

JOHN L. COMERFORD

EDUCATION

- Ph.D.** in Higher Education Administration 2007
University of Kansas - Lawrence, Kansas
Dissertation: *Non Sui Juris (Not of one's own right): Colleges and Minor Students*
- Master of Science** in College Student Personnel Administration 1998
University of Central Missouri - Warrensburg, Missouri
- Bachelor of Arts** in Political Science 1996
Western Illinois University - Macomb, Illinois

ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP ROLES

- President**, Blackburn College 2013 – current

Lead a unique Work College, dedicated to undergraduate liberal arts education for over 180 years, sharing a strategic vision with the Board of Trustees, students, faculty, staff, alumni and community. Communicate the vision to all constituencies and ensure that the resources and other tools are available to achieve it. As chief executive officer, take general authority and responsibility for the teaching, learning, and operational aspects of the college in partnership with faculty and staff. Report to a 33-member Board of Trustees and seek their approval for major initiatives and input on strategic direction. Lead fundraising, grant seeking, and government funding efforts. Responsible for the sound fiscal management of the institution, including operational budgets of \$15 million and total assets of over \$80 million.

- Vice President for Institutional Advancement**, Westminster College 2009 – 2013

Administered a holistic advancement program including alumni relations, parent programs, college marketing, major gift fund raising, campaign management, planned giving, foundation/corporate relations, annual fund programs, government relations, and related support functions. Created a systematic fundraising program focused on maximizing philanthropic support for the College. Developed a comprehensive branding and marketing campaign to capitalize on institutional momentum and achieve enrollment objectives. Arranged, attended, and promoted the College at alumni and other events. Represented the College's interests in local, state, and federal governmental processes. Collaborated with faculty and staff to build dynamic programs of interest to donors.

- Secretary to the Board of Trustees**, Westminster College 2009 – 2013

Served on an active and engaged Board leadership team. Managed all operations for a Board with over 40 members. Led Board work flow, liaison to administration, and strategic planning.

Vice President and Dean of Student Life, Westminster College

2005 – 2009

Served as Chief Student Affairs Officer for over 1,000 students. Supervised multiple student development functional areas, including Intercollegiate Athletics (NCAA Division III), Dining Services, Career Services, Residential Life, Spiritual Life, Counseling & Health Services, Greek Life, Student Activities and the Center for Leadership & Service.

Assistant to the Vice Provost for Student Success (Assistantship), University of Kansas 2004 – 2005

Assistant Dean of Students/Director of Residential Life, Missouri Western State University 2000 – 2004

Residence Hall Director, Ball State University 1998 – 2000

ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Academic Development

- Launched several new academic programs, designed to capitalize on faculty expertise and build enrollment, including Agricultural Business, Human Resource Development, Cybersecurity, Arts Administration, and Computer Game Design.
- Assisted with the design and implementation of a new general education curriculum, including innovative new courses, learning outcomes, and assessments.
- Led a new initiative for faculty and staff salaries, lifting the College beyond its peer group average through peer-based merit review.
- Secured funding and collaboratively built a new faculty professional development system.

Enrollment Management

- Increased applications and accepts by 100% in four years using a focus on under-served student populations and new marketing approaches.
- Created innovative new financial aid programs, including the Blackburn Promise (meeting all need), Affordable Access Award (free tuition for \$0 EFCs), and Macoupin Promise (debt-free college for local students). The new programs increased yield, increased net tuition revenue, increased student diversity, and put the institution into a leadership role in access and affordability.
- Grew enrollment in the freshman class by 50% in one year, including a dramatic increase in students of color (from 12% to 25% of the class).
- Articulated a brand niche based around career success through the Work Program that was designed to enhance the institution's value proposition to prospective and returning students.
- Started a new modeling and response system for student retention initiatives, including a holistic student advising model. Developed a comprehensive curricular and co-curricular plan to increase student success.
- Led efforts to increase student retention, resulting in an increase from 75% to 84% in freshman-to-sophomore retention in four years.
- Partnered with faculty to introduce pre-matriculation, early warning, first-year experience, living-learning community, and probation programs to better match students to support systems.
- Created new programs to serve emerging student populations, including students of color, international students, and students with learning differences.

Student Development

- Introduced a developmental philosophy to the Blackburn Work Program, capitalizing on its educational potential and ability to drive post-graduation success.
- Assisted with a new first-year student cohort system linking academic success courses with work assignments.
- Supported a new academic advising model that utilizes a holistic model designed to support at-risk students.
- Created a centralized center for student success and support, including capitalizing on underutilized facilities and student staff.
- Increased student-athletic participation by 40% and created incentives for coaches to excel in recruitment and retention. Grew the number of female student-athletes by 75%.
- Developed and implemented a comprehensive student development plan incorporating academics and student life.
- Led the creation of co-curricular learning goals and assessments integrated with academic departments.
- Advised a 130-year-old Greek system, implementing new risk management procedures; transitioned fraternity houses from off-campus to College ownership and management.
- Developed a nationally recognized center focused on student leadership and service.

