



DESTINATION 2040

OUR FLIGHT PATH

The 2025–30 Strategic Plan



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

DESTINATION 2040

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

In 2019, we launched our ambitious strategic plan, *Destination 2040: Our Flight Path*, which articulated five long-term goals for Ball State University. This plan, which included more than 30 strategic imperatives, has guided our work for more than five years.

Now, we have extended and enhanced our ambitious plan for what our University should be in our second century. Our refreshed strategic plan, which extends most of the strategic imperatives of *Destination 2040* through 2030, will continue guiding us in our mission of preparing our students for fulfilling careers and inspiring them to lead meaningful lives.

I am grateful to the members of our strategic planning committee who led our year-long, consultative process to enhance this guiding document. I am also grateful to the thousands of faculty, staff, students, alumni, community partners, and benefactors who provided their feedback through our surveys, our working groups, and our open forums.

From this process, we learned that you believe in the mission and enduring values of our existing strategic plan—and that you want to sustain our commitment to the five long-term goals and to the strategic imperatives of our existing plan. Throughout these pages, you will see we have done exactly that. This decision directly acknowledges the foresight that went into creating and implementing the first iteration of *Destination 2040*.

Our consultative process also produced some important enhancements to *Destination 2040*. Our updated plan includes several new strategic imperatives that reflect our commitment to purpose exploration and to relationship-rich education, as well as our anticipated integration of artificial intelligence to enhance various aspects of our University, including teaching, research, and operations. This updated plan also reaffirms our commitments to academic freedom and to freedom of expression, while ensuring that we develop strategies and initiatives that promote greater understanding of cultural differences in programs for students

and employees.

As we look ahead to our bright future, we pledge to continue building upon the strong foundation we established in *Destination 2040*.

We pledge to hold ourselves accountable to the goals and updated strategic imperatives outlined in this new iteration of our strategic plan. And we pledge to retain our commitment to the enduring values that make our University distinctive.

In the coming years, this plan will continue to be our flight path to a very bright future.

Sincerely,



Geoffrey S. Mearns
President

OUR MISSION

We engage students in educational, research, and creative experiences that empower our graduates to have fulfilling careers and meaningful lives enriched by lifelong learning and service, while we enhance the economic, environmental, and social vitality of our community, our state, and our world.

OUR ENDURING VALUES

To fulfill our mission, to achieve our goals, and to implement our strategic imperatives, we are guided by the enduring values represented by *Beneficence*:

Excellence

We commit to excel in all that we do.

Innovation

We commit to be creative, responsive, and progressive.

Courage

We commit to set ambitious goals and to take the risks necessary to achieve those goals.

Integrity

We commit to be honest, ethical, authentic, and accessible.

Inclusiveness

We commit to respect different cultural experiences and intellectual perspectives in all people.

Social responsibility

We commit to act for the benefit of society at large.

Gratitude

We commit to express appreciation to other people and to demonstrate our gratitude through our actions.

OUR 2040 GOALS

GOAL 1

UNDERGRADUATE EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

Our University provides a premier on-campus undergraduate experience.

GOAL 2

GRADUATE EDUCATION AND LIFETIME LEARNING

Our University expands its reach and impact along the continuum of human development by serving graduate students and other adults throughout their lifetime educational journeys and by anticipating and responding to workforce needs.

GOAL 3

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT

As a community-engaged institution, our University mobilizes and leads partnerships that revitalize and sustain our city and our region.

GOAL 4

SCHOLARSHIP AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

As a public research institution, our University recruits, retains, and supports outstanding faculty and staff who engage in scholarship—of discovery, integration, application, and teaching—that enhances pedagogy and curriculum, that attracts external resources, or that enhances the lives of other people.

GOAL 5

INCLUSIVENESS AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Our University is distinguished for inclusiveness and for institutional effectiveness across all dimensions of our work and for having a vibrant culture of wellbeing that enables all of our faculty and staff to find fulfillment in their work and meaning in their lives.



OUR STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

GOAL 1

UNDERGRADUATE EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

Our University provides a premier on-campus undergraduate experience.

To continue to make measurable progress towards this 2040 goal, we will implement the following strategic imperatives by 2030:

