

Spring 2019 Commencement Remarks
for President Geoffrey S. Mearns
May 4, 2019
Worthen Arena

[Remarks for Awarding Honorary Degree to Lucina Ball Moxley]

MEARNS:

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is now my privilege to confer an honorary degree upon a very deserving woman. I ask Trustee Conley and Trustee Bracken to assist me. [PAUSE]

Lucina Ball Moxley, would you please join us at the podium.

Our University confers honorary degrees on individuals who have demonstrated remarkable achievements. As we conclude our Centennial year, we are proud to bestow an honorary degree on the oldest living member of the family that founded our institution—a remarkable woman who embodies the Ball family legacy of philanthropy, cultural advancement, and public service.

Lucina Ball Moxley is the granddaughter of William C. Ball, one of the five Ball brothers who founded our University a century ago. And just as 1918 marked the auspicious beginning of Ball State University, it also marked the beginning of Lucina's extraordinary life.

Lucina was born on August 21, 1918. She spent her formative years with her extended family in Muncie. She inherited a love of music from her parents, William and Agnes Ball. She began piano lessons at four years old, honing the talent that would lead to her life's calling.

In 1939, Lucina graduated from Sarah Lawrence College in New York, after which she attended the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music.

In 1940, Lucina married Edwin B. Eckerson, a military surgeon who was killed during World War II. Her second husband, Sam Moxley, became the owner of Indianapolis-based Haag Drug Store, a pharmacy with stores across the Midwest.

Lucina and Sam settled in Indianapolis, where Lucina pursued a musical career that kept her active playing the piano, teaching the piano, and performing in concerts and recitals with musicians in the city and beyond.

Lucina also pursued her love of writing, authoring several children's books. She is also the author of a biography of her late husband, as well as a travelogue and an autobiography, which details her memories of growing up as a member of the Ball family.

In her memoir, Lucina described the many changes she has seen in her lifetime with a quote that embodies the spirit of our University's ongoing Centennial celebration. Lucina said, "We can't help but be different from our forefathers, but basic values and strength of character remain the same."

Today, our University's mission is guided by the enduring values that would make Lucina's grandfather and his siblings proud. These enduring values—excellence, innovation, courage, integrity, inclusiveness, social responsibility, and gratitude—have guided us through our institution's proud past and they will continue to be a source of inspiration for our bright future.

Lucina Ball Moxley, we are grateful that you and your family were able to join us for our Commencement ceremony. In honoring you today, Ball State University recognizes your lifetime accomplishments as a musician, educator, and patron of the arts. And with this award, we also recognize the historic contributions of the members of your family—a family whose vision and generosity continues to transform the lives of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

[PAUSE for APPLAUSE]

By the authority vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Ball State University, I hereby confer upon you, Lucina Ball Moxley, the degree of doctor of arts with the rights and privileges thereunto pertaining, and award you this diploma in testimony thereof; and present you the academic hood for this degree. [APPLAUSE]

[PRESENTATION OF DEGREE TO LUCINA BALL MOXLEY;
SHE IS LED BACK TO HER SEAT. YOU RETURN TO PODIUM.]

It is now my honor to introduce our Commencement speaker.

Governor Eric Holcomb is our state's 51st governor. Governor Holcomb is a lifelong Hoosier, and he is a veteran of the United States Navy.

Since taking office in 2017, Governor Holcomb has promoted a number of initiatives to better our state through his Next Level agenda.

Under his leadership, Indiana has had two consecutive record-breaking years of job creation. Last year, 320 companies committed to create at least 31,000 jobs in Indiana.

In 2018, Governor Holcomb partnered with the Markle Foundation and Microsoft to launch “Skillful Indiana,” a non-profit initiative aimed at bridging the divide between the skills Hoosiers have and the skills businesses need. Indiana was the second state in the country to adopt this new innovative program.

In his first legislative session, Governor Holcomb rallied bipartisan support from Indiana lawmakers to expand pre-K for low-income children. He also unveiled Next Level Recovery—an online resource to support the state’s comprehensive and community-based effort to fight the opioid crisis.

