Thank you, Dean McCarthy.

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.

Today is an exciting day as we celebrate the completion of our revitalized Cooper Science Building. This is an important moment for our University, especially for our faculty, staff, and students who benefit from the new classrooms, labs, and dynamic spaces inside this new state-of-the-art facility.

Today's ribbon-cutting signifies the successful completion of the third and final phase of our University's comprehensive plan to expand and renovate our STEM and health professions facilities.

The first phase of this comprehensive plan was the completion of our Health Professions Building in 2019. As all of you know, this building is home to our College of Health and this building also anchors the East Quad of our campus.

The second phase of this comprehensive plan was the completion of our Foundational Sciences Building. When this building was completed in 2021, it became the new home of our biology and chemistry departments.

Together, these three projects represent a $210 million investment in our University. We owe a debt of gratitude to the members of the General Assembly who provided us with the financial resources to make these facilities possible—and I'm going to speak more about some of them in a moment.

But first, I also want to thank our many partners whose commitment in time, in talent, and in philanthropic investments helped us reach this important milestone.

First, I want to recognize members of our Board of Trustees for their support of this project and for their ongoing commitment to our University's mission.

And I want to thank my colleagues in the College of Sciences and Humanities. For years now, you have waited for the transformation of this building to be complete. Despite a few setbacks and some delays, you remained committed to engaging our students in innovative, collaborative learning experiences. This renovated building is an investment in our facilities. But, most importantly, it's an investment in our people—it is an investment in you.

I also want to thank my colleagues from facilities for their guidance and leadership in helping with the demolition and renovation phases of this project.

And I would like to acknowledge another special guest here with us today—Dr. John Worthen, who served as the 11th president of Ball State. Dr. Worthen, thank you for joining us and thank you for your long-standing commitment to our University.

A moment ago, I mentioned my gratitude for the support the General Assembly provides—support that has made important projects like this one possible.

One of those lawmakers is Representative Sue Errington, who is here today with her daughter, Sara. Sue's late husband, Paul, was a physics professor at our University and so that meant he spent a lot of time in the old Cooper Science Complex. Later this year, the Errington family will join us again for a dedication in the renovated building of a new teaching lab in Paul's honor.

There is another lawmaker I want to thank personally today—a lawmaker who became a true champion for our University's years-long effort to improve the quality of STEM education on our campus.

That lawmaker is Luke Kenley, who served in the Indiana Senate from 1992 to 2017.

It was 10 years ago this Spring that the State began the multi-year process of providing us the financial resources to construct the new buildings I mentioned earlier and to fund the renovations to our Cooper Science Building.

In our corner throughout the budget process was Sen. Kenley, who had previously toured the Cooper complex.

During his tour of Cooper, Sen. Kenley saw firsthand how our departments had outgrown the cramped confines of a building first built in the 1960s.

He heard about how frustrated students would become trying to find their classrooms in the old complex, asking themselves if it was in CL or in CN or in

CP. And if you know the acronyms I'm referring to, then you also know that, for many decades, Cooper was really several buildings inside one.

Most importantly, Sen. Kenley observed how the labs and classrooms that were originally designed for the Baby Boomer generation were no longer keeping pace with the needs of current students who were pursuing 21st century careers in their chosen scientific fields.

As chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Sen. Kenley told his fellow legislators that it was—in his own words—"almost mandatory" for the state to step in and fund the three phases of this comprehensive project.

Sen. Kenley isn't here today, but I think we all owe him a debt of gratitude for the ways in which he showed up for our University at a pivotal time in the history of our institution.

And if he were able to join us in a bit for our tours of the building, he no doubt would be amazed at all the changes that have transpired, both to this complex and to our campus—changes that were implemented in part because of his longstanding support of our University.

So today, we gather to celebrate how a building once described as "outdated" has since become an airy, bright, and thoroughly modern space for our faculty and for our students.

And now, to share more with us about the impact this new building will have on the academic experiences of our students, I'd like to invite Provost Marri to the podium.