITY AND INCLUSION; FOSTER  
INDIVIDUAL AND CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY; AND STRIVE FOR  
EXCELLENCE IN ALL I DO.

BLACKBURN TIMELINE 6

CIVIC IMPACT 8

VALUES IN ACTION 16





Division of  
Student Life  
**Blackburn Institute**

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

Please send address changes,  
updates, or ideas to:  
[blackburninstitute@sa.ua.edu](mailto:blackburninstitute@sa.ua.edu)

<http://blackburninstitute.ua.edu>  
205-348-3277

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## IN THIS ISSUE 2019

Chairperson's Message . . . . .	3
Advisory Board . . . . .	4
Blackburn Society and Values . . . . .	5
Blackburn Timeline . . . . .	6
Civic Impact . . . . .	8
Student Spotlight . . . . .	10
Student Selections . . . . .	11
Fellows Involvement Network . . . . .	12
Fellow Spotlight . . . . .	14
Values in Action . . . . .	16
Civic Project Funding . . . . .	17
Program Spotlight . . . . .	18
Summer Networking Events . . . . .	20
AL Leadership Initiative. . . . .	21
Blackburn and Fulbright . . . . .	22
New Board Representation . . . . .	24
Celebratory Dispatches . . . . .	26
Giving Circles. . . . .	28
Blackburn Society . . . . .	30
Network Growth . . . . .	32
Save the Dates. . . . .	33

"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.

When I first came to the University of Alabama as a student some 41 years ago, we didn't have the Blackburn Institute. We did, however, have a Blackburn "Institution" in Dr. John L. Blackburn himself. In that same year, Dr. Blackburn returned to Tuscaloosa as the chief fundraiser of the university (Vice President of Educational Development) after several years at the University of Denver. At the time of his return, Dr. Blackburn had already secured his place in The University of Alabama's history for the central role he played as Dean of Men - the precursor to today's Dean of Students - in the successful and largely peaceful desegregation of the university.

Culpepper Clark, a former longtime UA administrator who wrote a book about the university's desegregation, said, "When the roll is called of the legendary, iconic figures of UA's 20th century faculty and staff, John L. Blackburn's name will be right there alongside Hudson Strode (the legendary, if somewhat controversial, author and professor of creative writing) and Bear Bryant (who needs no explanation)." That's pretty high cotton.

Dr. Blackburn was all about development: developing students as the first Dean of Student Development in 1968, developing The University of Alabama, and developing the state of Alabama. When Dr. Kathleen Cramer, then Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and now Interim Vice

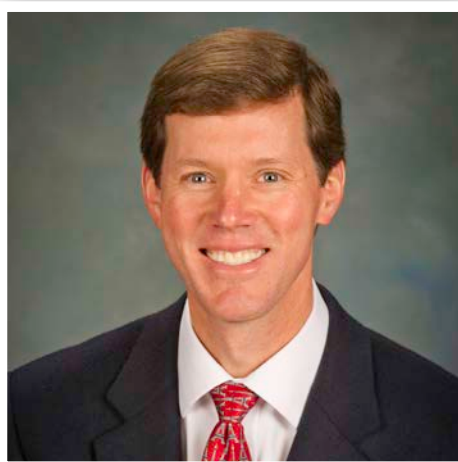
President for Student Life, approached Dr. Blackburn about how the university could pay tribute to him for his years of distinguished service, he asked if the university would consider creating an organization that would cultivate the future ethical leaders for Alabama and the nation. And that's exactly what they did, 25 years ago.

Since then, more than 650 students, now Fellows living in 36 states, the District of Columbia, and 14 countries, have participated in arguably the most dynamic college-level leadership development program in the country. And many are making a positive difference in Alabama and beyond. People like **Dr. Mark Martin (Blackburn '00)**, a Blackburn Fellow and Advisory Board member who started Build UP in Ensley, Alabama after serving in Teach for America, starting a charter school in New Orleans, and completing his doctorate with the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. Build Up is the nation's first and only workforce development model that provides low-income youth career-ready skills through paid apprenticeships with industry-aligned academic coursework leading them to become educated, credentialed, and empowered civic leaders, professionals, homeowners, and landlords.

As the Blackburn Institute begins its second quarter-century of service to Alabama, we have ambitious but attainable plans to further engage the entire Blackburn community, in the words of John Blackburn, "to develop a community of ethical leaders who collaboratively accomplish good and noble ends." I hope you will join us.



Gordon G. Martin, Chairperson  
Blackburn Institute Advisory Board





## 2019 ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

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 Holly Piper ..... Vice Chairperson  
 Alex Smith ..... At Large Member  
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 Jamie Riley ..... Student Life Designee  
 Mac Griswold (Ex Officio) ..... Director

## Nominate a Board Member

Nominations for Advisory Board members are actively solicited from current and past board members, students, and Blackburn Fellows through June 30 each year. They are then reviewed by the Leadership Development Committee and, after initial conversations, forwarded to the Advisory Board for a vote by the full board in August. 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>



## CURRENT MEMBERS

Mr. Bill Baxley  
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Dr. Kathleen Cramer  
Mr. Jim Hayes  
Dr. Sandral Hullett  
Mrs. Ann Jones  
Dr. Harry Knopke  
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Mr. Don Siegal  
Mr. Donald Stewart  
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Mr. Leonard Stolar

## 2019 INDUCTEES

Mr. Bradley Davidson  
Mr. David Donaldson  
Mr. David Ellwanger  
Mr. Michael House  
Mrs. Holly Piper  
Dr. Louise Thibodaux



## OVERARCHING VALUES OF THE BLACKBURN INSTITUTE

<b>Facilitating a Diversity of Opinion</b>	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.
<b>Being Called to Action</b>	by inspiring active citizenship as individuals and collectively by identifying and implementing strategic initiatives for the common good.
<b>Networking Through the Generations</b>	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.
<b>Instilling a Lifetime Commitment</b>	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.

In **1994**, during conversations with longtime colleague and friend, Dr. Kathleen Cramer, Dr. John L. Blackburn requested that his legacy be preserved through a living, breathing organization that would develop ethical leaders focused on improving the future of the State of Alabama. Out of these conversations and this desire grew the Blackburn Institute and the rest, as they say, is history.

In **1995**, the Institute's first event, the inaugural winter symposium, was held during February at Twin Pines with a group of UA student leaders selected by the administration. The major voices at the symposium were Jim Rogers, Johnny Johns, Cleo Thomas, and Bill Blount.

**1998** saw Symposium transition to a new location at Guntersville State Park and the holding of the first Frank A. Nix Lecture. The focus of the '98 Symposium was "How Decisions are made in the State of Alabama." The following year, 1999, saw Symposium move again, this time to Tuscaloosa. The focus of that Symposium was Constitutional Reform, and the Nix Lecturer was Mr. Bill Baxley.

The new millennium was an exciting time for the Institute. Symposium was held in Montgomery and coordinated by Blackburn Fellow Josh Hayes. The Frank Nix Lecturer was Lowell Barron, then-current Speaker of the Alabama House of Representatives. The following

By **2003**, the Blackburn Institute was engaging students in a curriculum that stretched year-round. Fall discourse dinners were again held in the home of University faculty members, special lunches occurred with Burt Jones and Donald Stewart, Symposium was held in Birmingham, and Representative Artur Davis served as the Frank A. Nix Lecturer. Blackburn Students also began hosting deliberative discussions for all students on campus. Students traveled to Sumter County, Mobile, and Montgomery. The Institute also hosted a lively discussion with two Cuban scholars during UA's Cuban Scholars Week.

1994

1998

2002

2004

1995

2001

2003

Topics of discussion at the first event were Global Economic Issues and their impact on Alabama; Government and Public Service: Contemporary Politics; Servant Leadership and Responsible Citizenship; An Interactive Look at the Future: Strategies for Campus and the State, and Future Blackburn Institutes.

Symposium was held at Twin Pines Resort for the second year in a row, this year with the specific theme of "Who Matters Most in Alabama Politics?" Also this year, Mr. D. Ray Pate made a major contribution of \$50,000 to begin the process of building an endowment and establishing a sustainable program. The following year saw a third consecutive Symposium held at Twin Pines focusing on "NATO and the View from Eastern Europe." 1997 also played host to the creation of the Nix Lecture Series on Ethical Leadership with an endowment now totaling over \$500,000 that was raised by Advisory Board members.

year brought additional donations from the Advisory Board and subsequently an expansion in programming. The Symposium returned to Twin Pines resort and students embarked on the inaugural Burt Jones Travel Experience to Selma, thanks to the generosity of Tom and Carol Patterson. **2001** also saw a luncheon with Governor Siegelman and a legislative agenda breakfast as well as the creation of the annual D. Ray Pate Dinner.

The **2002** Symposium was held at the Wynfrey Hotel in Birmingham. On the 10th anniversary of his novel conference championship, Mike Slive, Commissioner of the SEC, spoke as our Frank Nix Lecturer. Students participated in Travel Experiences to Marion, Birmingham, and Montgomery, where they witnessed Governor Bob Riley's inauguration. Blackburn moved selections to the spring allowing for a spring term and we began having monthly discourse dinners and on-campus lunches with leaders from across the state.

The **2004** D. Ray Pate Dinner was held at Botanical Gardens in Birmingham. Students also traveled to Demopolis and Huntsville for the Burt Jones Travel Experiences. In addition to advisory board members, Blackburn Fellows for the first time ever joined current students on each trip. The following year, the Institute was able to expand the scope of the Frank A. Nix Lecture thanks to continued donations from the advisory board. The 2005 Nix Lecture brought Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw to campus for a public lecture. Focusing on the theme of Entrepreneurs and Creative Partnerships for Progressive Solutions, Blackburn also traveled to Greensboro, the Shoals, and Montgomery to meet with state and local leaders.