Governor Holcomb has led the way for the largest infrastructure investment in the state's history with the long-term, fully-funded Next Level Roads program.

Governor Holcomb travels across Indiana, meeting Hoosiers who share with him their opinions about how to make their communities better places to live, work, and play. As Indiana's highest-ranking official, he also travels around the world to attract business to our state.

Today, we are grateful that he has traveled to Muncie to be with us for our special Centennial Commencement ceremony.

I am also pleased that Governor Holcomb's wife, Janet Holcomb, is here with us this morning. First Lady Holcomb is an alumna of our University. She earned both her bachelor degree and her master's degree in fine arts from Ball State. Last Fall, she joined us for the kickoff to our Centennial events, so it is fitting that she is with us as our year-long celebration draws to a close.

Please join me in welcoming our First Lady back to her alma mater.

[APPLAUSE]

As we celebrate our University's 100th anniversary, we are honored to make history today by welcoming the first sitting Indiana governor to deliver our spring Commencement address.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my privilege to introduce our Commencement speaker, Governor Eric Holcomb.

[GOVERNOR HOLCOMB GIVES HIS ADDRESS, AND RETURNS TO SEAT. YOU RETURN TO THE PODIUM.]

MEARNS:

Thank you, Governor Holcomb for your remarks.

Provost Rivera-Mills, we are now ready to proceed with the awarding of degrees.

[DR. RIVERA-MILLS PRESENTS DOCTORAL CANDIDATES TO YOU]

MEARNS:

Upon the recommendation of the faculty and by the authority vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Ball State University, I confer upon you your respective degrees with all rights, honors, privileges and obligations thereunto pertaining. The diploma of our university shall forever be the testimony recognizing the very high level of intellectual accomplishment that you have attained. I welcome you into the honorable company of scholars. Congratulations on your special accomplishments.

[LEAD APPLAUSE]

[DR. RIVERA-MILLS PRESENTS MASTER'S CANDIDATES TO YOU.]

MEARNS:

Upon the recommendation of the faculty that you have completed all the requirements for graduation and by the authority vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Ball State University, I confer upon you your respective master's degrees with all rights, honors, privileges, and obligations thereunto pertaining. The diploma of our university shall forever be the testimony recognizing your completion of the first level of graduate study. Congratulations to each of you.

You may be seated.

[YOU RETURN TO SEAT; DR. RIVERA-MILLS REMAINS AT PODIUM. YOU WILL BE CALLED UP NEXT FOR THE SENIOR AWARD PRESENTATION.]

MEARNS:

Thank you, Dr. Rivera-Mills. It is my pleasure this morning to recognize four outstanding students who have been selected from a very competitive pool of their peers for the distinction they earned.

I invite Ro-Anne Royer Engle, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs, to assist me with the presentation of these four awards.

[PAUSE FOR RO ANNE.]

We begin with the Senior Distinguished Service Award for Outstanding Community Service. I am pleased to present this year's award to Ms. Hannah Aletheia [A-lee-THEE-ah]. [PAUSE]

[MS. ALETHIA ENTERS PLATFORM, STANDS BETWEEN RO ANNE (RIGHT) AND YOU (LEFT).]

Today, Hannah is graduating with a bachelor of science degree in general studies, with an emphasis in mathematics and a minor in sociology.

Hannah's commitment to community action has inspired her to use her strong interpersonal skills to support marginalized people through service and advocacy work.

During her time at Ball State, Hannah dedicated many hours to volunteer efforts and social agencies that impact vulnerable citizens in our community.

Under the supervision of Professor Brad Gideon, Hannah participated in the Access to Justice Clinic, an immersive learning experience that places students with community partners who provide legal support to people in our community and in our state.

