



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMENTS BY GEOFFREY S. MEARNs
SEPTEMBER 18, 2020**

I want to provide a brief update about our University's response to the pandemic.

On Monday, I shared with the campus community some important information about our COVID-19 dashboard, which we are updating daily with data collected from IU Health, from third party on-campus testing sources that we have engaged, and from self reports by our students and employees.

Over the past two weeks, the number of our students testing positive has declined significantly, even though we continue to make ample testing available to them. And relatively few faculty and staff have tested positive since we resumed on-campus instruction on August 24.

These figures reflect an encouraging trend, but we must remain vigilant. That is why we are asking everyone to continue complying with necessary safety

protocols—wearing masks, washing hands, physical distancing, and avoiding large gatherings, both on and off campus.

Based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), we are now also conservatively estimating the number of people on our campus who have recovered from the coronavirus. As of yesterday afternoon, using this conservative methodology, we estimate that approximately 90% of the students and employees who previously tested positive have now recovered. The dashboard also reports other key indicators, including the availability of health care for those who need it, our contact tracing capacity, and our available capacity for quarantine and isolation space.

I am grateful to the team of medical and public health experts who have provided us guidance every day in helping us respond to the pandemic. These experts have advised me that the key indicators we are monitoring daily are stable or improving, and I appreciate the progress we have made as a campus community over the past two weeks.

I am also proud of how our students continue to adapt to modifications in their coursework and in their participation in campus life as a result of COVID-19.

Members of our Panhellenic Association recently held a successful, all-virtual new member recruiting process that culminated with more than 200 women

receiving bids to become members of our University's 11 sororities. I am grateful to our staff in fraternity and sorority life who helped these students plan for a recruitment week that prioritized the health and safety of all members of Greek life on our campus.

I also want to express my gratitude to all of our employees who have been working hard behind the scenes, helping our University operate effectively as we work together to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus.

In less than 24 hours, Julie Hopwood and her team from Business and Auxiliary Services set up Worthen Arena as a COVID-19 testing site for ISDH. Earlier this month, over the course of two days, we tested nearly 900 people at this location. And we continue to provide COVID-19 testing at Worthen Arena, every Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., thanks to our partnership with Open Door Health Services.

I regularly receive emails from parents who want to share their encouragement with me in the midst of the pandemic.

For example, I received an email last month from the mother of one of our students living off campus. When her daughter contracted the coronavirus, she worried about how her daughter would obtain her textbooks from the bookstore in time for her classes to begin. The mother called the bookstore and spoke with

Saviona Williams, a student employee. Saviona immediately offered to drop off the student's books after her shift was over at the bookstore.

The student's mother wrote: "What a kind, compassionate person! Saviona is a junior majoring in pre-med and anthropology. I believe she will make a wonderful doctor one day, based on her can-do spirit and compassion. She can be part of your 'We Fly' marketing campaign: We Care! is Saviona."

Last week, I received another "good news" email from Professor Christopher Thompson, who teaches in our history department.

Christopher wanted to express his gratitude for our colleagues, Terri Bryant and Robert Myers, who provided him the necessary tools and technology to adapt Pruis Hall into an effective teaching space for his History 150 lecture course.

Christopher wrote: "I am so thankful that in this time of great uncertainty ... I benefitted from the positive, cheerful assistance of Terri and Robert. Without such colleagues, our University's faculty would have faced even greater challenges this year."

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to the many women and men who are serving as contact tracers for our University. Loren Malm, who oversees our contact tracing program, reported that we trained more than 150 contract tracers and that, collectively, they have spent approximately 1,500 hours conducting contact tracing calls since the Fall semester began. As you know, this process is

vital to our ability to slow the spread of COVID-19. Our contact tracers have been making calls seven days a week, including holidays, to inform “close contacts” that they need to quarantine immediately.

As I shared in my campus email, I know that we cannot completely control this pandemic. But because of the hard work of so many students, faculty, and staff, we are seeing positive results from our ongoing efforts to mitigate the transmission of the coronavirus.

And our work has gained the respect of local officials, including Jammie Bane, an administrator from the Delaware County Health Department. In a recent interview with the Associated Press, Mr. Bane informed a reporter that our University has done—in his own words—“a remarkable job” planning for the return of our students to campus. He then praised our efforts to ramp up testing quickly, to identify positive individuals, to conduct contact tracing, and to issue isolation and quarantine notices.

Mr. Bane said: “[Ball State is] doing these tasks quicker and more efficiently than standard state contact tracing has done, which is very beneficial in reducing the risk of spread in a timely manner.”

Because of the commitment of our students, our faculty, and our staff, we can continue to provide the kind of on-campus instruction and activities that make our University so distinctive.

Thank you.