In **2006**, the Institute was able to bring former NATO Supreme Allied Commander of Europe and 2004 presidential candidate General Wesley



K. Clark (Ret.) to campus for the Frank A. Nix Lecture. Burt Jones Travel Experiences took students, Fellows, and advisory board members to Huntsville and Alexander City. The first new member retreat was also held this year. The D. Ray Pate dinner was held at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, as it had been in 2005.

**2007** saw the creation of the Gloria and John L. Blackburn Academic Symposium thanks to the generosity of Donald and LuLu Stewart. The 2007-2009 D. Ray Pate Dinners were held at Vulcan Park in Birmingham. Burt Jones Travel Experiences took the Institute to Anniston, Moundville, and Wilcox County. Students also had the opportunity to travel to Montgomery as part of the Protective Life Government Experience. The 2008 Nix lecturer was President F. W. de Klerk, the last State President of apartheid-era South Africa, and a man credited with bringing that terrible chapter to a close.

The Healthcare Challenge in Alabama and Beyond was the focus of the **2010** Symposium held at the Wynfrey Hotel in Birmingham. The

on Travel Experiences to Birmingham where they met with financial leaders, Fayette where they learned about rural life and governance, and the Shoals region where they toured FAME Recording Studios, Alabama Chanin, and the University of North Alabama. The D. Ray Pate Dinner was held for the second time at B&A Warehouse in revitalized downtown Birmingham.

In **2015**, students traveled to the Wiregrass region of the state for the Burt Jones Rural Community Experience, visiting communities to learn about topics including education and rural healthcare. Civic leaders hosted the group in Troy, Dothan, Enterprise, and Elba, just to name a few locations. The year also featured Alabamian and equal pay advocate Lilly Ledbetter as the keynote speaker for the Annual Symposium.

for several days of meals, sessions with local leaders, and intergenerational networking.

**2019** marks a historic milestone for the Blackburn Institute. Charged by the Advisory Board in 2015 to grow the size of the student class, the 2019 cohort boasts 50 students joining a complement of 48 returning students. The year also caps off a 2-year fundraising initiative,

annual D. Ray Pate Dinner was held at the Birmingham Museum of Art. Students and Fellows attended Travel Experiences that took them from Greensboro to Madison to Oneonta and Blount County where they learned about everything from aquaculture to the significance of the BRAC to north Alabama.

After a year at Renaissance Ross Bridge Resort, Symposium moved to the Sheraton Birmingham Hotel in **2012** and featured keynote speaker Dr. Benjamin S. Carson, M. D. Students and Fellows were invited

**2017** kicked off with record attendance at the Annual Symposium featuring Bryan Stevenson, founder and Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), a human rights organization in Montgomery, Alabama. Mr. Stevenson is a widely acclaimed public interest lawyer who has dedicated his career to helping the poor, the incarcerated, and the condemned. Travel experiences to Montgomery and east central Alabama (Lincoln, Talladega, Hobson City, and Anniston) brought students, Fellows, and Advisory Board members together

the Blackburn Legacy Endowment Campaign, to double the endowed resources of the Institute to \$2.1M. We are thrilled to be celebrating 25 years of turning Dr. John L. Blackburn's dream of developing ethical leaders into reality, and we are excited for the future of this unique leadership development and civic engagement organization.

*Background Photo: 1997 Academic Symposium at Twin Pines Resort*



# BLACKBURN IMPACT: FELLOWS SHARE THEIR STORIES

*"Blackburn constantly reminds me to think of how my actions are changing the state every day. I've made tremendous connections that still serve me today."*

In anticipation of the Blackburn Institute's 25th anniversary year in 2019-20, a large-scale data update was started for Fellows and Advisory Board members in October 2018. This survey was in addition to the on-going staff work of reconnecting with members of the Blackburn community and provided valuable information for the new Coordinator of Blackburn Alumni Programs. Community members were asked to review, update, and add new information to our database to accomplish three goals:

1. Ensure the Blackburn Institute has current contact information – mailing address, email address, and phone number – for all Fellows and Advisory Board members;

2. Collect more detailed information – professional job/industry classifications, detailed biographies, and various forms of civic involvement – to connect in a more meaningful way the various members of our community; and
3. Assemble a comprehensive view of our community's impact.

These data will also help inform future programming of the Fellows Involvement Network (FIN), as well as the student curriculum.

With approximately one-third (n=233) of Blackburn Fellows responding as of August 1, 2019, the results are not generalizable to the full network of Fellows, but several interesting data points and trends emerged as part of the analysis.

## CIVIC INVOLVEMENT OF FELLOWS

Activism and Advocacy: Have you ever volunteered or worked as part of community organizing around a specific issue or cause?	48.67%
Non-Profit Leadership: Have you ever founded or served on the advisory board, board of trustees, or similar body for a non-profit organization?	42.17%
Political Leadership: Have you ever volunteered or worked for a political campaign?	41.92%
Faith Leadership: Have you ever served as a leader in your faith community?	27.88%
Entrepreneurial Leadership: Have you ever founded or been involved significantly in the start-up of a new company?	18.42%
Public Office: Have you ever been elected to public office by the vote of the people at state, county, or municipal level of government or been appointed to a position at the state, county, or municipal level of government?	5.65%
Military Service: Concurrent with or following your involvement with the Blackburn Institute, have you served in the military?	1.75%
Direct Service and Other Leadership: Are there other forms of civic involvement, such as long-term direct service activities, in which you have engaged that you would like to share?	19.91%



## TOP ISSUES OF INTEREST TO FELLOWS

#1 Economic: Homelessness and Poverty

#2 Education: Higher Education Access

#3 Discrimination: Racial

#4 Criminal Justice: Prison Reform

#5 Education: K-12 Curriculum

#6 Government: Ethics

#7 Discrimination: Gender and Gender Identity

#8 Healthcare: Disparities

#9 Education: State Budget

#10 Public Health: Reproductive Health and Education

## WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY

Throughout the magazine, watch for boxes with quotes in response to the question, "What impact, if any, did your involvement with the Blackburn Institute have on the skills, motivations, or connections necessary for your civic involvement?"

*"The Blackburn Institute helped me to expand the internal drive and communication skills necessary to frame my story in such a way that I was seen as an asset to medical education while applying and interviewing for medical school."*

*"The whole idea of Blackburn in college (to me) was to see what our State was doing right & wrong, so that as we advance in our lives we can help continue the great things and fix the bad things. Choosing a career in nonprofit management I get to fundraise to support many agencies and programs that are doing just that."*

*"Blackburn helped broaden my understanding of how business, government, and academic institutions can work together to address civic issues and provided an example of how to form a network to enact change. This context made me a more conscientious citizen and employee."*

*"One of the most valuable skills I learned from the Blackburn Institute was how to ask good questions - from a genuine place of curiosity, with depth, and eliciting useful information. This speaks to a larger skill around dialogue, which the Institute also taught me. These skills inform the way I interact with people from all walks of life. The Blackburn Institute taught me the importance of networking through the generations, valuing perspectives and contributions from many different groups, [such as the Advisory Board, Fellows, and students]. I also learned about various industries that impact communities from my time as a Blackburn student and a Fellow. Before joining the organization, I wasn't conscious of the interconnectedness (and sometimes even the existence) of industries in the state of Alabama. This helped me to think about all the different ways I can engage with my community and work with others to create better communities in Alabama and beyond."*

*"My entire professional career would not have begun without connections made in the Blackburn Institute. Those connections are how I got my start."*



# STUDENT Spotlight

**Ms. Emma Mansberg**  
**Blackburn '18**

*Emma Mansberg is a senior from Memphis, Tennessee and Student Chairperson of the Blackburn Institute for 2019-20. She is a Political Science major with minors in the Blount Scholars Program and Social Innovation and Leadership. In addition, she is a part of the University Fellows Experience and devoted May 2018 to working in Marion, Alabama where she addressed issues of rural healthcare. She is very involved in the Honors College, having participated in the SaveFirst tax initiative in addition to serving as the Director of Civic Engagement for the Honors College Assembly. In the summer of 2019, she worked as a Birthright Excel fellow at a startup company in Tel Aviv, Israel. In her free time, Emma does long-distance running and is active in The University of Alabama Bloom Hillel. She intends to graduate in May of 2020, complete her Master's degree in Marketing at UA by May of 2021, then continue on to law school. She is specifically interested in civil rights and immigration law in addition to hands-on work to create effective policy that combats poverty.*

As students, Blackburn teaches us that the best leadership roots itself in dedication. The people we meet through Blackburn, from advisory board members to state leaders, exemplify the grit required to serve this state. The grit required to, at the end of the day, know that they did something to make Alabama better for someone. This courageous leadership exists in every corner of the state, and Blackburn ensures that we see it. I believe that we, as Blackburn students, bear the responsibility of bringing this dedication and grit back to campus. Every aspect of leadership that Blackburn teaches is not meant to stay within the Institute. If it does, we are not doing justice to this state, the people, and the principles for which Blackburn stands.

