



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMENTS BY GEOFFREY S. MEARNs
September 26, 2025**

I begin my remarks by expressing my gratitude to Dave Heeter, Keith O’Neal, and Chuck Reynolds for joining us today to provide the Board with an update about our partnership with the Muncie Community Schools.

We continue to make good, measurable progress because of this historic partnership. Stabilized enrollment, a balanced budget, and increased pay for teachers and staff are among the positive outcomes taking place in our city’s public schools.

But today, you also learned more about the improved academic outcomes underway at MCS—from substantial improvement in elementary school reading scores and high school graduation rates, to an increased number of MCS graduates enrolling in our University’s Direct Admit program.

I also want to thank the provost and Dean Bulkley for their leadership in helping to coordinate our University's enhanced support for MCS. As you heard, the Teachers College has launched a new Leadership Pipeline program to support MCS educators who aspire to become school leaders. This program is the latest example of our University's sustained commitment to a partnership that continues to reinvigorate our public school system.

Our University also began this new academic year with some positive enrollment news.

This Fall, we enrolled an incoming freshman class of approximately 3,730 new students, which is larger than last year's class. And, for the third consecutive year, our freshman class is larger than our pre-pandemic ten-year average. As you heard earlier in Vice President Paula Luff's enrollment report, this Fall's freshman class is well prepared, with an average high school GPA of 3.58.

Overall, our total enrollment is approximately 1,000 more students than just three years ago—an impressive accomplishment, given that the college-going rate in Indiana is now only 52 percent.

With this challenge in mind, I am grateful to Paula and to our colleagues in Enrollment Planning and Management for our sustained success in recruiting and retaining students to our University.

I am also grateful to the support our colleges provide in recruiting outstanding students, including our Honors College.

This Fall, approximately 620 new freshmen have enrolled in our Honors College. And this year, total enrollment in our Honors College exceeds 1,600 students—the largest in our history.

Later today, we will celebrate the completion of our newly expanded Edmund F. and Virginia B. Ball Honors House—a project that has been made possible through the gifts of some of our most loyal donors and friends.

The expansion, which adds a new classroom, faculty offices, and a collaborative area for students, comes at an opportune time to accommodate the growth of our Honors College. And I am grateful to all our generous benefactors who have chosen to support this transformational project.

I am also grateful to a special guest we had visit our campus this month for the first time—award-winning actor Hugh Jackman.

Many of you know that Mr. Jackman visited Ball State last week with Sutton Foster, who has been an instructor in our Department of Theatre and Dance for more than a decade. During the visit, Mr. Jackman and Ms. Foster were generous with their time, talent, and insights—engaging with students in their acting and musical theatre classes and participating in multiple question-and-answer sessions.

Hugh was also kind enough to join me as the latest guest on my monthly podcast. If you listen to the episode, which is available now, I think you will enjoy learning more about his career and his enthusiasm for experiencing what it meant to be a Cardinal for a few days.

Thank you.