



**BALL STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
COMMENTS BY GEOFFREY S. MEARNES  
March 3, 2023**

I want to begin my remarks by extending a thank you and a welcome to Dr. Rashida Willard and to Darrell Clark, both of whom shared presentations with the Board this afternoon.

Dr. Willard joined our University last September as our new Associate Vice President for Inclusive Excellence. Since she arrived, Dr. Willard has provided strategic leadership for our Office of Inclusive Excellence, as evidenced by her presentation today.

Dr. Willard also served as the keynote speaker at last month's MLK Celebration Breakfast, speaking with personal passion about inclusion, diversity, and social justice. Her dedication to these values is part of what makes her a good fit for her leadership role at our University.

In January, our University also welcomed Darrell Clark as our new Associate Vice President for People and Culture. In this role, Mr. Clark leads our enhanced efforts to recruit, to develop, and to support our faculty and staff.

You also heard a presentation today by our colleagues who are dedicated to another area of important work on behalf of our University: ensuring that the members of our campus community fulfill our institutional commitment to freedom of expression.

I want to thank Dean Turner for serving as the chair of our Freedom of Expression Committee, which I appointed in Fall 2019. Since then, Dean Turner has led our University's review of policies supporting free expression. She has helped our institution adopt a new unifying framework statement, and she has been instrumental in creating our engagement campaign to educate and celebrate freedom of expression on our campus.

Kristen McCauliff, who spoke earlier with Dean Turner, serves as our Associate Provost for faculty affairs and professional development. I want to thank Professor McCauliff for the ongoing support she has provided in helping our University plan for on-campus and off-campus events that provide our colleagues with opportunities to converse and learn from one another regarding this important topic.

You were also introduced to Kevona Tyler, who was hired last year as our new assistant general counsel, public access officer, and freedom of expression coordinator.

Our University's decision to hire Ms. Tyler was a direct outcome of the work of our Freedom of Expression Committee. As you heard in today's presentation, she is responsible for facilitating our University's response to public records requests. She is also our primary contact for campus community members regarding all matters related to the topic of freedom of expression.

Finally, I would like to end my remarks by sharing some good news about Ball State Athletics.

Our men's and women's basketball teams are headed to the Mid-American Conference Basketball Tournament next week with an opportunity to make history. This is the first time in five seasons that both teams have won 20 or more games in the same season.

For the second year in a row, Charity Griffith, who is on our track and field team, has qualified to compete in the high jump and pentathlon at the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships, which will take place next weekend in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Charity was selected as the most valuable player at last week's MAC Indoor Championships, after winning the pentathlon title and

capturing gold—and setting a personal record—in the high jump. Overall, the team finished second place, scoring the most points as a program since 2008.

A few other highlights across Ball State sports from the past week: gymnast Victoria Henry broke a 26-year school record with her 39.4 all-around score in Sunday's meet against Central Michigan; two players from our baseball team swept MAC weekly honors; and our No. 12 ranked men's volleyball team is building off a historic 2022 season with four straight wins on the road and at home.

It is a great time to be a fan of Cardinal athletics, and I hope you will join me in rooting for our dedicated student-athletes as this season of Ball State sports continues.

Thank you.