

ETBU trustees elect Blair Blackburn president

April 7, 2015

MARSHALL—[East Texas Baptist University's](#) board of trustees elected Blair Blackburn the school's 13th president, effective in June.

Blackburn, executive vice president at [Dallas Baptist University](#) since 2002, will succeed Samuel W. "Dub" Oliver who became president of Union University in Jackson, Tenn., last June.



The Blackburn family includes (left to right) Michelle, Blair, Elizabeth and (seated) Parker. Not pictured is Taylor Blackburn. Hal Cornish, chair of the ETBU board, announced

Blackburn's election after a special called trustee meeting April 7.

"Dr. Blackburn is an exceptionally well-qualified and highly experienced individual ideally suited to be ETBU's next president," Cornish said. "The board of trustees and the entire ETBU community is very excited about the university's bright future under the presidential leadership of Dr. Blackburn."

Blackburn has served 20 years at DBU. In his role as executive vice president, he has led three institutional divisions and provided oversight of all aspects of campus operations, administrative affairs, student affairs, athletics and enrollment.

Prior to his time at DBU, he served at the University of Texas at Tyler, Lon Morris College and Paris Junior College.

"I am excited and humbled that the Lord has called me to serve as president of East Texas Baptist University," Blackburn said. "Having been raised in Northwest Louisiana and living in East Texas for many years, I have known and respected this institution for its unwavering commitment to stand as a beacon for Christ-centered education.

"It is my desire to partner together with the faithful faculty and staff of ETBU and build upon an incredible foundation as we press forward in the vision of building East Texas Baptist into an institution of greatness for the glory of God. I believe that as followers of Christ, we are called to live a life of excellence, and as a Christ-centered university, we are likewise called to pursue excellence in all aspects of our mission to train and equip men and women to be contributors for the kingdom, in whatever and wherever the Lord calls."

Blackburn noted he and his wife, Michelle, look forward to serving ETBU.

Desire to 'reflect servant leadership'

“We want to reflect a model of Christ’s servant leadership and to foster an engaging environment where transformational leadership is embraced and encouraged,” he said.

Blackburn earned an associate of arts degree from Tyler Junior College and graduated from the University of Texas at Tyler with a bachelor of science degree in political science. He holds a master of science degree in higher education administration from Texas A&M-Commerce. He earned his doctorate in educational administration degree from Baylor University.

Blackburn arrived at DBU in 1995 to serve as assistant vice president for development. He served on two occasions as dean of the College of Adult Education and once as acting director of athletics.

His other administrative posts at DBU included assistant vice president, vice president and senior vice president for enrollment and administrative affairs. He was extensively involved with DBU’s reaccreditation process in 1998 and 2008.

During his time as administrative leader of enrollment, the overall DBU student population rose 56 percent, while the on-campus student population increased 275 percent, from 469 to 1,757 residents.

In addition, he led DBU’s efforts to become a member of the NCAA in 2004 and helped to grow the athletics department to include 14 NCAA Division II sports, six club sports and DBU’s nationally ranked Division I baseball program.

Achievements at DBU

Blackburn provided leadership for more than 30 building projects at DBU, and he worked extensively with both city and state officials on various campus, roadways, utilities and student funding matters.

“I have had the privilege to work side by side with Blair for 20 years,” said DBU President Gary Cook. “Over the course of that time, he has served in a variety of roles, each time meeting and exceeding expectations. He has worked closely with faculty and staff members in matters of accreditation, enrollment, advancement, student life, spiritual life, athletics and construction, and he is so highly respected by his peers.

“I know of few other leaders who are as diligent and driven as Dr. Blackburn, and while we are sad to see him leave DBU, I know that the Lord has wonderful plans for him and for East Texas Baptist University.”

Blackburn helped develop DBU’s Christ-centered Greek Life program, as well as new student programs such as the DiscipleNow Encounter Ministry, new men’s and women’s ministries, the Global Missions Program and living-learning communities for first-year female students and first-year male students.

Gail Linam, academic dean at DBU and former provost, characterized Blackburn as “a man of faith, devoted to excellence in Christian education.”

“He possesses a rare combination of extraordinary abilities in campus design, student affairs, innovative academics, and community service, “ Linam said. “As well, Blair and Michelle Blackburn are a remarkable team, supporting and encouraging the university family and enriching special events.”

The Blackburns have been married 23 years and have three children—Taylor, 22; Elizabeth Blair, 17; and Parker, 15.

Blake Killingsworth from DBU contributed to this report.