As we gain more distance from the time of Blackburn's founding, I believe current Blackburn students must make a more concerted effort to understand the Institute's roots: who we came from, where we came from, and how we have grown. So much of this understanding, though, depends on an effort to ensure that our networks are truly intergenerational and that we, as students, do not allow our campus to be a barrier to our intergenerational networking. I try to seize every opportunity to learn more about Dr. Blackburn whether it is from advisory board members who were his friends or Fellows whose lives he shaped. We must make these discussions more accessible to Blackburn students to effectively live Dr. Blackburn's legacy. Students and all members of the Blackburn community require an understanding of the "why" of Blackburn.

My most impactful Blackburn moments have been shaped by enacting and deepening this understanding of why we do what we do. When I sit on the bus during the Burt Jones Rural Travel Experience and dive deeper into a discussion about effective economic development in southwest Alabama, when I witness an energetic student asking a panelist difficult questions, when I experience students supporting one another after the difficult tour of the Holman and Fountain prison facilities, when I have the chance to eat dinner alongside a student from Coastal Alabama Community College and hear her story, and when I have the opportunity to sit down with a Fellow and learn about Dr. Blackburn and his passion and vision for this Institute and this state, this is when I experience the Blackburn mission in action. These are the moments when I feel most connected to the Institute. When experiencing the passion and energy of our community, I yearn to do more, serve more, and advocate more for this state and its people, and I feel this knowing that there will be a network of people doing this work beside me. This urges me and encourages me; it gives me the grit that I need.

The people of Blackburn inspire me. They excite me. They make me want to act for Alabama, every day. I am so proud to be a part of a community in which all corners of campus come together to discuss the important topics facing the state that we call home. Whether we are from Enterprise, Alabama or San Francisco, California, we are engaging with the issues occurring both on campus and across the region. Blackburn is one of the only spaces on campus in which people with varying political



beliefs share similar experiences and then sit down to talk about it. I admire most that our students make a concerted effort to ensure that these conversations never end. We see the problems together and, though we might disagree on the solution, the fact that the discussions are happening is marvelously rare. To me, this is what the Institute is all about.

It comes back to the people. It is our students, our Fellows, our advisory board members, and each Alabamian we meet along the way that allows us to continue to live the legacy of Dr. Blackburn. While it seems simple, Blackburn's mission means nothing without its members. Together, we strive to bring meaning and action to the goals of improving Alabama because changing this state depends upon a community that cares. For this reason, I am honored to be a part of the Institute and attempt every day to answer Dr. Blackburn's question, "What have you done for Alabama today."

*"Blackburn helped broaden my understanding of how business, government, and academic institutions can work together to address civic issues and provided an example of how to form a network to enact change. This context made me a more conscientious citizen and employee."*

*"My major had little or no political, policy, civic, or advocacy component. Without the Blackburn Institute pushing me beyond my comfort zone, introducing me to new people, provoking unique conversations, or forcing me to consider other perspectives, I am confident I would be a very different individual today. My family has resided in Tuscaloosa County for over 150 years and I have always felt a connection to that community; however, Blackburn did much in stoking the fire of my commitment to changing the state. Although I had no idea at the time, Blackburn has prepared me for a solid footing in my unrelated profession and keeps me constantly challenging myself to work for the betterment of my community and state."*

*"The Blackburn Institute instilled the passion for the state of Alabama that has shepherded my life/career decisions for the past 15 years."*

## Student Selection Process for the Blackburn Institute

<b>NOMINATION</b>	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.
<b>APPLICATION</b>	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.
<b>GROUP INTERVIEW</b>	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 member, Fellow, or Advisory Board member).
<b>INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW</b>	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-and-selection-process>



## FELLOWS INVOLVEMENT NETWORK

*Mr. James Kemp  
Blackburn '14*

*"The Blackburn Institute instilled in me a regional identity that I had grown up shunning and distancing myself from. It did this by introducing me to people and ideas that were moving the state of Alabama - and the whole South - forward, and by connecting me to those people and ideas I could be proud of. I consider myself dedicated to pursuing justice where it often is most lacking, and I attribute much of that dedication to my experience with the Institute."*

*Mr. James Kemp, Jr., a native of Birmingham, Alabama, graduated summa cum laude with a degree in finance in 2015. James immediately continued on to earn his MBA with a concentration in strategic management and marketing from UA's Manderson Graduate School of Business. His passions have always been organizational operations, finances, leadership, and civic engagement. While at UA, Mr. Kemp served as treasurer for UA's chapter of the NAACP and the Mortar Board honor society. He helped start and served as president for a honor society type organization for minority men called GGC with the purpose of developing a network of young men all looking to make a positive impact on the University and each other. Mr. Kemp currently serves as director of business operations for Kemp Management Solutions, LLC, a national project management and consulting firm based in Birmingham. His responsibilities include managing the firm's finances, overseeing its marketing strategies, maintaining and developing the firm's IT structure, and providing delivery support on client accounts as needed. James became a member of the Birmingham Rotaract Club in June 2018. He married his beautiful wife Jasmine in October 2017 and they now reside in the Crestwood neighborhood of Birmingham.*

**T**he Fellows Involvement Network (FIN) serves to advance the mission of the Blackburn Institute, connecting Fellows to each other, Blackburn students, and the Advisory Board as they carry out their lifetime commitment of acting as positive agents of change for Alabama and the nation. FIN officers lead Fellows programming by proposing, planning, and enacting initiatives, liaising with the Blackburn staff and Advisory Board, and promoting active participation in Blackburn activities. Fellows elected the current officers to serve a two-year term from August 2018 through July 2020.

### *What are the main projects the FIN is currently undertaking?*

For spring 2019, we FIN officers formally proposed two initiatives, both of which are we're proud to report are successfully running. First, we restarted and upgraded the monthly email newsletter to Fellows. Our goal was to create a stronger sense of community by sharing important life updates and notifying Fellows of opportunities to engage with Blackburn. The Monthly Connections newsletter has been hitting inboxes the first Monday of the month since March 2019.

Second, in response to Fellows' desire to build meaningful relationships and share experiences with one another, we established the Fellows Mentorship Program. In this two-year program, mentors and mentees spend two hours per quarter on

professional and/or personal growth such as career development, civic engagement, or work/life balance. Mentor/mentee matches were made in July 2019 for our pilot year cohort, and we will be checking in with them quarterly to learn how we can best support these mentoring relationships in future years.

Looking toward the future, we are aiming for a variety of meet ups throughout the year in the cities where we have large numbers of Fellows. The frequency and format of the events will depend on the interests of the region but could include family-friendly potlucks, happy hours, invited speakers, or volunteer projects. Through these regional networking events, Fellows will be able to become connected locally while also strengthening their ties to the Blackburn Institute.

### *How can FIN members take advantage of these programs?*

The best way to stay connected with other Fellows is to read the newsletter and keep your email address updated. We know that inboxes can be very full these days, but you might be surprised at what you'll find with just a quick skim of the newsletter. It might be a Blackburn dinner you can attend, a long-lost friend who accomplished an amazing milestone, or a way you can virtually discuss your experiences with current students. If you haven't been receiving Monthly Connections, please contact us.



If you'd like to be a mentor, please let us know and keep your data with Blackburn updated. Mentees will be more likely to select you as a mentor and have a productive relationship with you if they are able to learn about your current occupation, read a brief biography, and connect with a few of the ways you have been civically engaged. If you'd like to be mentored, take a look at the program description on the Blackburn website (under Curriculum and Programs), and be aware that we plan for our next matching period to be February 2020. The newsletter will advertise when matching for the Fellows Mentoring Program opens.

Currently, we have 90 Fellows who have indicated that they would like to serve as organizers for their local regional networking events. If you would like to add your name, please get in touch. Otherwise, plan on attending nearby FIN activities

to help make this initiative a success. Again, the best way to find out about regional activities is to keep your contact information updated and check our newsletter for upcoming dates.

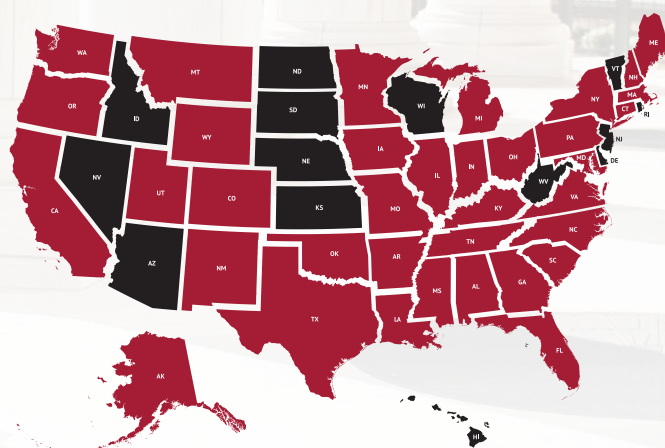
## *How to get in touch with us FIN officers?*

We hope to hear from you. If you'd like to learn more about the newsletter, mentoring, or regional events or if you have questions, comments, or suggestions about anything FIN related, please contact Chairperson James Kemp at [jamesmichaelkemp.jr@gmail.com](mailto:jamesmichaelkemp.jr@gmail.com). Thank you, and we look forward to working with you to create a FIN that best serves the Blackburn Fellows, Alabama, and other communities where we are represented.

