Distinguished Alumnus

James O’Brien
Chairman, CEO
Ashland, Inc.

Jim O’Brien has worked with Ashland, Inc., for 30 years and has a wealth of experience in Ashland operations, from chemicals to motor oil marketing and back. He joined the former Ashland Chemical Company in 1976 where he succeeded in assignments of increasing responsibility in the foundry, specialty polymers, and general polymers divisions.

In 1994, O’Brien took on the challenging assignment of revitalizing Ashland’s branded gasoline marketing operations. A year later, he became president of Valvoline. While at Valvoline, O’Brien successfully implemented a dynamic master brand strategy while expanding the product line into new premium products.

As group operating officer responsible for Ashland Distribution and Ashland Specialty Chemical, O’Brien developed new initiatives to redefine the distribution business model with a goal of enhancing efficiency, increasing revenues, and restoring returns.

A native of Circleville, Ohio, O’Brien earned a bachelor’s degree in accounting and finance and a master’s degree in business administration from Fisher. He is a member of the Dean’s Advisory Council, chairman of the board of trustees for Midway College in Kentucky, and a member of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. He is on the board of directors of Humana, Inc., and serves on the national board of directors of Big Brothers Big Sisters while volunteering as a big brother with Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Bluegrass.