- 1A. Our comprehensive enrollment management strategies engage colleges and academic departments, as well as their partners across campus, in the recruitment of undergraduate students.
- 1B. The first-year experience provides all undergraduate students with the opportunity to participate in a living-learning community or another intentionally structured learning community.
- 1C. Our academic advisors, student success coaches, faculty, and staff guide undergraduate students, beginning in their first year, to discover their strengths, interests, and passions.
- 1D. Our core curriculum incorporates innovative pedagogy, transdisciplinary approaches to learning and problem-solving, and the development of cultural competencies, global awareness, and transferable skills so that our graduates are prepared for a fulfilling career and a meaningful life in the 21st century.
- 1E. Through curricular and co-curricular experiences, as well as university traditions, our undergraduate students continue on their distinctive pathways to find their purpose, which lies at the intersection of professional fulfillment and personal meaning.
- 1F. Every student completes at least one course that includes one of the following high-impact practices: undergraduate research, immersive learning, study abroad, or study away; or a course that focuses on a societal issue or global challenge and that engages students with people across different disciplines, cultures, and thought.
- 1G. Every undergraduate student participates in a culminating experience, such as a capstone course, senior thesis or senior project, clinical experience, internship, or student teaching.
- 1H. Our comprehensive undergraduate student success strategies engage faculty and staff in providing a relationship-rich experience for every undergraduate student.
- 1I. Every undergraduate student creates a journal that memorializes the student's reflections on how the student's academic courses, co-curricular experiences, and intercollegiate athletic experiences enable the student to acquire the NACE competencies.
- 1J. Our alumni and our other external partners engage with undergraduate students in a variety of ways and settings that enrich their undergraduate experiences.



GOAL 2

GRADUATE EDUCATION AND LIFETIME LEARNING

Our University expands its reach and impact along the continuum of human development by serving graduate students and other adults throughout their lifetime educational journeys and by anticipating and responding to workforce needs.

To continue to make measurable progress towards this 2040 goal, we will implement the following strategic imperatives by 2030:

- 2A. Our University identifies and offers high-demand degrees and credentials in fields that align with our current and potential expertise.
- 2B. Our University offers a strategic portfolio of superior on-campus and online graduate programs.
- 2C. Our innovative and flexible offerings and modalities—including microcredentials, articulation badges, professional licensure preparation, certification options, and enrichment opportunities—accelerate career advancement and enhance personal development.
- 2D. Our University meets the varied and distinctive needs of individuals, employers, and organizations by allowing them to customize their education and their training programs to specific learning objectives.



GOAL 3

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT

As a community-engaged institution, our University mobilizes and leads partnerships that revitalize and sustain our city and our region.

To continue to make measurable progress towards this 2040 goal, we will implement the following strategic imperatives by 2030:

- 3A. Our faculty, staff, and students partner with the Muncie Community Schools, and collaborate with other organizations in our community, to improve academic outcomes for MCS students, while enhancing the learning experiences of our students.
- 3B. Our faculty, staff, and students collaborate with other organizations in our community to develop and implement a comprehensive plan that promotes talent attraction and retention in order to foster economic growth in East Central Indiana.
- 3C. The amenities and vibrancy of The Village and the surrounding neighborhoods are attractive to students, faculty, and staff, as well as our friends and neighbors throughout the region, as a result of the implementation of a plan to enhance quality of place.
- 3D. Our faculty, staff, and students collaborate with community partners to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to improve population health and wellbeing in East Central Indiana.
- 3E. Our faculty, staff, and students collaborate with community partners to enable more of our friends and neighbors to experience arts, culture, and athletic events hosted on our campus and throughout the region.



Environmental Education Center,
Dr. Joe and Alice Rinard
Orchid Greenhouse

GOAL 4

SCHOLARSHIP AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

As a public research institution, our University recruits, retains, and supports outstanding faculty and staff who engage in scholarship—of discovery, integration, application, and teaching—that enhances pedagogy and curriculum, that attracts external resources, or that enhances the lives of other people.

To continue to make measurable progress towards this 2040 goal, we will implement the following strategic imperatives by 2030:

- 4A. Our University recruits, retains, and supports faculty and staff who engage in scholarship that is published in peer-reviewed journals or in widely disseminated publications, or that garners external funding.
- 4B. Our University recruits, retains, and supports faculty and staff who connect their scholarship with the vibrancy of Muncie and East Central Indiana in ways that can be replicated to enrich communities around the world.
- 4C. As an integral component of providing innovative educational experiences to all of our students, our University recruits, retains, and supports faculty and staff who integrate their scholarship with their teaching.
- 4D. Our University recruits, retains, and supports faculty and staff who create, exhibit, and perform a wide array of creative endeavors that enhance quality of life for the people in the communities that we serve.



GOAL 5

INCLUSIVENESS AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Our University is distinguished for inclusiveness and for institutional effectiveness across all dimensions of our work and for having a vibrant culture of wellbeing that enables all of our faculty and staff to find fulfillment in their work and meaning in their lives.

To continue to make measurable progress towards this 2040 goal, we will implement the following strategic imperatives by 2030:

Inclusiveness

- 5A. Our strategies and initiatives promote understanding of cultural differences in curricular and co-curricular experiences for our students and in training programs for our faculty and staff.
- 5B. Our commitments to freedom of expression and academic freedom promote civil discussion and debate in curricular and co-curricular experiences and promote understanding of intellectual differences in ideas and opinions.

