



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMENTS BY GEOFFREY S. MEARNES
DECEMBER 14, 2018**

As we come to the end of our Fall semester, we celebrate the completion of our successful Employee United Way campaign. I am pleased to report that our employees donated approximately \$175,000 to support the United Way of Delaware County. This total surpasses last year's total of \$157,000, but it does not include matching gifts from the Ball Brothers Foundation or the United Ways of Indiana.

We had a record 55 leadership givers in 2018. This designation is reserved for our most generous employee givers, women and men who make contributions of \$1,000 or more to our Employee Campaign.

Another example of our University's extraordinary commitment to the community received national recognition this Fall. As you heard this morning, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) named our University the winner of the 2018 C. Peter Magrath Community Engagement Scholarship

Award during a ceremony last month at the group's annual meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana.

APLU recognized our Schools within the Context of Community (SCC) program, which takes a unique approach with teacher education to help prepare culturally responsive and community-engaged teachers. As part of the initiative, our faculty examined the impact of community-engaged teacher preparation on aspiring teachers, children, and the wider community. Researchers working on the project have published 12 peer-reviewed research papers, a co-authored book, and a wide array of national presentations—all while leveraging more than \$3 million in funding to support programming for children in our community. Working with our community partners at Muncie Community Schools, the program has helped prepare nearly 200 future teachers.

This is wonderful news that deserves to be celebrated. And it speaks to the momentum we are building for our future goals as we launch our new strategic plan in 2019.

As Kay Bales reported today, our preliminary application figures for Fall 2019 are on the rise. We are beginning to see early results from our policy change of making the submission of SAT and ACT scores optional for incoming students. As of December 6, approximately 23,000 high school students had applied to our

University for Fall 2019. Of that number, 28 percent were test-optional applicants, or approximately 6,500 students.

Research has shown that public colleges see applications increase 11 percent after becoming test-optional. Our total applications have increased nearly 13 percent over last year, indicating we are ahead of this national trend. Acceptances and confirmations are also well ahead of last year's pace.

Finally, I am looking forward to tomorrow's Commencement ceremony. Thank you for approving my recommendation that we honor Shirley Brice Heath with an honorary degree—a recognition that is much deserved for her professional and academic accomplishments.

Dr. Heath is best known for her longitudinal studies of linguistic development in the learning environments of families and communities. Over the course of her career as a linguistic anthropologist, Dr. Heath has published more than a dozen books and written more than 200 articles. She has taught at universities throughout the world, most notably Stanford University and Brown University. It is our privilege to recognize her success as an alumna, her exemplary scholarship, and her extraordinary contributions to our understanding of how people learn.

It is also a privilege to welcome student Ashley Ford as our Commencement Speaker. Ms. Ford enrolled at our University in 2005 and quickly immersed herself

in student life. But, in time, the financial burden of paying for her education kept her from graduating just a few credits shy of earning her bachelor's degree.

Ms. Ford left the University in 2012 and began her career as a freelance writer. Her work and growing online presence caught the attention of media outlets in New York City, where she moved in 2014 and where her career as a professional writer has flourished.

Today, Ms. Ford is a Brooklyn-based writer and media host whose work has been published by numerous publications. She is the author of the forthcoming memoir, *Somebody's Daughter*, which will be published by Flatiron Books under Oprah Winfrey's book imprint.

I am grateful that Ashley has accepted our invitation to speak, and I admire her courage to re-enroll as a student this Fall to finish the undergraduate degree she began more than a decade ago. I look forward to honoring her tomorrow as one of more than 1,500 candidates who will receive their degrees from our University. I am proud of all of their accomplishments. And I offer them best wishes for their future endeavors as alumni.

Thank you.