Institutional Advancement

- Launched a record-setting \$25 million campaign at Blackburn as a leader, donor, and solicitor. Funded capital needs, endowments, scholarships, and curricular programs. Raised \$26.3 million in five years.
- Through new gifts and growth, doubled the College's endowment (from \$12 million to over \$27 million) in five years.
- Helped to secure an increase in federal support for the Work Colleges and lobbied for a change in the tax code to recognize student work grants as scholarships rather than payroll.
- Refined college brand and launched entirely new website and admissions materials.
- Led efforts to improve the campus visit experience, including campus beautification.
- Successfully worked with state legislators to defend student aid programs and receive state capital funding.
- Built several new partnerships with foundations and other non-profits leading to grant support, enrollment pipelines, and faculty/staff development opportunities.
- Launched a volunteer-driven \$80 million comprehensive campaign at Westminster focused on endowment building and capital projects. The first year of silent phase yielded \$14 million in gifts and pledges.
- Raised over \$3.5 million in cash annually, including \$1.1 million in unrestricted gifts.
- Developed a college brand identity, created alignment within the college around it, and used it as the basis for a new external marketing initiative.
- Led college efforts at expanding revenue opportunities through new endeavors, including exploration of new programs and a branch campus in Arizona.
- Partnered with faculty to fund new programs in English, Allied Health, Spanish, Leadership, Entrepreneurship, and Religious Studies.

Board Development

- Advised the Blackburn College Board of Trustees in a complete governance review, resulting in new committee structures, meeting formats, and governance documents.
- Recruited and retained Trustees that reflect the diversity of our student body and wider community.
- Increased Trustee contributions of “time, talent, and treasure” through peer-led expectations and assessments.
- Introduced a new strategic planning process to keep the Board focused on macro-level institutional performance.
- Created a new Westminster College Board governance, policy, and structural model – including a new committee structure, new officer duties, a central coordination calendar, and comprehensive policy manual.
- Created a new Trustee research, vetting, nomination, and orientation process leading to a more diverse, engaged and financially supportive Board.

Finance & Facilities

- Achieved scores on the Composite Financial Index at Blackburn College that are 50-75% above national averages for liberal arts colleges and well above thresholds for financial health.
- Invested nearly \$9 million in capital spending at Blackburn and decreased deferred maintenance by 33% over five years.
- Realigned budget to better support faculty/staff compensation and launched a collaborative effort to distribute compensation increases equitably, including factors such as seniority, performance, and comparative pay.
- Managed new cash flow modeling and expectations which enhanced financial management
- Raised lead gift and completed planning for a renovation of the former student center into an alumni center.
- Raised funds and built a new student fitness center in an otherwise underutilized campus building.
- Led vision and fundraising for a remodeled library, turning it into a 21st century Learning Commons.
- Reorganized Physical Plant department in order to enhance campus esthetics and student productivity.
- Refinanced \$5 million in bond debt while securing additional \$2.2 million in operational debt capacity.
- Led a residential life master plan process and two new residence hall design and construction projects.
- Built revenue projections and goals into new projects such as a comprehensive fundraising campaign and a new branch campus operation.

TEACHING & RESEARCH ROLES

Assistant Professor of Education , Westminster College	2007 – 2013
Adjunct Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis , University of Missouri	2008 – 2013
Graduate Research Assistant for Lumina Foundation Grant , University of Kansas	2004 – 2005

ACADEMIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Teaching

- Taught courses in multiple departments at several institutions, including:
 - Postsecondary Law as part of the graduate program in Educational Leadership at the University of Missouri - Columbia
 - Educational Foundations, the entry course for the major at Westminster College
 - Freshman Seminars at Westminster College and the University of Kansas
 - Leadership courses at Westminster College and Ball State University
- Admitted as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Missouri with eligibility to supervise doctoral committees.
- Scored “well above average” teaching evaluations on the IDEA national and institutional measures.
- Served as an academic advisor for new student registration, regular freshmen and sophomores, and an upperclass student seeking a self-designed major.

Academic Policy & Curriculum Design

- Oversaw the creation of a new general education curriculum at Blackburn, including an improved new student advising program.
- Supervised the development of several new degree programs.
- Led a variety of administrative committees and counsels, including the strategic planning group at four institutions.
- Led curricular design for a new branch campus and assisted with designs for improvements to Pre-Med, Leadership, Business, and Education programs.
- Developed or assisted with program development for learning differences, commuters, students of color, international students, and health support.

