



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMENTS BY GEOFFREY S. MEARNES
December 12, 2025**

I begin my remarks by welcoming Mike Fowler as our newest colleague. I am grateful that the Board approved Mike's appointment as our next vice president for business affairs and treasurer. Mike's management skills and his passion for higher education will make him a valued member of our campus community, and I look forward to him joining us on campus beginning January 5, 2026.

Prior to Mike's appointment, our University had the good fortune of benefiting from the leadership and expertise of Sue Hodges Moore, who has been our interim vice president for business affairs since March 3. As many of you know, Sue served as our Chief Strategy Officer for several years, and I appreciate that she was willing to take on another essential cabinet role when I invited her to accept this interim appointment earlier this year.

In my time as your president, I have been fortunate to benefit from the counsel and support of trusted colleagues like Sue, as well as many friends and

graduates of our University. Among those graduates—someone whom I considered a dear friend and a cherished mentor—was Hollis Hughes, who passed away on November 22. Many of you had the good fortune to know Hollis, who gave generously of his time, his talents, and his treasure to our University.

In addition to his roles as an educator and a community leader in his home city of South Bend, Hollis served as a board member of our Ball State University Foundation, our Alumni Council, and our Black Alumni Council. He also served for 27 years as a member of our Board of Trustees. During that time, he provided leadership to multiple committees, and he served as the president and secretary of the Board. His retirement from the Board was commemorated in 2017 with the naming of Hollis E. Hughes Jr. Assembly Hall in the Alumni Center.

Hollis was an inspiration to all of us. He showed us how to lead with courage and humility.

I never had the privilege of serving with Hollis in my current role, but I have had the good fortune to serve with someone whose service to our University is equally impressive.

Renae Conley has served with distinction on our Board of Trustees since her initial appointment to the Board in 2014. In that time, she has served on three different committees, and she was a representative of the Board to the Ball State University Foundation Board. Renae also served two terms as vice chair of the

Board and two terms as chair of the Board. For the past eight years, I have benefitted from her support and her guidance, especially during the pandemic. I am grateful to her for her service to her alma mater, and I look forward to hearing the remarks she will deliver tomorrow as the speaker at our Fall Commencement ceremony.

Among Renae's many contributions to our University during her tenure on the Board was instituting our Days of Beneficence.

On behalf of everyone in our University community, I want to express my gratitude to the Board for your support of this extra time off during the holiday season. These days provide our faculty and staff with more opportunities to enjoy some much deserved rest and relaxation before the New Year.

Thank you again for this generous gift and for your ongoing service to our University.