



**BALL STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
COMMENTS BY GEOFFREY S. MEARNES  
December 16, 2022**

I want to begin by thanking the members of Jack Beyerl's family who have joined us today for the announcement that, in his honor, we will be renaming our North Residence Hall as the Jack Beyerl Residence Hall.

Dr. Beyerl was a courageous and compassionate leader at Ball State University, overseeing the unprecedented expansion of residence halls on our campus in the 1950s and 1960s. Throughout his career, he helped our University achieve distinction for the services and accommodations we provide students with disabilities. He also established—and was the first director—of our Counseling Center.

Dr. Beyerl's other accomplishments include creating our graduate program in student affairs administration in higher education, and creating our Student Health Center and Career Center.

Dr. Beyerl's contributions to Ball State are significant and lasting, and so I am grateful to the Board for approving my decision to honor his legacy with this naming, which we will celebrate next Fall.

I am also grateful for the Board's continued support of the implementation of our University's strategic plan.

Three years ago this month, the Board approved my recommendation to establish the Strategic Imperative Fund—a fund to support initiatives that will expedite the implementation of our strategic plan.

I am proud to share that, last month, we celebrated the grand opening of our new Faculty Excellence Center, one of 12 important projects to receive funding from this fund.

The Faculty Excellence Center offers our faculty the space, the support, and—most importantly—the inspiration to become even more outstanding educators than they already are.

The center is located on the ninth floor of our Teachers College. My hope is that this dedicated space—a space designed for faculty to think, collaborate, and consult about their careers—brings us one step closer to achieving our strategic goal of creating a positive culture of wellbeing for some of the most important members of our University community.

Another imperative of our strategic plan is engaging with community leaders to develop partnerships that foster economic growth.

Earlier today, you heard a report from Dean Ferguson about our Estopinal College of Architecture and Planning. Dean Ferguson provided details about recent initiatives, including the college's presence at Electric Works in Fort Wayne.

On December 7, I joined Dean Ferguson and other Ball State representatives, including Trustee Momper, for "An Evening at Electric Works." This public event was an opportunity to showcase to local legislators, business owners, and community members how our University is using this new mixed-use district to enhance our engagement with the city of Fort Wayne.

Northeast Indiana is home to more than 14,000 of our graduates—women and men we want to connect as mentors to our students. We also want to provide more of these graduates—and more of our state's employers—with valuable resources from our University.

As we expand our presence in Fort Wayne, I look forward to witnessing the many ways in which Electric Works proves a mutually beneficial space for our faculty and students as well as our graduates and partners in the region.

I am proud of all our Cardinals who choose to live and work in Indiana after they graduate. In fact, just last week, we tallied the results of our First Destination Survey of the Class of 2022—78% of our new graduates are living and working

and studying in Indiana. After tomorrow, I anticipate their number will grow as we celebrate the academic accomplishments of our students participating in our annual Fall Commencement ceremony.

Thank you for approving my recommendation that we honor Dick Emens with an honorary degree—a recognition that honors his extraordinary contributions to our University as well as his family’s remarkable legacy at our institution.

Dick and his wife, Bea, are here with us today, and I want to thank them for joining us for this meeting as well as tonight’s honorary degree dinner.

As many of you know, Dick is the son of Dr. John Emens, who served as Ball State’s president from 1945 to 1968. Dick recalls fond memories of growing up in a house adjacent to campus, a topic we spoke about when I interviewed him for my podcast earlier this summer.

Together, Dick and Bea created the Emens Leadership Scholarship to honor Dick’s parents. And each year, they help our University select 15 outstanding high school seniors to become deserving recipients of this scholarship.

In addition to Dick’s role on the Emens Scholars Committee, he also served our University as the past chair of the Ball State University Foundation.

Dick and Bea continue to practice law together in Ohio, where they also provide educational resources to hundreds of small business owners in the region.

It is our privilege to formally recognize Dick's professional achievements as well as his loyalty and service to our University. I look forward to awarding him this much-deserved honor.

It is also a privilege to recognize our graduates who have completed their degree requirements this Fall. Tomorrow we will honor more than 1,200 candidates for doctoral, master's and bachelor's degrees. I am proud of their accomplishments, and I offer them best wishes for their future endeavors as alumni.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to share with the Board how much our faculty and staff appreciate your support of our upcoming Days of Beneficence.

The holidays are a time to recognize the importance of giving thanks. On behalf of everyone in our campus community, I want to share my gratitude to all of you for approving these days off—days that provide my colleagues with valuable extra time to spend with their family and their friends.

Thank you again for this generous gift and for your ongoing service to our University.