Hannah volunteered for Muncie's Court-Appointed Special Advocates office, helping Court Liaison Karen Zabel gather information relevant to the hundreds of children served by the agency. Hannah's work heightened her willingness to participate as an engaged, informed servant of her community. In her own words, Hannah discovered that "to better the community is to better myself."

Hannah also volunteered for the Facing Project, a local non-profit organization that seeks to strengthen communities by connecting people through stories.

In addition to her commitment to these causes, Hannah also participated in projects that benefitted communities that are important to her. She dedicated more than 50 service hours helping plant and tend the Lawrence Community Gardens, which serves residents living in the far east side of Indianapolis. And she donated more than 100 hours of service to Teter Organic Farm, a community-run organic farm in Noblesville that donates more than 12,000 servings of fresh organic produce each year to food pantries.

Hannah, today we recognize you for your commitment to serving your community. On behalf of Ball State University, thank you and congratulations. [LEAD APPLAUSE]

[RO-ANNE PRESENTS MS. ALETHEIA WITH AWARD. YOU BOTH SHAKE HANDS WITH HER; POSE FOR PHOTO. MS. ALETHEIA EXITS PLATFORM.]

It is now my pleasure to present The Provost's Prize for Outstanding Scholarly Work to Ms. Hannah Fluhler. [PAUSE]

[MS. FLUHLER ENTERS PLATFORM, STANDS BETWEEN RO-ANNE (RIGHT) AND YOU (LEFT).]

Hannah is an exceptional student scholar. As a Whitinger Scholar, Hannah received the most prestigious scholarship awarded to Ball State students. Today, she graduates magna cum laude with a bachelor of science degree in nursing and pre-dance/movement therapy.

As the inaugural James S. Ruebel Fellow for Innovative Experiences, Hannah worked to combat the opioid crisis by focusing on newborn infants of mothers addicted to these drugs. In pursuit of her dream of becoming a neonatologist, Hannah assembled a clinical research team to propose and conduct a study that examined the effects of movement and music therapy for newborns suffering from drug withdrawal.

In addition to her research work, Hannah pursued multiple cross-cultural learning experiences. She saw more than 500 patients as part of a brigade that traveled to Ecuador with Timmy Global Health, and she took field studies to Italy and Asia.

Hannah also participated in several immersive learning experiences. She contributed to “Fine Focus,” the University’s first undergraduate microbiology journal, and she was involved with “A TAPestry of Dance,” a student-led performance staged by our Department of Theatre and Dance. Through these experiences, Hannah participated in interdisciplinary work that is a hallmark of a Ball State education.

In addition to her impressive academic accomplishments, Hannah served in leadership roles with the Homecoming Steering Committee, Panhellenic Council, and Ball State Dance Marathon. She also volunteered on campus and in the community with non-profits that included Camp Sunshine, the Facing Project, and the Prism Project, our University’s performing arts program for students with special needs.

Hannah's mentor, Professor Renee Twibell, described Hannah as a "world changer." In her own words, Dr. Twibell said of her first meeting with Hannah: "I walked away suspecting I had just met the most extraordinary student of my long career."

Hannah, on behalf of Ball State University, congratulations on your exceptional academic record.

[LEAD APPLAUSE]

[RO-ANNE PRESENTS MS. FLUHLER WITH AWARD. YOU BOTH SHAKE HANDS WITH HER; POSE FOR PHOTO. MS. FLUHLER EXITS PLATFORM.]

Our next award is being presented for the first time as part of our Spring Commencement.

The Jessie Nixon Award is given annually by the Multicultural Center in recognition of a graduating student of color or an international student who has been involved in student life and who has made a positive impact on our campus community. The award is bestowed in honor of Jessie Nixon, who was the first African American student to graduate from Ball State University.

This year, in recognition of our Centennial, our University has begun a new tradition of recognizing the honoree of this award as part of our Spring Commencement ceremony.

I am pleased to present the 2019 Jessie Nixon Award to Mr. Anthony Walton. [PAUSE]

[MR. WALTON ENTERS PLATFORM, STANDS BETWEEN RO ANNE (RIGHT) AND YOU (LEFT).]

