



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMENTS BY GEOFFREY S. MEARNES
September 30, 2022**

The new academic year is off to a good start. Given the significant impact of the pandemic over the past two years, I am grateful to see all of our students on campus and more faculty and staff fully resuming face-to-face instruction.

As Paula shared with you, we welcomed approximately 3,500 new freshmen to our University this Fall—a six percent increase over last year’s freshmen enrollment. And as you heard from Susana and Jason, approximately 600 faculty and staff members participated in our Student Success Summit, which was designed to help them better understand our incoming and current students. Over the course of two days, September 15 and 16, our faculty and staff heard from inspirational speakers and learned more about how collaboration across campus is crucial to helping our students—particularly our new freshmen—take full advantage of their educational experiences at Ball State.

Another group of educators who participated in an important summit this month were the teachers and staff of Muncie Community Schools. As you heard a few moments ago, our University once again participated in the school district's annual MCS-Ball State Academic Innovation Summit, which was held September 16 at Muncie Central High School. I was at the high school that morning to participate in a panel discussion moderated by our Provost. During the discussion, I joined Dr. Lee Ann Kwiatkowski, CEO of MCS, along with Jim Williams, president of the MCS school board, to share our thoughts and reflections on the progress of our University's historic partnership with MCS.

On that note, I want to thank Dr. K and Jim for joining us this afternoon to deliver an update about all the good things that are happening at MCS, from new grant opportunities to increased salaries for teachers and staff. I also want to thank our Provost and Dean Marri for participating in their presentation and for their dedication to the partnership on behalf of our University.

Earlier, you also heard about our new Indiana Connection Lounge. I am grateful to Jim McAtee and all of our staff at the Career Center for their hard work on creating this inviting workspace. The lounge has been designed to help our students, particularly our first-generation students, network with our graduates and future employers, strengthening their social capital and helping them realize the benefits of their Ball State education. As Jim shared during his presentation,

Indiana employers will also be able to make use of the lounge, from which they'll be able to engage with our students who can become future employees.

You also heard a report from Deedie Dowdle, our new vice president for marketing and communications. Deedie's first day at Ball State was June 27. And just a few weeks later, she was on the ground—literally on the fairgrounds—leading our University's enhanced presence at the Indiana State Fair. As you heard Deedie share, she and her team engaged in hundreds of one-on-one interactions with thousands of fair attendees who were eager to share their Ball State stories, make a 360-degree video, or take a ride on the Ball State Cardinal Super Wheel.

I also want to commend our marketing and communications staff for another recent project that will help us communicate what makes our University truly special. Last month, during my annual Fall Convocation address, I showed a video that was produced by Domenic Centofanti, Stacey Grosh, and several of our colleagues from marketing and communications. This video highlights what I believe makes our University truly distinctive—the character of our people.

I'd like to share that video with all of you now.