Research

- Served on the External Review Board for the Journal of Student Affairs at New York University.
- Studied the impact of a reciprocal reduced tuition plan in fifteen western states as part of a Lumina funded project, including an exhaustive literature review on the college choice process.

PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Higher Education Leadership

- Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities, President, 2018-19
- St. Louis Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, Vice Chair, 2017-18
- Associated Colleges of Illinois, Executive Board, 2015 – current
- Federated Colleges of Illinois, Executive Board, 2015 - current
- CIC Presidents Institute, 2014-current
- National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, 2014-current
- Work College Consortium, 2014-current
- CIC/AASCU Executive Leadership Academy, 2011-2012
- Association for the Study of Higher Education, 2005
- American Marketing Association, Higher Education Marketing Symposium, 2010

Accreditation & Assessment

- Higher Learning Commission, Consultant-Evaluator Training, 2010, 2014
 - HLC Reaccreditation Visit Teams, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017
- Department of Education TRIO Grant Reader/Reviewer, 2008
- CIC/CLA Consortium on Assessment, 2008

Finance & Administration

- National Association of College and University Business Officers, Summit on Third-Party Financing in Student Housing, 2004

Advancement

- Big Ten Fundraising Institute, 2009
- Counsel for the Advancement and Support of Education Symposium, 2010
- St. Louis Planned Giving Council Conference, 2010

Student Affairs

- FEMA Incident Command System Training, Certification, 2008
- National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, New Senior Student Affairs Officers Institute, 2005
- American College Personnel Association, Directorate of the Commission on Administrative Leadership, 2001-2004
- Missouri College Personnel Association, President, 2004-2005

PRESENTATIONS & PUBLICATIONS

Publications

- Public Colleges, Don't Act Like the Privates - State Journal Register, May 7, 2015
- Learning Happens During Life's Pauses - State Journal Register, March 11, 2015
- Go to College, Get a Job. Right? - State Journal Register, November 5, 2014
- On College Affordability, the White House Gets it Half Right - State Journal Register, March 20, 2014
- Making College Affordable Again – State Journal Register, January 11, 2014

Conference Keynotes

- Missouri Extension Directors Conference, June 2014
- Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, April 2014
- Nebraska Student Affairs Association, January 2012
- National Association of Educational Office Professionals, July 2010
- Choosing Your Path in Student Affairs, University of Central Missouri, 2008
- Heartland Resident Assistant Conference, University of Missouri – Rolla, 2007

Other Conference Presentations

- Student Affairs to the Presidency, 2017
- The President's Role in Fundraising, Executive Leadership Academy, 2012
- Advancement Overview for Future College Presidents, Executive Leadership Academy, 2011
- It's Not Them, It's Us: A blunt conversation about what gets in the way of faculty partnerships, 2008
- Non Sui Juris: Colleges and Minor Students, 2008
- Liability, Negligence, and other Fun Words!, 2008
- Law 101: What Student Affairs Practitioners Need to Know, 2006
- Taking Theory to Practice: Graduate Students in Education Examine Issues of Diversity, 2002

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Board Member, Unified Child Advocacy Network	2017 – current
Police Commission, City of Carlinville	2014 – current
Higher Education Advisory Board, Congressman Rodney Davis	2014 – current
Board of Directors, Abraham Lincoln Council, Boy Scouts of America	2013 – current
Senior Vice President	2015 – current
Board of Trustees, Carlinville Public Schools Foundation	2013 – current
Rotary Club of Carlinville	2013 – current
Illinois Commission on Higher Education and Workforce Development	2015 – 2016
Rotary Club of Fulton	2005 – 2013
Secretary	2007 – 2009
Volunteer, Boy Scouts of America, Great Rivers Council	2008 – 2013
Fulton Downtown Development Board	2012 – 2013
Co-Chair, Community Coalition to Combat Underage Drinking	2008 – 2009
Rotary Youth Leadership Academy, Volunteer	2008, 2009
AmeriCorps Emergency Service, Volunteer	2007

AWARDS & HONORS

Rotary District 6460 Difference Maker Award	2017
Key to the City of Carlinville	2017
Richard Schien Leadership Award, Carlinville Chamber of Commerce	2016
Alumni Achievement Award, Western Illinois University	2013
Paul Harris Society, Rotary International	2012
Outstanding Professional Award, Missouri College Personnel Association	2004
Pi Lambda Theta Educational Honor Fraternity	2003
Outstanding Feature Article, UMR-ACUHO	2000
Award for Service, Office of Disability Support Services, Ball State University	1999
Donald Marshall Student Government Excellence Award, Western Illinois University	1996
Blue Key National Honor Fraternity	1995
Who's Who in American Colleges & Universities	1995
Phi Sigma Alpha National Political Science Honor Fraternity	1994
Phi Eta Sigma Freshman Honors Society	1993
Eagle Scout	1993