Anthony is graduating today with a bachelor of science degree in marketing, with a minor in professional writing. Anthony's passions for digital and social media are the reasons that he is pursuing a career in the field of digital marketing.

While at Ball State, Anthony presented more than 100 workshops as a peer advocate at the Multicultural Center. In this role, Anthony helped run programs and events on campus that aim to educate our University community about diversity, inclusion, and social justice issues.

In 2018, Anthony was awarded a Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship that afforded him the opportunity to study abroad at Richmond University in London. There, he took global marketing courses, and he served as a guest writer for a student-led fashion magazine.

Upon his return to our campus, Anthony presented a workshop detailing the importance of study abroad opportunities for minority and underrepresented students, detailing ways for them to help fund and participate in their own study abroad experiences.

In addition to his work with the Multicultural Center, Anthony participated in several internships during his undergraduate career.

Most recently, he served as the marketing intern for the City of Muncie and its Office of Urban Development. There he created marketing materials, participated in community outreach events, and assisted with the development of monitoring tools for communication purposes.

Anthony, on behalf of Ball State University, congratulations on your efforts to promote diversity and inclusion on our campus. [LEAD APPLAUSE]

[RO-ANNE PRESENTS MR. WALTON WITH AWARD. YOU BOTH SHAKE HANDS WITH HIM; POSE FOR PHOTO. MR. WALTON EXITS PLATFORM.]

Next, it is my privilege to present the John R. Emens Outstanding Senior Award. This award is named in honor of the sixth president of Ball State University. The award recognizes a senior's cumulative co-curricular achievement, leadership, and contributions to our University. The 2019 recipient is Ms. Kathy Berryhill. [PAUSE]

[MS. BERRYHILL ENTERS PLATFORM, STANDS BETWEEN DR. BALES (RIGHT) AND YOU (LEFT)]

Today, Kathy graduates with a bachelor of science degree in construction management with a business administration minor.

Over the course of her four years as a Ball State student, Kathy committed herself to our institution's enduring value of academic excellence.

She was selected to represent Ball State in the Associated Schools of Construction competition, helping her team bring home top national honors. She served as a member of the Construction Management Student Organization, and she was awarded the Construction Management Scholarship. Kathy also earned two highly sought-after summer internships, and she represented her program and the College of Architecture and Planning at various state legislative events and programs with the University Foundation.

Kathy also upheld our University's enduring value to act in a socially responsible way. A testament to her desire to better Ball State can be summarized in the words of her mentor, Professor Jennifer Warrner: "In my thirteen years at Ball State, I have not known a student who is as committed to Ball State as Kathy has been during her time on campus."

Indeed, Kathy was an active participant in student life. She earned regional recognition for serving two successful terms as president of the Residence Hall Association. She held leadership positions with our Student Government Association and University governance. She was a member of the National Residence Hall Honorary, and she served as the student representative on a number of university-level committees.

In her application essay for this award, Kathy wrote that change and growth often happen slowly, and she realized she may not personally witness some of the key changes that she had championed during her undergraduate career. Nevertheless, she remained committed to serving as a student leader.

I am also grateful to Kathy for her commitment to helping ease the transition to college for our incoming students and their families. As a Family Orientation Leader, and as an Accelerate Program Lead Mentor, Kathy welcomed members of the classes of 2020, 2021, and 2022 to our University. I am confident that her warm personality and winning smile helped her foster a real connection with our students—a connection that, combined with her extraordinary level of campus involvement, helped Kathy earn the title of Homecoming Queen her junior year.

Kathy has said that being at Ball State has taught her the importance of loving and thanking people. From her first tour of campus to her last month as an undergraduate, she has learned that “the mark of a good leader is not the things that they accomplish, but rather the things they help those around them accomplish.”

