



John A. “Jack” Blackburn Award
Presented to Todd Rinehart
53rd Annual Conference – Dover, DE
April 15, 2018

By Lou Hirsh, NACAC Admissions Practices Chair

While all awards hold a special place in the hearts of those who receive them, Potomac & Chesapeake’s **Jack Blackburn Award** is special. Its focus is ethical behavior, and its recipients are honored for *doing the right thing*.

“Doing the right thing” is an accolade that stands apart from all other accomplishments because it has no necessary connection to the usual admissions outcomes. For example, this award does not depend on the answer to such questions as, “how many students did your high school send to elite colleges?” or “has your college met its tuition revenue goals?”

Instead, it honors people for having a moral compass in a world where it is becoming increasingly hard to find ethical role models. Jack Blackburn was the consummate role model, and this year’s Jack Blackburn Award recipient is a shining example that those role models still exist.

This year’s recipient earned his undergraduate degree at Ohio’s Bowling Green State University in Secondary History Education and his Masters of Education in Athletic Administration, also at Bowling Green.

After working at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, he came to the University of Denver in 1997, where he served first as an assistant men’s basketball coach, then as an admissions counselor and director of alumni admission, then as an Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment and director of admissions, and currently as DU’s recently-named Vice Chancellor for Enrollment.

While this year’s Blackburn winner is a role model for ethical conduct, another of his enduring contributions is his success at convincing others to behave ethically. I first saw him in action when we were members of NACAC’s Admission Practices Committee, a committee that he chaired from 2013 to 2015.

A year later NACAC tapped him to chair an *ad hoc* Steering Committee on Admission Practices. Under his leadership, the committee crafted an entirely new code of ethics for our profession. The “new SPGP,” as we call it, was approved in Boston last September by the NACAC Assembly. Since all educators are by nature contentious, we were profoundly shocked when the NACAC Assembly approved the document *without a single dissenting vote*.

Listen to how one of our colleagues on the Steering Committee describes our Blackburn recipient’s leadership. She writes:

Our charge . . . was to evaluate . . . long-standing rules, known as the *Statement of Principles of Good Practice*, or SPGP. [He] convened 20 admission and college counseling leaders representing a vast array of constituencies, and with likely as many different ideas on how to approach this charge. The easier route would have been to make some structural changes but leave the overall

document intact. But there was a contingent among us who wanted to start over and highlight overarching ethical principles, while creating a more accessible format that members could more easily refer to and understand. There is no question that this approach --start from scratch -- was the tougher job and there were those who were not in favor, but [he] brought everyone on board to the idea of writing an entirely new document for the profession and laid out a well-paced timeline to complete the ambitious task.

But it was after the hours spent parsing commas and word choice that the hard work began: securing buy-in from the 16,000 members of NACAC. This process was a model for collaboration as he sought and incorporated critical feedback over the course of several months and coordinated input from the 23 NACAC affiliate associations, all helping to craft a stronger document that was presented and voted upon at our . . . national conference . . . and unanimously approved by the 200+ members of the NACAC Assembly. It is now in effect for NACAC's 16,000 members. [She concludes:] It is an understatement to tell you that **Todd Rinehart** has made an indelible mark on the ethical practices of everyone in the profession of college admission and counseling.

Why did Todd Rinehart put himself out like this? One answer, I think, is that, like Jack Blackburn, Todd understands that low-income, first-generation students and their families are often the ones who are the most victimized by unethical admission and financial aid practices. That's a way of saying that Todd has a conscience and wants us to have a conscience, too.

To put Todd's achievement in its proper context, let me also mention that Todd is the chief enrollment officer at the University of Denver. I have met several members of DU's admissions staff: they love working for this guy. Todd's wife, Melissa Kutcher-Rinehart, is the head coach of DU's nationally ranked women's gymnastics team. She, too, has an absurdly busy job. What's more, they have two school-aged children and a bundle of community and volunteer activities. How these two extraordinary parents manage the scheduling logistics of their family life is, frankly, a complete and enduring mystery to me.

Finally, a year ago, Todd's own affiliate – Rocky Mountain ACAC – awarded him its *Roger H. Campbell Award*, which is their highest honor. It seems fitting that we join our colleagues in Rocky Mountain ACAC in recognizing his remarkable contributions to our profession and above all to college-bound students everywhere by honoring Todd Rinehart as our 2018 recipient of the **John A. "Jack" Blackburn Award for Ethics in College Admission**.