

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you very much for that kind welcome. It is an honor, for me and for my family, to be selected as the 17th president of Ball State University.

Mr. Momper, thank you for that generous introduction. And I thank you and the other members of the search committee for your role in providing me with this special opportunity. You worked very hard, and you have represented your university colleagues and your community partners very well.

Mr. Hall, I thank you and the other members of the Board of Trustees for giving me the privilege of serving this outstanding university. I look forward to working closely and collaboratively with you to secure a bright and a bold future for Ball State.

During the search process, it became clear to me that all of you are very proud of your university.

The faculty are rightly proud of the quality education that they provide to their students. And they're proud of the impactful research that they contribute to their communities and to our world. This institution is widely respected for its innovative programs, and Ball State's distinguished faculty are admired for their dedication to academic excellence.

The staff are rightly proud of the services they provide to the students and to their colleagues. Your staff have also built and maintained excellent facilities and beautiful grounds. Their support and their commitment are vital to the success of this academic enterprise.

And Ball State has talented and resourceful students. They arrive on this campus with untapped potential and with ambitious aspirations. The educational experience that they receive here enables them to reach their full potential and to achieve those ambitions.

When they depart, Ball State graduates become leaders in their professions and in their communities. They use the knowledge and the skills that they obtained at Ball State to seize today's opportunities and to prepare for tomorrow's challenges. Though they may ultimately travel to distant places, your alumni remain engaged with the university in many important ways, and they provide philanthropic support for the next generation of entrepreneurial learners.

As a result of the efforts of so many people, Ball State is now recognized all across the state – and in the statehouse – for its role in enhancing economic development and in promoting civic and cultural vitality. And that recognition is spreading from coast to coast and from continent to continent.

Over the next few months, as I prepare to transition to Ball State, I look forward to meeting many more of you – faculty, staff, students, alumni, community leaders, and elected officials. I need to learn more about your university, and I need to learn more about you.

When we meet, I will ask you two simple questions: What do you think I need to know about your university and this community? And what do I need to know about you?

You see, before I can lead, I must learn and I must listen. And before I can assist you in developing a plan to build on the successes you have achieved over the past century, we must assess together the progress that you have made in achieving the goals that you have already set for the university.

When we meet, I hope that you will also ask me some questions, too. But let me today, this afternoon, anticipate one question: Why Ball State for me?

I briefly alluded to many of the reasons a moment ago.

Innovative academic programs.

Excellent, talented faculty.

Dedicated staff and devoted leadership.

Bright, ambitious students, and generous alumni.

Outstanding facilities, and a beautiful campus.

Elected officials who are providing increasing financial support for this university in recognition of your success.

These are all important factors. But I was drawn to Ball State as a result of another, more distinctive attribute: this public university proudly proclaims its commitment to certain enduring values.

Beneficence, the iconic statue, symbolizes the generosity of the Ball brothers whose initial donation of

land created this institution. It also symbolizes the sustained generosity of their descendants – generosity that has enabled your university to grow and to thrive.

This statue is an enduring symbol of the value of gratitude.

It is in that spirit that I express my gratitude to my colleagues and to my friends at Northern Kentucky University. Working together, we improved student outcomes, and we persuaded the General Assembly to provide additional state funding. Something special is happening at NKU, and I will always be proud – and very grateful – to have been a part of it. Thank you.

To my wife, Jennifer. We have been partners for many years – for more years than we want to acknowledge. Throughout this wonderful journey, in

good times and in bad, you have been my strength and my inspiration. Thank you.

To my son, Geoffrey. You came quite a distance to represent your four bright, beautiful sisters. Thank you. And you know, son, that I am very proud of you.

This university's values are also articulated in the Beneficence Pledge.

Academic excellence – in teaching, learning, and scholarship.

Honesty and integrity – in order to earn and maintain trust and respect.

Social responsibility – through civility, courtesy, and compassion.

Inclusion – valuing the intrinsic worth of all people and learning from their different experiences and their ideas.

I was drawn to this university because those values are the ones that were instilled in me by my parents.

In 1951, my father graduated from college. He was the first person in our family to earn a college degree. The education that he received changed his life – and it changed the trajectory of our entire family.

A few years later, after he graduated from law school, my father devoted his entire career to higher education. For 40 years as a law professor and as a university administrator, he was committed to

excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service – service to the institution and to the community.

My mother, after raising nine children, dedicated her time to public service. She was on city council for ten years, and she was the first woman to be elected as the mayor of Shaker Heights, Ohio.

By their example, I learned the value of academic excellence and servant leadership. My parents also taught all of us to treat everyone with courtesy and with respect. They embodied the values of integrity, civility, and humility.

Both of my parents died a few years ago.

Today, in their memory, I pledge that I will embrace these values – your values – as the next president of Ball State University.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you.