



**BALL STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
COMMENTS BY GEOFFREY S. MEARNES  
March 25, 2022**

As you just heard, our University’s plan for the redevelopment of The Village includes the design and construction of a new performing arts center. I am very excited for the potential of this new facility to help fuel the continued growth of our outstanding Department of Theatre and Dance. This national-caliber program has grown substantially in the past two decades. This growth is a reflection of the dedicated commitment of our faculty and staff and the extraordinary talent of our students and our graduates.

During Spring break, I had the good fortune to spend several days in New York City, where I was able to watch our musical theatre students audition for casting directors and agents as part of the department’s annual New York Showcase. I also attended a performance of the new Broadway revival of “The Music Man,” featuring Tony Award winners Sutton Foster and Hugh Jackman. Many of you know that Sutton is an instructor in our theatre department. I

appreciate her ongoing investment in our University and in the success of our students.

I also attended a matinee performance of “Tina: The Tina Turner Musical on Broadway.” During this production, I proudly watched as Kayla Davion, who graduated from Ball State in 2017, play Tina Turner, the revered rock star.

My time in New York was a powerful reminder that the educational experience that we provide to our students is the foundation upon which they build their future success as graduates. And so, I want to express my gratitude to Bill Jenkins and to everyone else from the department for their commitment to providing such an exceptional undergraduate experience to our students.

This Spring, I am participating in another series of campus conversations with my colleagues across all colleges and divisions of our University. Provost Susana Rivera-Mills has joined me for the sessions in the academic colleges, during which we’ve provided updates about our comprehensive enrollment strategies and responded to questions from faculty and staff. I have completed eight of these sessions so far, with nine more scheduled through April. After the pandemic forced us to endure an extended period of physical distancing, I appreciate this opportunity to gather in person again with members of our campus community.

And speaking of the pandemic, I want to acknowledge that this month marks the two-year anniversary of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. I think it's fair to say that, in March 2020, none of us could have predicted the duration of this pandemic or how much the coronavirus would disrupt our daily lives. Despite the challenges that resulted from this public health crisis, our students, our faculty, and our staff rose to the challenge. Throughout the pandemic, they followed necessary health and safety protocols. They adapted to new ways of teaching and learning. And they excelled in navigating the hardships of the moment. For that, I am proud. Proud—and very grateful.

Thank you.