## WHERE ARE THE BLACKBURN FELLOWS?

United States  
641

Abroad  
14



Top US  
Locations  
Outside AL

Georgia (45)  
Texas (37)  
Tennessee (28)  
DC (22)

### Central (141)

Blount, Cullman, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, and Walker Counties

### West (80)

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

### North (48)

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

### Southeast (38)

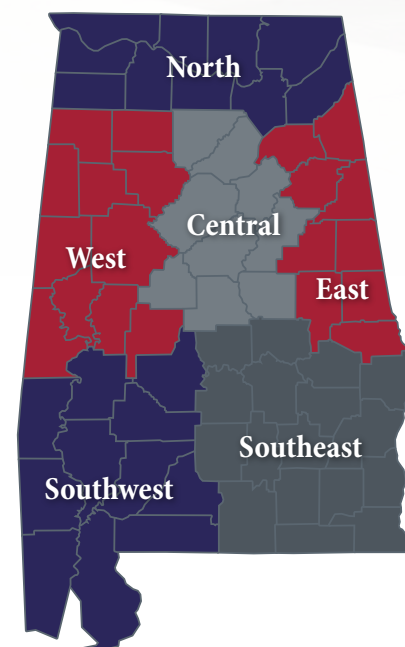
Autauga, Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Chilton, Coffee, Covington, Crenshaw, Dale, Elmore, Geneva, Henry, Houston, Lowndes, Macon, Montgomery, Pike, and Russell Counties

### Southwest (20)

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

### East (13)

Calhoun, Chambers, Cherokee, Clay, Cleburne, Coosa, Etowah, Lee, Randolph, Talladega, and Tallapoosa Counties





## FELLOW Spotlight

### *Mrs. Whitney Miller-Nichols Blackburn '04*

*Mrs. Whitney Miller-Nichols is an alumna of The University of Alabama with a B.A. in Communications (2006) and an M.A. in Secondary Education and English Language Arts (2011). She currently serves as Assistant Director of Leadership Development for the Alabama Association of School Boards. Mrs. Miller Nichols was previously a language arts teacher for 8th grade at a magnet middle school, a language arts teacher for 10th and 11th grades at a traditional high school, and a graduate assistant with UA Early College during its start-up years. She also had 3 years of work experience in the private sector after completing her undergraduate degree. Her areas of expertise include the Alabama School Board Governance Act; Alabama public school finance and The Foundation Program; school board development and training; secondary classroom instruction; and the Alabama College & Career Readiness Standards. She and her husband, Mr. Taylor Nichols (Blackburn '06), currently reside in Montgomery, AL.*

I've been passionate about education for as long as I can remember. My mother's first year as a classroom teacher started two months after I was born, and I practically grew up in her classroom. She was an active, involved teacher, always taking on projects or tasks to make sure her students in our small school community had experiences and advantages they might otherwise miss out on. In addition to being passionate about her content (secondary science), she spent many summers working on her masters and EdS degrees, eagerly sharing with my sister and me the ideas she was learning about public education, its history, and how it should work. Both of my parents are the product of public schools and there was never a question that my sister and I would also attend public schools. Her passion for education inspired my interest in and eventual passion for education as well.

Once I got to the University, I was fortunate to meet a group of people who were just as interested in education as I was, and who also exposed me to new ways of thinking about old problems. Through conversations with these folks, I was able to see connections and patterns that I had not before, which in some cases fundamentally changed how I viewed certain issues in education.

However, as the child of a public school educator, I had zero desire to go into the field that I felt had taken so much from my mother, and by extension, me. I wanted to forge my own path, not follow in her footsteps. To be fair, my father is an accountant

and I certainly wasn't taking any business classes, either. I had several good friends who joined Blackburn our sophomore and junior years, and saw the excitement and passion that the experience brought to them, so I decided to apply in the spring of my junior year at the University.

I think more than anything else, the conversations and experiences that Blackburn afforded me kept that spark of passion alive. Dr. Blackburn's charge to change the state was never far from my mind as I slogged through two low-level corporate jobs after graduating from the University. I was fundamentally unsatisfied with the direction my life had taken; I often asked myself, "What am I DOING here? I'm supposed to be making a difference!"

Over lunch with a friend and fellow Fellow one day, I expressed my dissatisfaction and told her I was looking into Teach For America, or thinking about contacting another Fellow and begging for the opportunity to work in the charter school he headed up. My friend looked me dead in the face and said, "It sounds like you want to teach. So why don't you just go teach?" You could have knocked me over with a feather. The one thing I KNEW growing up is that I NEVER wanted to be a teacher. Didn't I?

That conversation set into motion my move into the classroom. I returned to the University a few months later to work on my master's degree in education, allowing me to earn an alternate



teaching certificate since my major had been advertising. I was fortunate to be a student with a cadre of teachers passionate about the intersection of secondary education and social justice, and their ideas further stoked my own about how education should work for all students in Alabama.

My first teaching job actually took me "back home" to my alma mater, though the community has changed substantially since I was a student there. I taught high school English for two years before moving to Montgomery, where I taught advanced eighth graders for three and a half years at a local magnet school. My five years in the classroom have only reinforced for me the necessity of high quality public education for all of our students.

I had the opportunity to leave the classroom a year and a half ago, and after much consideration, took advantage of the opportunity. For literally my entire life, I had only viewed the problems facing education from the educator's standpoint. Through my new position at the Alabama Association of School Boards, I have gained a fresh perspective on the problems facing our school systems. My desire to "change the state" hasn't waned, but I feel that by working outside of the classroom but still within the "education family," I'm better able to be an advocate for positive change that can have far-reaching impact.

More than ever, I understand how important representation is when thinking through our educational system's problems. It's frustrating that practicing educators and current students are often not at the table when important issues are discussed, and as much as I can, I advocate for their voices to be heard. That habit of asking, "Who's not in the room?" is a direct result of my experiences as a student Fellow under Dr. Causey, who often challenged us to consider all perspectives when meeting with leaders and to never shy away from asking the hard questions, respectfully, of course. The ways of thinking about problems and of engaging in dialog with varied perspectives has served me well in my professional life, and I don't know that I would have had those habits had it not been for Blackburn.

One of the most important things we can do as Fellows is to actively build connections with others. A network only works when all hubs and spokes are connected and communicating, and as much as I'm able I try to do my part. Whether it's passing along a name and contact information or humbly asking for help

from another Fellow, we as Fellows have taken up the obligation to grow Dr. Blackburn's tiny sapling of a network into a far-reaching one that can impact our state for the betterment of all. It's very easy to be plugged in while on campus. It's much harder to balance our personal and professional lives with active participation in the Blackburn network. I think many Fellows feel that if they aren't able to attend Institute programming, they must be separated from the network overall. However, a network isn't just a reunion once a year. It's people interacting and engaging, often independent of formal programming, for the betterment of others. I would challenge all Fellows to reach out in the next 12 months and make one small connection. After all, we've pledged to change the state, and every journey begins with a single step.

*"It has taught me that it's worth working for the greater good."*

*"Blackburn is the underlying reason I remain as engaged as I am in Alabama - it gave me the education I've been building off of ever since."*

*"I consider my job in public education and commitment to preparing equity oriented teachers for public schools to be civic engagement, and my decision to pursue education at all was a direct result of my experience with Blackburn. The community of people committed to the public good helped form my own commitments in this area."*

*"Despite having spent an entire lifetime in Alabama, my passion for my home state dwindled as I approached college. The Blackburn Institute invigorated my love for Alabama and motivated me to devote my career to the welfare of Alabama's history. The individuals I have connected with through Blackburn have been priceless and continue to create a knowledgeable and skilled group of people doing amazing work for the state and other communities like it."*

*"I feel the need to build community wherever I live."*

*"I often cite my experience with Blackburn Institute as a catalyst for pursuing a Master's degree in Public Administration and being exposed to the opportunities available in the nonprofit sphere. It truly shaped my career path."*

*"The ideals and values that I learned and continue to be reinforced as part of my involvement with the Blackburn Institute stay top of mind when I am presented with opportunities for civic involvement."*

# VALUES IN ACTION: RETURNING STUDENTS' DANIEL COMMUNITY SCHOLARS PROJECTS

*Through the Blackburn Institute's Daniel Community Scholars Program, the Daniel Foundation of Alabama funds Blackburn student and Fellow projects to address the needs of Alabama communities. The new class of students has one project funded each year and there are opportunities for additional project funding for returning students and Fellows. These returning students have applied what they learned in the first year curriculum to a community project of their own design for the 2019-20 academic year.*

## **Mae Crumbley (Blackburn '17)**

### *Expansion of West End Health Project (WEHP)*

The West End Health Project (WEHP) focuses on voluntary preventative screening and nutrition information in the West Tuscaloosa community. The effort originally started in 2013 as a Daniel Community Scholars class project. After six successful years, the project is expanding to include a new location in Tuscaloosa - Jesus Way Homeless Shelters - in addition to the original site at the Salvation Army. The new site, a homeless shelter located in a residential area, will provide the opportunity for health screenings to community members who do not have transportation to the Salvation Army site. The grant funding provided by the Blackburn Institute will help with start-up materials such as digital weight scales to assess Body Mass Index (BMI) information and nutritional pamphlets. WEHP provides accessible screening and partners with DIET, a UA student organization focused on diabetes prevention, on a consistent basis which allows the student volunteers and community members to build relationships. Many patients return to the clinic sites regularly because they enjoy the personal attention and community atmosphere. This regular attendance is helpful because it keeps participants mindful of the trends in their personal data and their excitement to "know their numbers" each visit can be motivational for making healthy choices.



## **Bennett McGehee (Blackburn '18)**

### *Alabama REACH*

This project stems from research into the issue of educating fostered, homeless, and emancipated youth. Alabama REACH, the community partner, is a campus resource at The University of Alabama for students who fit into any of these categories. Research for this project was conducted through consultation with subject matter expert, Dr. Chapman Greer, and interviews with the director of REACH, Ms. Shannon Hubbard, and REACH students. With the awarded funds, participants will author mentorship training and curriculum materials for REACH Champions, local professionals who volunteer to enter a mentorship relationship with a REACH student. The funds will also support two networking events for REACH students and prospective REACH Champions. The costs associated with the project will primarily be printing and food. The project will be implemented throughout the 2019-20 academic calendar.

