



**BALL STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
COMMENTS BY GEOFFREY S. MEARNES  
February 28, 2025**

As you heard a few moments ago, our University is an active partner in the distinctive initiative known as Optimus Primary.

I appreciate all of our educational and healthcare partners who attended today's meeting to share with you firsthand the ways in which, together, we are working to recruit more medical professionals to live and work in East Central Indiana. I am also grateful to the board members of the Ball Brothers Foundation who have joined us, including Jim Fisher, who serves as chair of the board. To date, the Ball Brothers Foundation has provided approximately \$3 million to fund Optimus Primary—a project that continues to strengthen the pipeline of medical professionals in our community.

I am grateful, too, to our graduates and friends whose contributions to our comprehensive fundraising campaign continue to empower our students, support our faculty and staff, and enrich our University. Earlier today, we announced that

several of our very generous benefactors will soon be honored with named spaces on our campus.

Rich and Linda Berthy have committed \$1 million to support an expansion of the Edmund F. and Virginia B. Ball Honors House. At the request of the family, the new wing of the building—which will house new classroom, office, and gathering spaces for our growing Honors College—will be named in recognition of Rich’s parents, Charles and Erika Berthy.

Our University will also honor longtime benefactors and Ball State graduates Michael and Katherine Shebek by naming our baseball stadium as Shebek Stadium in recognition of the family’s \$5 million gift.

Located within the baseball complex, Shebek Stadium will feature a state-of-the-art clubhouse, including a locker room, nutrition space, and meeting area. Mike and Katherine share a passion for sports, and Mike was a standout pitcher for the baseball team while he was a student at our University.

The coming changes to our Honors College and to our baseball complex are among the latest enhancements in store for our vibrant campus. Work is also now underway on our Performing Arts Center and the Cantio Hotel—buildings which serve as two of the catalysts to our University’s plans to our ambitious plan to revitalize The Village.

Another important component of this comprehensive plan is the addition of new owner-occupied housing in The Village. I am grateful to you, our trustees, for authorizing me to execute an agreement with Trademark Construction to construct 17 new attached townhomes and eight new single family homes as part of the ongoing Village revitalization project. We are now one step closer in advancing a goal we share with the City of Muncie to provide more housing options for people to live near where they work in our community.

A moment ago, I mentioned our Performing Arts Center, which, as you know, will become the future home of performances led by theater and dance students from our College of Fine Arts. And earlier today, you heard Seth Beckman provide an update about the college, including mention of how enrollment in our CFA programs has rebounded since the pandemic.

Next week, Jennifer and I will travel to New York City to see some of our talented seniors from our theater and dance program perform in the college's annual cabaret and showcase. These events are an opportunity for our students to perform in front of agents and talent scouts who can help them transition into the professional world, in some cases even onto the Broadway stage. So we very much look forward to celebrating our students' hard work and creativity alongside the dedication of our faculty and staff who have helped our students reach this defining stage of their undergraduate careers.

Thank you.