

Thank you, Anand.

It's my good fortune to serve as the President of Ball State University, and it's a pleasure to be here with you this afternoon.

As you just heard, we have gathered today to commemorate the work that is underway on our new Center for Innovation and Collaboration—a center that soon will live up to its name by becoming the central hub of collaboration and experimentation where our vibrant campus meets our increasingly vibrant community.

Like all of you, I am excited to witness how this center contributes to our University's long-term vision to revitalize The Village. Behind us, you can see how we are making good progress in the construction of our Performing Arts Center and The Cantio Hotel. And coming up, on June 13th, we will hold a groundbreaking ceremony with our partner, Trademark Construction, for the new houses and townhomes that will be constructed in The Village. That site is located just east of here, between North and Gilbert Streets.

As work begins on each new phase of this project, I have many people to thank for their time, their talent, and their dedication to our University's ambitious plan to revitalize The Village.

First, I want to recognize members of our Board of Trustees for their ongoing support of this project and their continued investment in the future success of our University.

I am also grateful to our city officials and our state legislators who continue to champion this project. Some of those women and men are here today, including Senator Scott Alexander, Representatives Sue Errington and Elizabeth Rowray, and Dale Basham from the Muncie City Council.

I am grateful to my colleagues from Business Affairs for their guidance and leadership, especially Chris Paladino. Chris, you have gone above and beyond in ensuring the successful implementation of this project, and I appreciate your ongoing investment in this important work.

I am also very grateful to my colleague Sali Falling, who serves as our vice president and general counsel. For years now, Sali and her team have assisted and advised the University with the legal and contractual elements of this project.

The colleagues I've just mentioned have been engaged in advancing the physical construction of our new Center for Innovation and Collaboration. But there is someone else I want to acknowledge—someone who has led our University's efforts in planning for how this new building will serve our faculty and staff, our students, and our friends and neighbors in the community.

Jennifer Palilonis has been the guiding force in helping to determine which of our academic programs and units will be among the first collaborators to work inside this building when the center opens in Summer 2026.

Jenn has also been instrumental in our efforts to build relationships with the community partners that will benefit from sharing space with our students, faculty, and staff inside the center.

Jenn, thank you for your willingness to serve as the interim director for our new Center for Innovation and Collaboration. I look forward to witnessing how your leadership continues to help our University nurture a culture of innovation and growth on our campus and in our community.

In a few moments, Jenn is going to invite all of our special guests here today to join us in adorning this beam with their signatures. But first, it is now my pleasure to invite her to the podium to say a few words of her own about the significance of this moment.