*"The Blackburn Institute connected me to a network of engaged leaders, who wanted to work with their communities to make a positive change. In a world where young leaders are often asked for too much, of high career pressures, and of the constant threat of burn out, that network has been invaluable in maintaining my commitments to community and motivation to make a difference for others."*



## Tyler Thull (Blackburn '18)

### *Alabama Law Prison Project*

The goal of this program is to expose future Alabama lawyers, judges, and policy makers to the Alabama prison system and the efforts being made to improve it. It is imperative that young professionals in our state know about the needs of our prison system and the people who are working to address them. As lawyers, we need to know how best to use our careers to support Alabama in its management of correctional facilities. We need to know what criminal defendants face when we prosecute and represent them. We need to know about the administrative structures tasked with maintaining the physical and mental health of inmates. We need to know not just the history of criminal justice in Alabama, but also the current state of our system. Phase One of the program includes a lunch panel discussion with people who are actively engaged in improving Alabama's prisons, either by taking legal action, by serving in prison administration, or by working directly with inmates. Phase Two is a tour of a correctional facility. Phase Three will be an informal debriefing. Students will continue to talk about what they learned in the panel and saw in the prison, and hopefully they will be inspired to stay in Alabama and do something to help. All law students at The University of Alabama School of Law will be invited to participate in the Alabama Law Prison Program.



## Apply for Returning Student or Fellow Funding

In order to maintain the high quality of projects, it is strongly suggested returning students and 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 applicants 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>





# PROGRAM Spotlight

## *Perspectives on Leadership Series Mr. Jerran Hill, Assistant Director*

The Perspectives on Leadership series began in September 2016 to introduce students at The University of Alabama to diverse points of view on leadership. Twice a semester, the Blackburn Institute hosts a lecture or panel discussion, open to UA students, by leaders working to create a better Alabama. Guests come from a variety of sectors and professional industries and share their experiences as leaders. Following the public portion of the event, Blackburn students, Fellows, and Advisory Board members are invited to attend a private dinner with the speakers and representatives from co-sponsoring organizations on campus. The series serves as a recruiting opportunity for potential new students to learn about the Institute, as well as an opportunity for Blackburn students to have one-on-one access to speakers in their fields of interest. For the 2018-19 academic year, the Blackburn Institute hosted three diverse panel discussions that explored leadership through the unique lenses of transportation, water, and local government.

The September event focused on leadership in the transportation sector with a panel of academic, legal, and engineering experts. The panel featured Dr. Shashi Nambisan, Executive Director of the Alabama Transportation Institute, one of The University of Alabama's four major research institutes; Sarah Stokes, Senior Attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center; and Tera

Tubbs, Executive Director of Infrastructure & Public Services with the City of Tuscaloosa.

During the public lecture, the speakers discussed a variety of topics including stakeholder engagement, managing competing interests, access to under-served communities, barriers to professional success, alternatives to auto-oriented transit, and the managing the supply and demand of transportation networks. Following the lecture, panelists joined Blackburn students for a private question and answer session along with students from the co-sponsoring organizations, Alabama Transportation Institute; Department of Civil, Construction and Environmental Engineering; Society of Women Engineers; and Student Engineers in Action.

The second installment of the series in October 2018, moderated by **Christine Allen (Blackburn '17)**, examined leadership with scholars and professionals in industries related to water. Dr. Prabhakar Clement drew from his academic experience as Professor of Civil Engineering and Director of the UA Center for Water Quality Research and detailed how innovation can be used to improve water conservation and treatment. Heather Elliott, Class of '36 Professor of Law at The University of Alabama School of Law, discussed water policy from a legal perspective, weighing in on water property rights and the tri-state water wars between Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. Charles Scribner, Executive Director of Black Warrior Riverkeeper, provided insight into pollution, watershed management, and balancing

*"My time in Blackburn was critical to my development as a leader and my ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds. The Blackburn program was instrumental in helping me learn how to share my viewpoints intelligently with people who were older than me, may not have felt the same way I did about an issue, or were passionate yet uninformed about something I was passionate about. Whether students are experienced or aspiring leaders, Blackburn helps prepare them to meet the upcoming challenges we face as a society. I would not have traded my time in Blackburn for any other experience."*







the competing interests of industry, utilities, residents, and special interest groups. Similarly, Vic Stricklin described his experiences mitigating the impact of droughts, erosion and natural disasters as a supervisory hydrologist for the United States Geological Survey.

In February 2019, the final installment of the series featured a unique opportunity to explore municipal leadership with the mayors of Alabama's five largest cities. **Matt Calderone (Blackburn '11)** arranged for 50 Blackburn students and prospective applicants to participate in a private forum with

the group collectively known as the "Big 5" mayors: Walt Maddox (Tuscaloosa), Sandy Stimpson (Mobile), Todd Strange (Montgomery), Randall Woodfin (Birmingham), and Tommy Battle (Huntsville). Although Mayor Battle was unable to join the group, the mayors discussed a variety of topics with the students including political involvement, personal leadership challenges, relationship management with city councilors, intergovernmental cooperation with state officials, challenges for local home rule, policy change implementation, and leadership in increasingly diverse urban communities. Students, many of whom are eager to serve their local communities in elected office, appreciated the opportunity to ask questions of the sitting mayors. Student **Bennett McGehee (Blackburn '18)** commented, "It was interesting to see the working dynamics between the mayors and how they used their time together meetings to learn best practices from each other that can be implemented in their home communities."

The series has been an effective vehicle to reach students with diverse interests from different corners of campus. It provides exposure to the work of the Blackburn Institute and gives students an intimate view of the mission and values. For Fellows and Advisory Board Members, Perspectives on Leadership is an opportunity to remain connected by sharing professional insights and life experiences with students. For Blackburn students, it serves as a time of reflection and dialogue, where they can glean wisdom from experienced leaders in government and industry. As we embark on the 2019-20 academic year, Perspectives on Leadership will continue to bring new people to the table, introduce diverse viewpoints, and empower emerging leaders.

*"The Blackburn Institute taught me the importance of networking and building relationships in order to effect long-term change in the future. In the world of ministry and missions, relationships are a fundamental part of accomplishing what we are called to do. We work with leaders in multiple countries and certainly do not have the answer to every challenge they face, but an important part of our role is connecting them to others who have more knowledge and experience on a given subject so that they can learn from one another and even work together to have an even more effective ministry. Blackburn taught me the importance of making connections with a wide range of people because we never know how those relationships could end up being beneficial for the goal of changing communities one life at a time."*

*"The Blackburn Institute instilled in me a regional identity that I had grown up shunning and distancing myself from. It did this by introducing me to people and ideas that were moving the state of Alabama - and the whole South - forward, and by connecting me to those people and ideas I could be proud of. I consider myself dedicated to pursuing justice where it often is most lacking, and I attribute much of that dedication to my experience with the Blackburn Institute."*

*"One of my major takeaways from my Blackburn experience is how I have become aware of the issues impacting my home state of Alabama and the nation. For example, I truly appreciate how Blackburn emphasized the national crisis of mental health awareness. There is a significant amount of disinformation about those suffering from conditions and often they are pulled into the criminal justice system. Learning about the crisis of Alabama's prison system was of particular interest to me. I had no idea how poorly Alabama's prisons were performing and was concerned by how little funding and rehabilitation efforts are taken. Another major takeaway is how inspiring it is to be surrounded by passionate people who are genuinely invested in their communities. From learning new ideas, ways to get involved, and generally educating myself about the issues impacting at need communities around me, Blackburn has empowered me with knowledge and helped mold me into the person I am today. I hope, as an attorney, to take a more active role in my community through pro bono work in at need communities and to further contribute to promoting inclusivity and equal representation in all levels of society."*



# BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH REGIONAL SUMMER NETWORKING EVENTS

*Each year, the Blackburn Institute organizes regional dinner gatherings of the community, providing Fellows, Advisory Board members, students, and local leaders with the opportunity to engage in "networking through the generations," one of the core Blackburn values. Gatherings in summer 2019 brought guests together in Alabama (Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile, and Montgomery), as well as Washington, DC; New York, NY; Nashville, TN, and Atlanta, GA.*



**K**athryn Drago, Coordinator of Blackburn Alumni Programs, hit the ground running with her start at the Blackburn Institute in January 2019. She immediately got started with the 2019 Summer Networking Events to be held in May, June, and July. Kicking off the Institute's 25th anniversary, the primary objectives for the series of events was to increase both the attendance and the meaningfulness of the events for Fellows. She achieved this goal with record attendance and novel activities as the groups broke bread together in eight locations, with four in Alabama and four outside the state.

To bolster participation, prior to each summer networking event, she invited Fellows through personal phone calls, newsletter announcements, and regionally-targeted emails. Due to this outreach, attendance at several dinners met or overwhelmed capacity and Fellows who had taken long breaks from Blackburn activities were able to reconnect with the community. She also scheduled one-on-one daytime meetings with Fellows preceding each regional event. These meetings allowed her to learn more about individual Fellow's journeys, discuss in detail the current and future goals of the Blackburn Institute, and gather suggestions for Fellows programming.

