

## Kevin Blankenship, B.A. English, 1998

*By Sarah K. Miller & Max Chambers*

### Chief Information Officer, Volunteer State Community College

*“I fully believe there is a need in the world for people who think about why we do the things we do, not just how we do things.”*



Kevin Blankenship graduated from Western Kentucky University with a bachelor’s degree in English in 1998. He earned an MBA from Morehead State University in 2005, then served as the Interim Chief Information Officer at Berea College for 10 years. Since 2015, Blankenship has served as the Chief Information Officer at [Volunteer State Community College](#).

As a student at WKU, Blankenship worked as a lab assistant in Academic Technology, beginning his career in higher education. “We were helping faculty integrate technology into their classrooms way back in the early days of the internet,” Blankenship said. “[I] progressed through my career from a technician to a director of an information technology department at a community college as part of the KCTCS system.”

After obtaining his MBA, Blankenship became the Director of User Services at Berea College. While at Berea, he was promoted to the Computer Center Director, then to Associate CIO. Although he enjoyed his time at Berea, Blankenship was excited to become the CIO at Volunteer State Community College in Gallatin, Tennessee. “In many ways, being this close to WKU again has been like coming home,” said Blankenship.

As Chief Information Officer, Blankenship values the communication skills that he gained from his English degree. “Reading Shakespeare, Keats, and Shelley is really about understanding and connecting with human nature, and I think that has contributed to a lot of my success in director positions and as a CIO. A large part of leadership is about forming relationships and connecting with others, and I think my background in English and the humanities really underpins all that I do in my career.

For anyone aspiring to a leadership position in technology, communication and people skills are as essential as understanding networks, security, and software.”

Although his career focuses on technology and information science, Blankenship still enjoys writing and reading literature when he can. “I have three published chapbooks of poetry as well as several short stories,” said Blankenship. “It is hard to squeeze in time for writing, but it is a good release from the stress of my daily job.”

Blankenship advises students to take every chance to build interpersonal and career skills, and he urges students to follow their passions as he did. “Take advantage of your opportunities to communicate and learn from your classes and your peers,” said Blankenship. “Your degree will enable you to be successful no matter what direction you choose to go. This time will be a special time in your lives, and you should look back on it with no regrets.”

