



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMENTS BY GEOFFREY S. MEARNs
September 15, 2023**

As you may have heard during Fall Convocation last month, the theme of my remarks was how our University emerged from the pandemic better and stronger.

Today, you saw firsthand why this is true.

You saw it in the charts Paula Luff shared during her presentation about our positive enrollment trends for Fall 2023. The 3,800 new freshmen enrolled for the current academic year represents a nine-percent increase compared to Fall 2022. The size of this year's freshman class is even more impressive when you consider that, in August 2021, we enrolled only 3,278 new freshmen because of the adverse impact of the pandemic.

I am grateful to Paula and to our entire Enrollment Planning and Management team for their dedication to implementing innovative strategies that have enabled us to recruit more new students.

Another way you saw how we are better and stronger is during today's presentation about designs of our new Performing Arts Center, which is the principal catalyst for our comprehensive plan to revitalize The Village.

The design of the PAC will feature two performance venues, a 425-seat main-stage theater and a "black box" theater, along with the necessary spaces to support stage performances. Once completed, the PAC will serve as a state-of-the-art facility that reflects the quality level of the talent and work of our students studying in the Department of Theatre and Dance.

You also saw—and heard—more about the continued progress of our University's historic and innovative partnership with Muncie Community Schools. The partnership is a tangible example of our University's commitment to our enduring value of social responsibility. As always, I remain grateful to the MCS board and administration for implementing the innovative plan that has resulted in so many positive outcomes that have taken place at MCS over the past five years.

This December, the MCS school board will make the final payment on the \$10 million bond that triggered state oversight of the school district in 2017. This final payment is a symbol of our collective progress. It's a clear sign of hope that there is a brighter future ahead for all children and families in Muncie.

So, as you have heard throughout the day today, our University is, indeed, better and stronger.

As I told my colleagues during Fall Convocation, I believe the reason we are better and stronger—the reason that we are in a much stronger position right now than many other institutions of higher education—is because of the persistence, the passion, and the creativity of our dedicated faculty and staff.

That is why I am grateful to you, our trustees, for recognizing their hard work and for tangibly demonstrating your gratitude for their contributions by approving a one-time salary supplement for all University employees. Our faculty and staff have earned this compensation.

Thank you.