Whereas previous summer networking events primarily consisted of informal opportunities to chat and network over dinner, this year new approaches were tested in several locations. In Atlanta, **Ryan Sprinkle (Blackburn '11)** presented on the causes of the rural healthcare crisis both nationally and in Alabama's Black Belt, followed by a spirited discussion. Likewise in Huntsville, **Eule Glenn (Blackburn '96)** organized a conversation around the conditions in Alabama's prison system and possible solutions. In a break from tradition, our Montgomery event was a family-friendly affair inside air-conditioned suites at the Biscuit's Minor League Baseball stadium where guests could take photos with the mascot "Big Mo" and relax with a plate of barbecue.

These eight events across summer 2019 spoke to the commitment of the Blackburn Institute to remain connected to and supportive of Fellows. As a testament to that ideal, at least two Institute staff members and at least one Fellows Involvement Network (FIN) officer attended each event. Having Blackburn staff and FIN officers in the same room as Fellows allowed for intimate conversations ranging from reminiscing about advice Dr. Blackburn gave students to offering help with jobs searches and community projects.

It is clear that the 2019 summer networking dinners will have lasting impacts. Participants made new local connections, rededicated themselves to Blackburn's vision and mission, engaged with challenging civic issues, and planned future action. The sparks ignited during these

events will only continue to grow as the FIN organizes regional networking events throughout the rest of the year. We highly anticipate the fellowship, collaborations, and progress for Alabama to come.







# BRIDGING EXPERIENCES WITH THE ALABAMA LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

*Mrs. Lynne Vallely*  
*Advisory Board Member*

I am a native of Alabama. As I have grown older, I have tried to become more involved in moving Alabama forward. In 1992, I was delighted to be chosen for Class 3 of Leadership Alabama, the most well-respected organization in our state that is working toward that end.

Leadership Alabama gives established leaders across Alabama exposure to the broader fabric of the state. It develops a network of relationships and provides a structure for this network to seek mutual understanding of problems and priorities for Alabama's future. Leadership Alabama encourages its members to act, individually and in concert, to move Alabama forward to help our state reach its full potential.

In 1995, Leadership Alabama introduced the Alabama Leadership Initiative (ALI), a program for emerging leaders. Class members connect with statewide experts in order to increase their knowledge of the issues impacting Alabama. They bond with like-minded leaders from throughout the state, and they receive leadership training in various areas, including public speaking, effective board involvement and political involvement. Qualified applicants need to have shown leadership and commitment in a professional capacity and within their own communities.



Each year, Leadership Alabama alumni are asked to nominate individuals for participation in ALI. As I thought about the kind of people I wanted to nominate, it became obvious to me that Blackburn Fellows would be especially well-qualified. I am so glad to find that there will be 7 Blackburn Fellows in next year's ALI program. I know they will represent Blackburn and The University of Alabama well. Through the process of learning about the state, each other, and themselves, I know they will emerge uniquely equipped to move Alabama forward.



**Pictured:** Prince Cleveland (Blackburn '02), Alex Flachsbart (Blackburn '07), John Hammontree (Blackburn '08), Kendra Key (Blackburn '07), and Rashmee Sharif (Blackburn '12)  
**Not Pictured:** Holly Caraway McCorkle (Blackburn '02) and Landon Nichols (Blackburn '12)





**A**t first glance, it might seem that the Alabama-centric mission of the Blackburn Institute and the world-wide scope of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program are at odds. Dr. Beverly Hawk, Fulbright Program Advisor at The University of Alabama, however, believes that, "The Fulbright Program does just what Alabama needs." She recounted how Fulbright English Teaching Assistants share American studies with their students, introducing them to Alabamian authors, Huntsville's aerospace leadership, and our excellent universities. Alabama benefits in the long-term because interactions between Fulbrighters and citizens in host countries enhances our workforce development, creates and strengthens international ties, and enables all parties to share their best ideas.

## BLACKBURN FULBRIGHT FELLOWS: MUTUAL EXCHANGE BETWEEN ALABAMA AND THE WORLD

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program provides grants for U.S. citizens who are newly graduated university students, Master's and doctoral candidates, and young professionals with fewer than 5 years of experience to teach English or conduct research in over 140 countries. There is also a Fulbright Scholars Program for individuals with terminal degrees or more experience in their fields. Candidates submit proposals for their grant work in a specific country, which to be awarded must be approved first by a US national jury and then selected by the host country and approved by the national J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board. Nationwide, the student program receives approximately 10,000 applications each year, yet awards only 2,000 grants.

Throughout our history, twelve Blackburn students and Fellows have won this highly competitive award, fostering bilateral relations between Alabama and nine countries. Dr. Hawk explained that the Blackburn community is so successful at attaining Fulbright awards because the characteristics of our membership are a perfect match with the program. The Blackburn community is "flexible, mature, and dedicated to community engagement." In addition, they "exhibit academic excellence and are experienced in intercultural communication." Importantly, Blackburn members are eager to mix culturally with the host community in their homes and will build bonds with local community leaders through participation in programs and events.

Fulbright Award recipients have earned a special place of recognition in the Blackburn community and their presence around the world has advanced the causes of Alabama. Their varied experiences in their host countries have broadened perspectives, enriched lives, and prepared them to be even better advocates for Alabama in the future. If you are interested learning more about the Fulbright U.S. Student Program or Fulbright Scholars Program, contact Dr. Beverly Hawk at [bhawk@ua.edu](mailto:bhawk@ua.edu).

## BURT JONES RURAL COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

The Burt Jones Travel Experience is a cornerstone of the leadership development curriculum for the Blackburn Institute at The University of Alabama. This 4-day travel experience was redesigned in the 2015-16 academic year, consolidating multiple shorter trips into one longer regional trip that changes locations each fall. One of two travel experiences embedded in the student curriculum, these trips are designed to provide students with opportunities to experience the state of Alabama in all its diversity. Students interact with state and local leaders, explore regional commonalities and differences, place national issues into local context, and learn about the culture of communities to which they may have had little or no prior exposure. These travel experiences have taken the institute's students to almost every corner of the state, providing them with the breadth of experiential knowledge necessary to take action for a better Alabama.

For fall 2018 students traveled to Monroeville, Thomasville, Brewton, and Atmore, exploring topics such as rural healthcare, education, and economic development. One stop on the trip was to visit the National Center for Pulp and Paper Technology (facing page) at Coastal Alabama Community College in Monroeville.



## BLACKBURN FULBRIGHT AWARD RECIPIENTS

Name	Year	Country	Program / Project Title
Courtney Geary (Blackburn '18)	2019	Jordan	English Teaching Assistantship
Sophia Warner (Blackburn '16)	2019	Germany	English Teaching Assistantship
Dwyer Freeman (Blackburn '16)	2018	Germany	English Teaching Assistantship
Madeleine Lewis (Blackburn '16)	2018	Montenegro	English Teaching Assistantship
Jonathan Joyner (Blackburn '15)	2017	Sri Lanka	Taming the Tiger: The War for Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka
Christian Shannon (Blackburn '14)	2016	Poland	English Teaching Assistantship
Rachel Hunkler (Blackburn '12)	2014	Spain	Fulbright Mentor
Lauren Marsh (Blackburn '10)	2014	China	Nutrition Literacy of Infant Caregivers in Sichuan Province, China
Jilisa Milton (Blackburn '16)	2014	Indonesia	English Teaching Assistantship
Carolyn Bero (Blackburn '11)	2013	Spain	English Teaching Assistantship
Anna Boardman (Blackburn '09)	2013	Brazil	English Teaching Assistantship
Rachel Hunkler (Blackburn '12)	2013	Spain	English Teaching Assistantship



# RECENT GRADUATE ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

*Following a vote by the Advisory Board to revise the bylaws in fall 2015, a new position was created to allow Fellows from the three most recent graduating classes to serve on the board. The Recent Graduate Advisory Board Members bring a unique perspective to the board's work, having recently engaged with the student curriculum. They are able to speak to the culture of the organization, share insights about campus with the board, and make recommendations for changes to the Institute's curriculum and programs.*

*As Will Sorrell (Blackburn '13) completes the final year of his three-year term on December 31, Alli Koszyk (Blackburn '18) prepares to start her term on January 1, bringing the group to the close of its first full cycle of involvement from recent graduates. Asked to share their thoughts on the first three years of their role, Mary Lieb (Blackburn '14) and Pat Reynolds (Blackburn '17) discuss their motivations to apply and their aspirations for the future.*

## Mary Lieb

My first semester at The University of Alabama, I made a long list of things I wanted to accomplish throughout my four years - places to eat, clubs to join and activities to participate in. At the end of my five years at UA, while most of the items were struck through, so many of my greatest memories involved divergence from this plan and a 2 or 3 a.m. time stamp. One of my most unexpected blessings came from membership in the Blackburn Institute.

Membership in the Blackburn Institute allowed me to bear witness to the hope that communities across the state have for Alabama's future. When I traveled to Demopolis, Mobile, Montgomery or Muscle Shoals, I grew passionate about my adopted home. In speaking to community leaders—elected and unelected, recognized and unrecognized, I realized how significant it is to see a reflection of your world and learn from it. When I attended The University

of Alabama, I knew it would be a simple goal to go to class and graduate but committing to a sustainable impact in the state would be much more challenging. I embraced that challenge when I was asked to join the Advisory Board as a recent graduate. I knew that for three years I could use my relationships and background to provide current Blackburn students with memories, lessons and experiences similar to those that changed my perspectives for the better.

