

Thank you, Dwight.

Good evening, everyone. I have the great good fortune to serve as the president of Ball State University.

I say that I am so very fortunate, because our University has transformed the lives of hundreds of thousands of women and men who have earned their degree from this institution.

And with your engagement and your support, Ball State will continue to transform the lives of people for many years to come.

I am so very fortunate, because I have the opportunity to participate in this worthy mission—and to serve you.

[PAUSE]

In a few moments, I will tell you about why Jennifer and I chose to answer our call to beneficence in our own way.

But first, I want to express my appreciation to a few people.

Dwight, thank you for serving as our host for tonight's program. Well done.

To Mark Helmus, Lori Corvino, and Debbie Linegar—and to all the Foundation staff and university colleagues who have been working on this

campaign and organizing this special evening—I am grateful for your commitment—for your hard work. Thank you.

To Randy Pond and all of the other volunteers who are serving on our various campaign committees—thank you for your guidance and for your encouragement.

I would also like to express my appreciation to two of our past university presidents. You saw them in the video this evening.

Dr. John Worthen is here with us tonight. During his service as our president, John led the successful completion of the University’s first capital campaign. John, thank you for your leadership. And thank you for your unwavering commitment to Ball State University—for nearly 40 years.

[PAUSE FOR APPLAUSE]

Dr. Jo Ann Gora also played a pivotal role in advancing our University. During her service as president, she led our last—and largest—capital campaign. She also serves on our Foundation Board, and I am grateful for her continued investment in the future success of our University.

[PAUSE]

That last campaign—"Ball State Bold: Investing in the Future"—was indeed a very successful one.

The Bold campaign raised \$210 million—an all-time record for our University. That total set a high bar for us.

But because we were building on this strong foundation, we had the courage and the confidence to try to surpass that record. And we're off to a very good start. During the leadership phase of this campaign—"Our Call to Beneficence"—we have already raised more than \$225 million.

We've reached this point because of the generosity of more than 49,000 donors—including so many of you.

[PAUSE for APPLAUSE]

Given this progress—because of your generosity—it is my honor to announce that we have set a goal that is as ambitious as the collective aspirations of our entire University community.

Tonight, in order to empower our students—to support our faculty and our staff—and to enrich the lives of our friends and neighbors in our community—we commit to raise more than \$350 million for Ball State University.

[SHOW \$350 MILLION GRAPHIC]

[PAUSE for APPLAUSE]

As I mentioned a moment ago, we have already received contributions and commitments from so many people—graduates, families, friends, fans, and philanthropic organizations.

Each of these generous benefactors has a story—a story about what inspired them to answer Our Call to Beneficence.

Throughout the program this evening, you have heard several of their stories.

Over the past three years, as we embarked upon the leadership phase of this campaign, I traveled from coast to coast, visiting with graduates and friends in cities across the country.

In addition to alumni gatherings and tailgate parties, I participated in 36 salons. In this more intimate setting, I heard from women and men who were interested—indeed, eager—to invest in the mission of our University.

At all of these events, I heard stories about the profound, positive impact that our University has had on our graduates and their families. And they told me why, because of that impact, they have chosen to support our capital campaign.

[PAUSE]

During my Fall Convocation remarks in August, I shared the stories of two graduates who were inspired to support our University. Just two—among several thousand stories.

The first was about a graduate whose Chinese name was Bo. For many years, he has preferred to be called Paul.

Paul was an international student who came to Ball State in the 1980s with just a few possessions. For a short time, he slept inside the closet of the Chinese food restaurant where he got his first job as a graduate student.

But because of the guidance of a professor, Paul was ready for the interview that launched him on a fulfilling career—a career that spanned three decades.

Paul decided to demonstrate his gratitude to our University by making a \$1 million contribution to our campaign—because, as he said, Ball State—in Muncie, Indiana—had enabled him to achieve “the American dream.”

[PAUSE]

The motivation behind Paul’s gift was meaningful.

Just as meaningful was the heartfelt sentiment expressed by another graduate, Nile Harper. Nile delivered us a handwritten letter just in time for this year’s One Ball State Day. In the envelope, Nile included a check for \$500.

In his letter, Nile wrote how Ball State had prepared him and his wife, Judith—both graduates of our Teachers College—for their fulfilling careers.

[SHOW LETTER GRAPHIC]

Nile and Judith were married in 1955, and they raised two sons who went on to achieve their own professional success.

In his letter, Nile wrote, “Much of the meaningful accomplishments of our family have roots in the skills and values we learned at Ball State. We celebrated our 65th wedding anniversary three years ago. Now, Judith is deceased. So our gift is a good memorial in honor of her life accomplishments. Thank you, Ball State.”

[SHOW PHOTO]

[PAUSE]

Nile is just one of the more than 18,000 people who made a contribution to our University just last year. Each of these gifts is a testament to the enduring value of gratitude.

[PAUSE]

Each gift has a story—a story that is deeply personal to that benefactor.

Permit me now to share why Jennifer and I also answered the call to beneficence—to explain how we were inspired to support the next generation of Cardinals.

**I always tell people that Jennifer and I are very fortunate. Throughout our lives, we have been blessed in many ways.
Our greatest good fortune was our parents.**

Our parents showed us that, to lead a meaningful life, we should share our good fortune with other people.

Each day, through their actions, they showed us that life is a precious gift. And through their lives, our parents showed us that it was our moral obligation to share that gift with other people.

Jennifer and I chose to come to Ball State because the enduring values that are represented by Beneficence—these are the same values that our parents instilled in us. And these values are the same ones that Jennifer and I hope to instill in our five children—more blessings.

As you know, at Ball State, we define gratitude—one of those enduring values—as our commitment to expressing our appreciation and to demonstrating our appreciation through our actions.

You may recall, back in September 2017, shortly after we arrived, Jennifer and I established a scholarship fund for Muncie Central graduates who enroll at Ball State and who are the first in their families to attend college. My father was the first one in our two families to earn a college degree.

We called the fund that Jennifer and I established “The Mearns/Proud Family Scholarship Fund.” We did it in memory and in honor of our parents.

Today, because many other people contributed to our fund, it has already provided financial support to 18 Muncie Central graduates who are Ball State students.

All four of our parents have passed. But I believe that they are pleased—and proud—to know that their legacies will endure in the lives of Ball State students for many generations to come.

And, like me and Jennifer, they are grateful to all of you for allowing us to be members of this special university community.

[PAUSE]

As you leave here this evening, I ask you to reflect on the transformative impact that our University has had on you and on your life—and on your family.

Please reflect on the extraordinary impact that your generous philanthropy can have on the lives of our students and their families.

Please reflect on the extraordinary impact that your generous philanthropy can have on the contributions of our dedicated faculty and staff and on the vitality of the communities that we serve.

Please reflect on how that impact will endure for many generations to come.

Please answer Our Call to Beneficence. Thank you.