



OTTERBEIN'S TWENTY-FIRST PRESIDENT

JOHN L. COMERFORD, PH.D.

~ APRIL 24, 2018 ~



John Comerford, Ph.D., comes to Otterbein University with a record of commitment and advocacy for higher education and liberal arts colleges. He has served as president of Blackburn College in Carlinville, Illinois, since 2013, where he has been at the center of a number of innovative programs designed to enhance student access and learning.

Comerford is committed to providing access to affordable higher education while delivering excellence in academic, student life, and career preparation programs. Under his leadership, Blackburn College became one of just a handful of colleges in the country to meet the full financial need of all its incoming students, with a focus on providing a series of work experiences that will help students impress prospective employers after graduation. Blackburn is one of just a few colleges in the state of Illinois to show enrollment growth over the past five years.

In addition to growing the enrollment, Comerford has been committed to cultivating diversity on campus. Through building bridges and creating support programs, Blackburn increased the number of students of color on its campus from 12 percent to 24 percent in the past four years.

Comerford understands the role of fundraising in providing access and affordability, and spearheaded the most successful campaign in Blackburn history, raising \$26.3 million to renovate three buildings and double the size of the endowment.

He previously served at Westminster College in Missouri from 2005 to 2013 as vice president for student life and vice president for institutional advancement. He also has held positions at Missouri Western State College and Ball State University. He has taught leadership, education, and law courses at several institutions.

Comerford completed his doctorate degree in higher education administration with an emphasis in law at the University of Kansas. He also holds a master's degree in college student personnel administration from the University of Central Missouri and a bachelor's degree in political science from Western Illinois University. He has conducted research in areas from higher education law to college student culture.

He has been an active leader in professional and community associations. He is an active Rotary member and serves on the boards of the United Child Advocacy Network, Abraham Lincoln Council of the Boy Scouts of America, Carlinville Public Schools Foundation, Associated Colleges of Illinois, Federated Colleges of Illinois, and Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities.

Comerford's wife, Rachel, also has a background in higher education, having served in several leadership roles in housing and residence life. The couple has three children, Garrett, 11, Reagan, 9, and Grant, 6.