In the twenty-first century, Alabama has become known for the things it fights against instead of the things it fights for. Past conflicts such as racial and religious intolerance have marred the common ground of Alabamians, and stereotypes of southerners with dirty fingernails and even dirtier pick-up trucks have become the state's spokespeople. It is in situations like this that the nation fails to realize the gestalt effect—not seeing a tree, but a forest. A single tree, one headlining story, one Alabamian does not



**Will Sorrell**  
**Blackburn '13**  
2016 Graduate



**Mary Lieb**  
**Blackburn '14**  
2017 Graduate



**Pat Reynolds**  
**Blackburn '17**  
2018 Graduate



**Alli Koszyk**  
**Blackburn '18**  
2019 Graduate



# RECENT GRADUATE ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

epitomize all the state has to offer. It takes time, engagement with and comprehension of our people and resources to develop the forest, or identity of our state as a whole.

As I have started my professional life, one of the first questions people ask upon meeting is, "Where are you from?" or "Where did you go to college?" No matter one's answer, each location comes with a piece of baggage or prejudice hanging over it. However, like so many other places have had their time to escape the negative media light, I hope that the time has come to recognize the state of Alabama not for what it is not, but for what it is: a place where innovation thrives, tradition is celebrated and history is remembered. The future of Alabama has the potential to shift the conversation of the nation from one that ridicules the southern culture to one that celebrates all it has to offer, and in doing so we will be able to honor the past but learn from it at every encounter.

## Patrick Reynolds

Only having had a year with the Institute and the impact it has had on me as a professional, I decided to apply for the Advisory Board position. In addition, I feel that I have value to add to the Institute. With a background in higher education, I feel as if I have the ability to challenge and push against the curriculum. I also believe I have a deeper understanding of the student development Dr. Mac and Mr. Jerran are instituting. From the role I have gained a greater understanding of the importance of fundraising, brand perception, and the need to stay involved. The deeper insights that I have gained from the position revolves around the decision making process and the fundraising. Going through the curriculum, I did things

because they were required or recommended. I did not think as much as I do now about how the event is funded, or generous sponsorship that people and organizations give to support UA students.

In terms of my aspirations for the future, my hope is to increase my participation with the Institute. Since being in New Orleans, I have contemplated moving to DC, Birmingham, or back to Tuscaloosa so I may be better positioned to help change the state. I also aspire to be able to sponsor an event for the Institute. I also will be helping anyone and everyone that enters the Soft Landing program and reach out. I love everything that the soft landing program stands for and I am looking forward to assisting my first Fellow in the coming weeks.

*"Blackburn gave me an early exposure to many of the issues the US has only recently started confronting, including the divergent fortunes of rural and metropolitan areas and the hard work required to maximize the economic potential of both. My experiences meeting business people, advocates and policy makers continues to affect the way I think about both business and public policy, and the complexities that surround a big deal or a newly proposed law. Most importantly, I formed a lot of great relationships with other Blackburn Fellows that remain very important to me."*



# CELEBRATORY DISPATCHES

*With the start in January 2019 of the Blackburn Institute's new Coordinator of Blackburn Alumni Program, Kathryn Drago, the Fellow newsletter has taken on a new look and feel. One of the most significant changes has been the addition of Celebratory Dispatches to keep the community informed of major personal and professional accomplishments. Watch for these every month and share yours for distribution to the Blackburn community by emailing her at [kdrago@ua.edu](mailto:kdrago@ua.edu).*

## March 2019

- **Cameron Harris (Blackburn '16)** and **Kristin (Chambliss) Harris (Blackburn '16)** were married New Year's Eve. Cameron and Kristin met through Blackburn and got to know each other on the Fall Travel Experience. Cameron graduated May 2018 and is now a commissioned officer in the Army. Kristin is finishing up her last semester in Mechanical Engineering at UA. The couple will be living in Augusta, GA for the next few years.
- **Katie Boyd Britt (Blackburn '01)** became the first female President of the Business Council of Alabama in January.
- **Ian Sams (Blackburn '08)** was recently named the National Press Secretary on Kamala Harris' presidential campaign.

## April 2019

- **Cameron Smith (Blackburn '06)** was hired as the Executive Director of the United States House of Representatives Republican Policy Committee (RPC). Representative Gary Palmer (AL-6), RPC Chairman, announced Cameron's employment saying he had "broad policy acumen."
- **Lean On: Alabama** held a Women's Summit in Tuscaloosa where more than 100 women from throughout the state gathered to discuss topics related to Lean On: Alabama's core values: wisdom, hope, faith, and friendship. Lean On: Alabama was founded by **Dr. Mary Lee Caldwell (Blackburn '12)**, in an effort to create opportunities for women in the state to come together to have a positive impact on Alabama by promoting collaboration instead of competition. Dr. Caldwell spoke to the Women's Summit about the power of friendship, Dr. Rosalind Moore-Miller (Blackburn Advisory Board Member) served as the event's emcee, and **Lillian Roth (Blackburn '15)** served as the lead facilitator for the day's break-out sessions.
- **Baily Martin (Blackburn '17)** won the Sarah Ida Shaw Award which recognizes one member nationwide as "the most exceptional brave, bold and kind woman who remains dedicated to Tri Delta's Purpose and ideals and has shown significant unselfish leadership in her chapter, campus and community."
- **Meg McCrummen Fowler (Blackburn '08)** was hired as the new director of the Mobile History Museum. Meg states, "As Blackburn Fellows we know interpreting our shared histories in a thoughtful and responsible manner

is essential to healthy civic discourse. It is my hope that visitors to the History Museum of Mobile will come away seeing themselves as historical actors, capable of consequential change in the course of their own daily lives."

- **Will Dodd (Blackburn '12)** started as a Campaign Manager for Calvert Street Group in Nashville, TN after six years of running political campaigns in Alabama. He specializes in guiding clients through the intersection of private business and public policy with an emphasis on land use and environmental policy.
- **Rob Grady (Blackburn '16)** accepted a job as Project Engineer with Robins & Morton Construction, a Birmingham-based general contractor that ranks 3rd in Healthcare. He is currently working on a pharmacy renovation in Hilton Head, South Carolina and will likely be in the Carolinas for the next couple years; however, he plans to eventually transition to the headquarters in Birmingham.

## May 2019

- **Joan Smith (Blackburn '07)** won the Distinguished Engineering Fellow Award, the highest honor the college of engineering bestows.
- **Katie Boyd Britt (Blackburn '01)** and Mary Margaret Carroll (Blackburn Advisory Board Member) were recognized with Women of Impact Awards, "a celebration of the strong women who impact and propel Alabama."
- Our Fellows Involvement Network (FIN) Chairperson, **James Kemp (Blackburn '14)**, is expecting a baby boy.
- **Megan Welborn (Blackburn '07)** is also having a baby boy. William David Welborn is due on September 3.
- **Kyle Buchanan (Blackburn '03)** has been named the new president of Helen Keller Hospital.
- **Undré Phillips (Blackburn '15)** received the 2019 Rising Star Award for NASPA Alabama recognizing him as an outstanding new professional in student affairs for his work as Coordinator of Student Activities at UAB.

## June 2019

- **Jilisa Milton (Blackburn '16)** became the first UA student to earn a joint MSW/JD degree from The University of Alabama Law School and School of Social Work.
- **Matt Calderone (Blackburn '11)** and his wife Claire welcomed their third child, Jane Dabney Calderone, on



May 15, 2019. The older children, Abigail and Whitt "Buddy" Calderone, are proud older siblings.

- **Leigh Terry (Blackburn '13)**, a native of Sylacauga, AL, graduated from Yale Law School on May 20. Next she's getting married to **John Brinkerhoff Jr. (Blackburn '11)** and starting work in Montgomery as a law clerk for Judge W. Keith Watkins of the Middle District of Alabama.

## July 2019

- **Alex Flachsbert (Blackburn '07)** was selected for The Business Journals' Influencers: Commercial Real Estate (CRE) list. The list spotlights 100 executives making moves in the CRE space in cities nationwide.
- **Victor Luckerson (Blackburn '11)** is writing a narrative history of the Greenwood District in Tulsa, Oklahoma, also known as Black Wall Street, for Random House.
- **Kate Moss (Blackburn '13)**, now a 5th grade English Language Arts teacher in Houston, Texas, was featured in a Teach For America (TFA) video.
- **Chris Lancaster (Blackburn '16)** moved to Chicago in June to start a new role with JPMorgan Chase. Now he'll be a Treasury Management Officer covering a portfolio of companies in the Midwest and consulting/advising on cash management strategies.
- **Sarah Hughes (Blackburn '10)**, a third year law student at The University of Alabama School of Law, wrote an Op-Ed in AL.com entitled, "What Culverhouse got wrong about UA law."
- Recent graduate **Cokie Thompson (Blackburn '18)** just started her new position as Coordinator for Leadership and Service at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge.

## August 2019

- In January of 2019, **Dr. Elliot Knight (Blackburn '09)** began his role as Executive Director of the Alabama State Council on the Arts.
- Following a nation-wide search, Phi Eta Sigma named **Dr. Mary Lee Caldwell (Blackburn '12)** as their new Executive Director. She will also continue to

work part-time in the Division of Student Life at The University of Alabama.