Kathy, on behalf of Ball State University, thank you for serving our University with humility and grace. Congratulations. [LEAD APPLAUSE]

[RO-ANNE PRESENTS MS. BERRYHILL WITH AWARD. YOU BOTH SHAKE HANDS WITH HER; POSE FOR PHOTO. MS. BERRYHILL EXITS PLATFORM.]

[DR. RIVERA-MILLS LEADS ROTC COMMISSIONING; CALLS FOR DEGREE CANDIDATES TO STAND, PRESENTS THEM TO YOU.]

MEARNS:

Upon the recommendation of the faculty that you have completed all the requirements for graduation and by the authority vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Ball State University, I confer upon you your respective bachelor's or associate degrees with all rights, honors, privileges, and obligations thereunto pertaining. The diploma of our university shall forever be the testimony of your accomplishments. With pleasure, I admit you into the company of educated men and women. You may now wear your mortar board tassels on the left side.

[PAUSE FOR THEM TO DO SO. LEAD APPLAUSE.]

Congratulations to all of the members of our graduating class of 2019.

It's an honor to have with us today Sam DeWeese, [PAUSE FOR SAM TO STAND] who is representing our Ball State University Alumni Association. Mr. DeWeese, it is my honor to present to you the newest members of the Ball State University Alumni Association.

[Closing Remarks]

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 two colleagues who are also concluding their service at our University this year.

Bernard Hannon, thank you for your service as our vice president for finance and administration. Your service to our University is not yet complete. But today, you are deserving of our sincere appreciation for ensuring that our University's finances remain strong and stable and for guiding the women and men who maintain our beautiful campus. Thank you, Bernie.

Robert Kvam, for nearly two decades you have served as dean of our College of Fine Arts. You were a champion for this outstanding college, and your contributions are valued. You will be remembered. Thank you, Bob.

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 engage 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 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.

In helping me prepare to introduce Dr. Moxley today, one of my colleagues found a newspaper article that had been written about her more than 20 years ago. In that newspaper article, Lucina was quoted as saying, “My philosophy is that you’re only alive for a while and you’d better fill up those days.”

Well, of course, Dr. Moxley has lived much longer than most of us will, and she has certainly filled each day with energy and passion.

This quote prompts me to ask you this question: how will you fill up your days?

As you leave our campus, I suggest that you reflect on the aspirations that we articulated in our mission statement: we believe that we have prepared you for a fulfilling career, and we hope that we have inspired you to lead a meaningful life.

But what is a fulfilling career?

And what is a meaningful life?

I cannot answer those important questions for you. Rather, each one of you will provide your own individual answers to those questions, based on your own experiences, your own circumstances, and your own unique aspirations—your own personal dreams. And your answers will almost certainly evolve and grow with the passage of time.

But I know this: professional success and career fulfillment are not the same. People generally equate success with financial rewards, with impressive titles, and with notoriety or fame. Those are external indicators of success, and I fear that you may very well find that they are temporary and hollow.

So, I encourage you to seek fulfillment. Set professional goals that will make you and your families and your friends proud of your professional contributions—because your contributions have improved the lives of other people. That impact is enduring.

I also encourage you to pursue a life of meaning. Life is a gift—a precious gift. And to lead a meaningful life, you should share that gift with people who need you.

To lead a meaningful life, you must also 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.

Be grateful, and demonstrate your gratitude through your actions.

Through your character and commitment, please help us create a world that is more peaceful and more just. We believe in that brighter future, because we believe in you.

I wish you good luck.

Finally, on a personal note, I am grateful that your final year with us has included a special moment for our University: the celebration of our University's Centennial.

In November 2017, as we prepared to begin this Centennial celebration, we held an event in Sursa Hall where we invited a group of students—the members of last year's 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 “Benny.”

Since that first performance, our cabaret students have performed this song at various events throughout the past two school years—on campus, as well as in performances in Chicago, Indianapolis and New York City.

I have asked this year’s graduating seniors to perform for us one more time today.

[YOU 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.

[YOU RETURN TO SEAT. DR. RIVERA-MILLS RETURNS TO PODIUM.]