



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMENTS BY GEOFFREY S. MEARNs
October 4, 2024**

I want to begin my remarks by expressing my gratitude to Paula Luff and her team. As you heard earlier today, because of their hard work, and their partnership with our colleagues all across campus, our University's enrollment across all dimensions—undergraduate, graduate, international, online—has fully recovered from the adverse impact of the pandemic. Our financial aid, Cardinal Central, and admissions staffs were also instrumental in helping our new and returning students navigate the challenges they encountered in applying for financial aid earlier this year. These challenges were the result of the federal government's flawed rollout of the newly revised FAFSA application.

Along with some positive enrollment news, you also heard about our positive retention trends, which are on an upward trajectory for the fourth consecutive year. Jason Rivera has done a very good job of leading our enhanced commitment to undergraduate student success. Just two short years ago, we created

a task force to develop a comprehensive student success strategy for our University. Today, we have more than 60 advisors and student success coaches. And we have student success centers in every college. Because of these strategies, and because of the dedicated efforts of our faculty and staff, we are excelling at this important work.

We are also experiencing continued success in our historic partnership with Muncie Community Schools. I am grateful to Chuck Reynolds and Jim Williams for sharing their latest update with us—an update that reflects the importance of our collaborative effort to improve our public schools, and thereby enhance the economic and civic vitality of our region. There have been many significant gains made in the school district over the past six years. And while we have much more work to do, we should take the time to celebrate the progress that has resulted from the partnership so far.

Progress, as we all know, is a process, and when it comes to our evolving plans to revitalize The Village, I want to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of my colleague, Jennifer Palilonis.

Many of you know that Jennifer is a distinguished professor of multimedia journalism in our College of Communication, Information, and Media. But as you learned today, she has also taken a lead role in advancing the mission of our Center for Innovation, which is among the sites featured in our Village Revitalization

Plan. Once it opens in Summer 2026, the center will become the central hub of collaboration and experimentation on our campus. I look forward to that day.

And finally, Jennifer and I are also looking forward to hosting members of our Parents Advisory Council this evening at Bracken House as part of our University's celebration of Family Weekend.

This volunteer group of 24 council members helps advise our administrators, recruit prospective students, and raise scholarship money for our current students. I am grateful for their involvement in supporting our University. And I am also grateful to Ro-Anne Royer-Engle and to all of our Student Life staff who help plan the annual Family Weekend events and activities that give family members the opportunity to spend time with their student, to experience life at Ball State, and to explore the city of Muncie during their visit.

As they are about to discover, it's a great time to be a Cardinal on our campus.

Thank you.