- **Ryan Flamerich (Blackburn '10)** is leaving his role as a Management Consultant for Deloitte in New York to go back to school. He will be moving to Boston this August to attend Harvard Business School's full time MBA program.
- **Jessica Tolbert (Blackburn '16)** was recently admitted to an Online Masters of MIS program at UAB.
- **Art Richey (Blackburn '12)** is transitioning from working as a lawyer to a new position as the Vice President of Small Business Administration Banking at Regions Bank in Tennessee.
- **John Hammontree (Blackburn '08)** launched the Reckon Interview podcast which will explore the modern South.
- **Will Sorrell (Blackburn '13)** is the host of a podcast called "Ergonomy" about faith and work and the economy. Season 2 launched in June.
- **Christian Smith (Blackburn '04)** was accepted into the 2019-20 Leadership DOM Class (UAB's Department of Medicine Leadership Development Initiative).
- The National Alumni Association presented Outstanding Senior Awards to 10 students who demonstrated exceptional character and excellence while attending the University of Alabama. Two of the 2019 awardees are newly graduated Blackburn Fellows: **Alyssa Barefield (Blackburn '17)** and **Amber Scales (Blackburn '16)**.
- **Amber Scales (Blackburn '16)** also has been performing at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival as Viola in Twelfth Night, Balthazar and Juliet in Romeo and Juliet, and in the original practice production of King John.
- **Meredith Riley Stewart (Blackburn '99)** is thrilled to return to her home state as a filmmaker with an official selection in the Sidewalk Film Fest. Her VR piece, "See Me," will play Saturday, Aug 24 and Sunday, August 25 at the Lyric Theatre as part of the XR Category. "See Me" invited the viewer to enter the subconscious mind of a woman. Experience the persistent barrage of verbal attacks that women are exposed to on a daily basis. Watch as these women strip off those confines and emerge ready to truly be seen.





# *Lifetime Giving Circles*

## **DIAMOND**

**\$500,000+**

**Mr. and Mrs. Thomas L. Patterson**

**Mr. and Mrs. Donald W. Stewart**

## **PLATINUM**

**\$250,000-\$499,000**

**Protective Life Foundation**

## **GOLD**

**\$100,000-\$249,000**

**Alabama Power Foundation, Inc.**

**Mrs. Jeanne Cunningham**

**Drummond Company, Inc.**

**Mr. and Mrs. T. Michael Goodrich**

**Mr. and Mrs. W. Mike House**

**Mr. and Mrs. William C. Hulsey**

**Luke 6:38 Foundation**

**Medical Properties Trust**

**Regions Financial Corporation**

**Vulcan Materials Company**

**Wynfrey Hotel**

## **SILVER**

**\$25,000-\$99,000**

**Mr. and Mrs. Walter P. Batson, Jr.**

**Mr. and Mrs. David A. Donaldson**

**Dr. Nancy and Mr. John D. Johns**

**Mr. and Mrs. Peter L. Lowe, Sr.**

**Mrs. Marjorie Kay Nix**

**Mrs. Helen G. O'Sullivan**

**Pastor D. Ray Pate, Jr.**

**Mr. and Mrs. F. Don Siegal**

**Dr. Louise and Mr. Paul Thibodaux**

## **BRONZE**

**\$10,000-\$24,999**

**Mrs. Gloria Blackburn**

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**Mr. and Mrs. Fournier J. Gale, III**

**Mr. and Mrs. Hobart Grooms**

**Mr. Chris Horgen**

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*RECOGNIZING FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE BLACKBURN INSTITUTE  
THROUGH INDIVIDUAL AND CORPORATE DONATIONS FROM JULY 1, 1996 TO JUNE 30, 2019.*



# 2018-19 Annual Giving Circles

## DIAMOND

*Donations of \$1,001+*

Alabama Power Foundation, Inc.  
Mr. and Mrs. Walter P. Batson Jr.  
Justice Sue Bell Cobb and Mr. William J. Cobb  
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Missy Ming  
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## VISIONARY

*Donations of \$501-\$1,000*

Drs. Karen and Norm Baldwin  
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Ms. Kathy Rader  
Mrs. Christian N. Smith  
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## LEADERSHIP

*Donations of \$101-\$500*

Mrs. Katherine C. Barker  
Mr. Robert F. Boylan  
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Mr. and Mrs. Terry D. Lamar  
Mr. and Mrs. F. Don Siegal  
Ms. Meghan A. Stringer

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## HERITAGE

*Donations of up to \$100*

Dr. Patty and Mr. Robert M. Bogue  
Mrs. and Mrs. Maria N. L. Bonifacio-  
Sample

Ms. Martha M. Griffith  
Ms. Mary K. Lieb  
Dr. and Mrs. M. Stephen McNair, Jr.

Mr. Holden K. Spain  
The Honorable and Mrs. Judson W. Wells,  
Sr.

RECOGNIZING FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE BLACKBURN INSTITUTE  
THROUGH INDIVIDUAL AND CORPORATE DONATIONS FROM JULY 1, 2018 TO JUNE 30, 2019.



## 2019 Class of Blackburn Students



**ROW 1** Jade Hill, Jordan Watkins, Will Henson, Marquis Hollingsworth, Jarrett Moore, Taylor Roberson, and Kelsi Long

**ROW 2** Camille Howarth, Krymson Hammond, Bhavana Ravala, Payti Harrison, Royce Dickerson, Reeva Kedia, Cassie McCarley, Sam Reece, Abba Mellon, and Cambridge Layfield

**ROW 3** Carina Villarreal, Brittany Hamner, Carter Kampakis, Clark Vick, Megan McCrory, Juliana Strobing, Olivia Smith, Addison Stewart, and Alyssa Rapadas

**ROW 4** Clayton Lawing, Nayeli Pineda, Arianna Kellum, Lauren Chambliss, Christopher Robinson, Logan Goulart, Tejas Dinesh, Trey Sullivan, William Roberts, and Josh Britt

**ROW 5** Courtney Zotaj, Emma Bearden, Zachary Pate, Kathryn Lahr, Aleah Brown, Tana Early, Cameron Dobbs, Ford Williams, Ben Leonard, and Micah Presley

**Not Pictured** Jack Kappelman, Kate Pitts, and Tattum Denham

## 2019 Pinned Fellows of the Blackburn Institute



**ROW 1** Kyle Van Frank, Sophia Warner, Anna Shelby, Kristen Chambliss Harris, Austin Halverson, Wen Walsh (2020), Donna Xia, Marissa Navarro, Maruka Walker, Mollie Wade, James Clinton, Quinika Bradley

**ROW 2** Cokie Thompson, Jilisa Milton, Callie Cochran, Courtney Geary, Christine Allen, Alli Koszyk, Millicent Krebs, Alyssa Barefield, Shawn McGee, Phuong Nguyen

**ROW 3** Ryan Truitt, Norris Davis, Nivory Gordon, Keegan Allen, Matthew Tedford, Carson Ford, Reid Jenkins, Ibukun Afon, Houston Wingo, Ronald Nelson

**Not Pictured** Camille Carr, Stephen Grover, Elizabeth LaPaugh, Baily Martin, Elizabeth McEldowney, Colby Murray, Amber Scales, and Dante Whittaker



**AUGUST 21** New Student Nominations Open

**AUGUST 23-24** Annual Symposium and Fall Advisory Board Meeting

**SEPTEMBER 5, 11, 17, 23** Small Group Values Discussions  
*Facilitating a Diversity of Opinion*

**OCTOBER 3, 9, 15, 21** Small Group Values Discussions  
*Networking Through the Generations*

**OCTOBER 25** Blackburn Homecoming Reception

**OCTOBER 30 - NOVEMBER 2** Burt Jones Rural Community Experience  
*Eastern Black Belt*

**NOVEMBER 2, 8, 14, 20** Small Group Values Discussions  
*Being Called to Action*

**NOVEMBER 18** Daniel Community Scholars Poster Presentations and Reception

**NOVEMBER 20** New Student Interest Session

**NOVEMBER 23** Alabama v. WCU Tailgate  
*Advisory Board Host, Alex Smith*

**JANUARY 9** New Student Interest Session

**JANUARY 15** New Student Interest Session and New Student Nominations Close

**JANUARY 16** New Student Applications Open

**JANUARY 16-17** Protective Life Government Experience  
*Montgomery, AL*

**JANUARY 27** New Student Applications Close

**FEBRUARY 6, 12, 18, 24** Small Group Values Discussions  
*Instilling a Lifetime Commitment*

**JANUARY 31 - FEBRUARY 9** New Student Essay Review

**FEBRUARY 11-13** New Student Group Interviews

**FEBRUARY 20-22** New Student Individual Interviews

**FEBRUARY 25** New Student Class Announcement

**MARCH 1** New and Returning Student Reception

**MARCH 27-28** D. Ray Pate New Student Retreat

**APRIL 13** Spring Networking Dinner and Spring Advisory Board Meeting

**MAY, JUNE, AND JULY** Summer Networking Events

**AUGUST 28-29** Annual Symposium and Fall Advisory Board Meeting



# BLACKBURN LEGACY ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN

Throughout the history of the Institute, taking thoughtful and strategic action has been at the core of our work. The curriculum incorporates learning outcomes associated with identifying and researching community problems, working with community partners, building budgets, and implementing civic engagement projects. Combined with the Institute's core value of facilitating a diversity of opinion, these skills facilitate students' transitions to their roles as Blackburn Fellows. They leave The University of Alabama prepared to engage in the work of community discussion and to make systemic change for the betterment of Alabama.

Entering its 25th anniversary year, the Blackburn Institute begins a new phase in its realization of Dr. Blackburn's vision. This transition will result in a more structured network and financial resources to support Fellows' endeavors for local and statewide action, honoring Dr. Blackburn's 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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EMAIL: [blackburninstitute@sa.ua.edu](mailto:blackburninstitute@sa.ua.edu)

Blackburn Institute

The University of Alabama

Box 870167

2400 Ferguson Student Center

Tuscaloosa, AL 35487

205-348-3277

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