



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**GEOFFREY S. MEARNS
BRAND LAUNCH REMARKS
SURSA HALL
NOVEMBER 6, 2017
11:30 A.M.**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. And as Kathy said, it is, indeed, a very good morning here at Ball State University.

As you know, when I come to a podium like this, I routinely say that it is a privilege. It is a privilege to serve as your president.

It's a privilege because, for nearly 100 years, this institution has transformed the lives of thousands and thousands of women and men.

And, today, I am not only privileged, I am so very proud to be the president of this University. We are embarking on a campaign to tell the remarkable story of this institution and the remarkable stories of its extraordinary people—you, our faculty, our staff, our students, our alumni. And we are going to tell these stories with the passion and with the prominence that they deserve.

As Kathy mentioned, at our Fall Convocation, I said that we had become too quiet—too modest. Humility, I think we all recognize ... humility is an honorable trait in a person. We admire and respect humble people. We respect them because they embody our values.

But when it comes to marketing a university, humility is not an asset. We need to be more forthcoming. We should not be reluctant to share our successes—to share your achievements.

At the Convocation, I told you that, in the very near future, we would launch a more visible and a more vocal effort to market Ball State—to tell the world about our University.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, that moment has arrived.

As you just saw, starting today, starting right now, we are going to tell the stories of our students, our graduates, our faculty, and our staff—we are going to tell your stories—with energy and pride.

And this new brand is going to help us do it. We want everyone to know—not just in Indiana and not just across the country but truly around the world—that Ball State is the best option for students who want an exceptional education that prepares them to have a successful career and to lead meaningful lives. And we want to let them know that we are the university where dedicated faculty and staff produce transformational change—in people and in our communities.

Now the challenge that we had was how to communicate visually and verbally the distinctive attributes of an institution the size and complexity of Ball State. So we began last year, many months ago, with a research process that produced qualitative and quantitative data. We asked prospective and current students, we asked faculty and staff, alumni, and the general public what they thought about Ball State. The opinions and insights they shared helped us identify what is distinctive and what is compelling about our University. And I want to express my gratitude for everyone—the thousands of people—who were involved in that process.

And then, over the last few months, we refined that research to launch an aggressive marketing campaign—a campaign that will boldly and proudly communicate our story—a story that distilled 99 years of history into a few powerful words and several captivating images.

Now in some marketing and branding efforts, there's a temptation to dwell on statistics and rankings. To some audiences, and in some situations, those numbers are important.

But we recognized that, while those metrics may be relevant in some cases, to us, in this campaign, they weren't sufficient. We aspired to be inspirational. We want to touch your heart.

We want to convey the distinctive character of our institution in a way that excites you. We want to make you feel proud of Ball State. And we want to motivate you, our faculty and staff, to continue to do the hard work—to continue to provide the selfless service that is required so that we can realize the full potential of this great institution.

At its core, the essence of our brand is the transformative experience that we provide to our students. This core message consists of a few fundamental components: a visual symbol, a tagline with relevant images, and a set of key messages that convey more about this central theme. And all of these elements are crucial to our success.

So, for our symbol, we've chosen to retain Beneficence. And frankly, there really was no alternative. She's a beautiful symbol of our proud past. And Beneficence is a prominent, visual reminder that, in the future, some things won't change. We will retain our commitment to the enduring values represented by our beloved icon. Those values include a commitment to excellence, integrity, social responsibility, respect for all people, and yes, gratitude.

But as we prepare to embark on our second century, we've accentuated her features. Her right hand, as you can see, which has always been open to welcome students and visitors, now reaches beyond her shield. This important but subtle change illustrates our enhanced

commitment to the community, an enhanced commitment which I spoke about during my installation in September.

In her left hand, she holds a box that represents the treasure that education can offer to everyone. I believe that in these uncertain and these challenging times, we believe that knowledge and greater understanding are more important than ever. And her wings extend far past her shield. And that's because, with Beneficence as our guide—and with Beneficence as the source of our inspiration,

WE FLY.

These two words are the central theme of our new brand. These two simple words capture the spirit of intellectual curiosity that challenges our students, that challenges our graduates, our faculty and our staff—these two words challenge everyone in our community to excel.

On one level, these two words reflect that Ball State is ascending as an institution.

- Our enrollment of 22,500 students is the largest in our history.
- Our freshman class of more than 4,000 students is the most academically qualified and the most diverse class in our history.
- Programs all across our campus, academic programs all across the University, are receiving national and international acclaim.
- The number of degrees and credentials we have conferred increased by 20 percent in just seven years.
- And in that same period, our on-time, four-year graduation rate has increased by 21 percentage points.

But on a deeper level, a more meaningful level, these two words—We Fly—they communicate the life-changing impact that we have on our students.

So did you know that more than 20% of our students are the first in their families to attend college?

And did you know that more than 30% of our undergraduate students are eligible to receive Pell Grants?

And because of these and other factors, many of our students are facing barriers to their success. Notwithstanding their best intentions and their best efforts, they're weighed down by practical constraints. Their ambitions are at risk. Their dreams may be tethered to the ground.

But their faith and their hope have brought them here to our campus. To this place, at this time.

And their bold ambitions are propelled by our innovative approach to education. We give them—and we give all of our students—the knowledge, the skills, the experiences, the power, the freedom, the inspiration to take flight—here at Ball State and throughout their lives.

You know, when I first spoke at our convocation in August, as Kathy mentioned, one of my objectives was to persuade you to move beyond the protracted transition that had distracted us from appreciating our good work and our good fortune. And I was cautiously optimistic that I could achieve this objective, because this institution is so fundamentally strong.

But I have to confess that my fervent hope, though, was that I could reignite your pride in this, our outstanding university. That was my aspiration. And I have to admit, I wondered whether I had the capacity to find the right words to achieve that goal.

So I shared with you the stories of two of our graduates. And I shared those stories not just in my words, but in their words.

And when I was preparing my remarks, I was moved. And when I recounted their stories that morning, I sensed that you were proud of your individual contributions and our collective achievements. I sensed that you shared my excitement. I sensed that you shared my optimism for our future. And I sensed that you shared my faith and my confidence in our ability to change the world—to change the world for the good.

I told you about Sara McInerney. Sara graduated in 2014 with two options: she could accept a job with a company based in Indianapolis, or she could serve as an intern with the philanthropic arm of a national retailer of athletic apparel. Sara chose the internship, which then led quickly to a full-time job. She credits our University—she credits you—with instilling in her the values of Beneficence—values that inspired her, and again, these are her words, values that inspired her to “choose her passion over a paycheck.”

I also told you about Yosef Tekle-Wold. Yosef graduated from Ball State in July. He was raised in a small village in Ethiopia. Through a series of extraordinary opportunities—opportunities that Yosef credits, in his words, as “a gift from God”—as a result of those opportunities, his Muslim parents allowed a Christian couple from the United States to adopt him.

When he came to campus, Yosef encountered people who had a hard time pronouncing his last name. And he told them it sounded like, “Take the world.”

And that’s quite ambitious, indeed. But because of you—because of you—Yosef will return to Ethiopia to educate and empower others. He will “take the world.”

You know, these compelling stories exemplify our own individual and collective aspirations. They personify who we are—and what we hope to become.

- We study and learn together as partners in a quest for knowledge and truth.
- We grow and mature individually and collectively.

- We exceed expectations.
- We transform lives. We transform communities.
- We embrace the future with courage—and with gratitude.
- We believe in a world that will be more peaceful, a world that will be more free, and a world that will be more just. And we believe that we can make that dream come true.
- Because at Ball State University ...

WE FLY.