



**BALL STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**GEOFFREY S. MEARNS  
SPRING 2018 COMMENCEMENT REMARKS  
FINE ARTS TERRACE  
May 5, 2018**

Commencement is a celebration—a celebration of the achievements of our students, who will now begin the next stage of their life journeys. But before I offer them a few words of advice and encouragement, I want to acknowledge a few colleagues who are also concluding their service at Ball State this year.

Dr. Marilyn Buck, thank you for your service as our interim provost—our chief academic officer. Your service to our University is not yet complete. But today, you are deserving of our sincere appreciation for ensuring a smooth transition of leadership at an important time for our University.

Dean Roger Lavery, for more than a decade, you have served as dean of our College of Communication, Information, and Media. You were a champion for the college, and your contributions are valued. You will be remembered. Thank you.

Dr. Kourtland Koch, thank you for your service as chair of our University Senate. You embraced the challenges and opportunities of the role with passion and respect for our University. Thank you for your leadership and for your friendship.

And now to you, our graduates. You are the reason we are here today. We are here to celebrate you.

But as you know, your academic success is not just the product of your individual effort. Rather, it is the result of the sustained and collective commitment of many people, some of whom are here today.

At Ball State, we have hundreds of distinguished faculty who are dedicated to teaching and to scholarship, and they are dedicated to treating our students as partners in the quest for knowledge and greater understanding. Some of our faculty members are here now wearing academic regalia. This tradition symbolizes their commitment to sharing their knowledge with others, while they continue the search for truth and wisdom.

We also have thousands of talented, supportive staff members who are equally dedicated to your accomplishments. We don't make them dress in caps and gowns, but we know and appreciate their contributions to you and to our University.

Pause for just a moment to look across this beautiful space. It is just one example of the many, many ways that these women and these men have contributed to creating an environment that has enabled your achievements.

And we have trustees who care deeply about your success. Their commitment to our mission is a source of strength for all of us.

Now, to another special group of people who deserve our recognition: your family and friends. These are the men and women who have guided you. They have been there to support you with enthusiastic encouragement, with good advice, and with unconditional love. Graduates, please join me in a round of applause for your families and friends. [P A U S E]

Now, to you, our graduates.

You have pursued and obtained this education in order to get a good job and to provide for yourself and for your family. But no matter how you choose to earn a living, please continue to serve your neighbors. As I suspect that you already know, such service is very rewarding.

Throughout your experience at our University, I hope that you have been challenged to exceed your expectations. Don't settle for being average. Commit yourself to excellence in everything that you do.

But always remember that professional success and personal satisfaction require more than knowledge and talent. To lead a meaningful life, you must embody certain core values, such as the enduring values articulated in the Beneficence Pledge.

Be sincere, and speak the truth.

Model integrity – and value integrity in others.

Character matters.

[P A U S E]

And so does heart.

Within each one of you, there is some special motivation that brought you to our University – and that brings you to this place at this time. To arrive at this destination, you have overcome many obstacles. There will be more challenges and some disappointments in the days ahead.

But never forget the dream that brings you here today. Pursue that dream with passion and with courage.

And pursue it with great optimism. We believe in a better future. We believe in a world that is more peaceful and more just. We believe in that bright future, because we believe in you.

Finally, on a personal note, I want to share that I am grateful that your final year with us has included a special moment for our University: the launch of a more visible and more vocal campaign to tell the world about Ball State University. Your stories—and the stories of more than 180,000 graduates—were among those we have shared during this ongoing campaign.

Last November, as part of this effort, we held an event in Sursa Hall where we invited a group of your peers—our senior cabaret class—to perform a song that they wrote—a song that captures the passion and pride of our University.

Their lyrics communicate a few key aspects of our fundamental mission.

The lyrics remind us that our faculty, staff, and students are given the freedom and flexibility to collaborate as learning partners.

Their words demonstrate that we provide a transformative educational experience to our students.

And their lyrics prove that our history and our future are guided by our sustained commitment to the enduring values represented by Beneficence—whom our students affectionately call “Bennie.”

They’ve performed this song at various events throughout the school year—several times on campus, as well as performances in Indianapolis and New York City.

I have asked these graduating seniors to perform for us one more time today.

[RETURN TO SEAT. RETURN TO PODIUM AFTER PERFORMANCE.]

Please join me in another round of applause for our cabaret graduates.

[PAUSE FOR APPLAUSE.]

These talented students are representative of the talent—and the great potential—that permeates this graduating class. Talent and potential that spreads across this lawn and as far as my eyes can see. I hope that all of you share my passion and my pride in our exceptional University.

To each of you, good luck. And god speed.