Our People and Culture

- 5C. Faculty and staff are empowered through ongoing professional development, leadership programs, career advancement opportunities, and other resources that enhance employee and personal wellbeing.
- 5D. Our agile and responsive human resource policies, procedures, and business processes enable us to recruit and retain outstanding people.
- 5E. We recognize and reward our employees for using their expertise, creativity, and collaborative spirit to improve accountability, productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency.
- 5F. Our flexible and accountable governance structures improve our responsiveness and ability to make timely decisions.
- 5G. Faculty, staff, and students advance our legacy of environmental stewardship.

Our Programs and Processes

- 5H. We regularly assess and modify our academic program portfolio for quality and relevance, invest in distinctive programs, and maintain agile and responsive curricular approval processes that support academic innovation.
- 5I. Our people, processes, technology, policies, and infrastructure are strategically aligned to support academic excellence and enable operational efficiency and effectiveness.
- 5J. Campus administrators use data analytics and robust management information to provide actionable insight that enhances student success and institutional effectiveness.



- 5K. We assess and deploy generative artificial intelligence to enhance curricular and co-curricular experiences for our students and to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.
- 5L. Our marketing, communications, and brand management strategies increase public awareness of our strengths, distinctive attributes, and contributions to our community, our state, and our country.

Our Financial Resources

- 5M. Our incentive-based budget model aligns our financial resources with our strategic priorities, and the model encourages innovation and effective resource management.
- 5N. We enhance our culture of philanthropy, which generates substantial and sustained philanthropic support for our University.

Our Facilities

- 5O. We design, renovate, and build flexible learning spaces that are conducive to innovative pedagogical models and enhance the learning experiences of our students.
- 5P. We continue to implement our campus master plan, which aligns with our mission, goals, and strategic imperatives.

THE EVOLUTION OF OUR FLIGHT PATH

In June 2024, President Mearns commenced the strategic planning process by convening a small but representative committee comprised of five academic administrators, one faculty member, two staff members, an undergraduate student, a member of the Ball State University Foundation Board, and a member of the local community. In the months that followed, this committee embarked upon an extensive process to engage the University community in working to enhance *Destination 2040: Our Flight Path*.

First, the committee designated approximately 140 people to serve on one of ten working groups. Each group prepared a report on a current or proposed strategic imperative relevant to our University's existing strategic plan. The topics were: undergraduate excellence and innovation; graduate education and lifetime learning; community engagement and impact; scholarship and societal impact; institutional excellence; inclusive excellence; artificial intelligence; purpose exploration; instructional faculty, and alternative tuition structures.

Shortly thereafter, the committee distributed a survey to the University community. Approximately 5,000 people—students, employees, graduates, and community members—responded to the survey.

The committee also hosted five open forums in Fall 2024. More than 250 people attended these forums, all led by President Mearns. Each of the forums focused on a different strategic theme. It was clear that forum participants were very engaged in the future of our University.

After evaluating all of this input, the committee met several times to draft the next iteration of our long-term strategic plan. President Mearns shared a working draft of this document with members of the Board of Trustees in February 2025. The following month, after incorporating feedback from the trustees, the committee disseminated a draft and a second survey to the University community. More than 2,800 people responded to this second survey.

In May 2025, the committee completed a revised version of the strategic plan. This final stage of the committee's work entailed considering responses to the second survey, as well as other information and input. On June 13, 2025, the Board approved the committee's final recommendation, resulting in a refreshed strategic plan that is an extension of *Destination 2040*, which was first approved by the Board six years ago.

We are grateful to everyone who contributed to our comprehensive, consultative process—a process that ultimately engaged more than 7,000 people. The members of our strategic planning committee have collaborated to enhance our long-term strategic plan, which will continue to guide our work for the next five years.



Strategic Planning Committee

- Geoffrey S. Mearns**
President
- Charlene Alexander**
Chief Strategy Officer
- Seth Beckman**
Dean, College of Fine Arts/Professor of Music
- Alex Buxton**
Student
- Jennifer Coy**
Department Chair, Department of Computer Science
and Associate Professor of Computer Science
- Ligia Gomez Franco**
Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology
- Abby Haworth**
Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and
Director of Student Life
- Julie Hopwood**
Senior Associate Vice President for Business Affairs
- Jill Lacy**
Member, Ball State University Foundation Board
- Kristen McCauliff**
Dean of the College of Communication, Information,
and Media and Associate Professor
in Communication Studies
- Lathay R. Pegues**
Community Member
- Stephanie Simon-Dack**
Vice Provost for Research and Professor of
Psychological Science
- Julie Eiser**
Staff Support

Board of Trustees

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- Brian Gallagher**, *Vice Chair*
- Mike McDaniel**, *Secretary*
- Julie Griffith**, *Assistant Secretary*
- Hope Churchill**
- E. Renae Conley**
- Wm. Craig Dobbs**
- Henry Hall**
- Mark Hardwick**

Shafer Tower





Fish Fountain and DeHority Complex



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

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