



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMENTS BY GEOFFREY S. MEARNES
May 7, 2021**

As we approach the end of this academic year, I want to express my gratitude to all of our faculty and our staff for their steadfast and creative efforts this past year. Without their hard work and determination, we would not have been able to overcome the challenges of COVID-19 and successfully provide our students the premier educational experiences they value so much.

The pandemic has required significant sacrifices from all of us. But throughout these difficult times, we continue to make progress as a University—implementing our strategic plan, moving forward with major physical changes to our campus, and setting records for fund-raising.

As you heard our colleagues from the Ball State University Foundation, we recently celebrated the extraordinary success of our third annual One Ball State Day. Because of the generosity of our students, parents, faculty and staff, alumni,

and friends around the world, we received more than 9,000 gifts totaling more than \$775,000 in that 24-hour window—our best single day of fundraising ever.

I am grateful to our colleagues from the Foundation who found ways to implement creative and innovative strategies that allowed them to continue generating philanthropic support during this pandemic. I also want to express my appreciation to all of our employees who served on various planning committees and as One Ball State Day ambassadors, helping to promote the day's events through email and social media.

I also want to congratulate three special members of the Class of 2021 who were selected from a very competitive pool of their peers for the distinction they earned: Aric Fulton for being named this year's recipient of our Senior Distinguished Service Award as well as our 2021 Jessie Nixon Award; Gwyneth Harris on receiving this year's Provost Prize for Scholarly Work; and Emma Cieslik for being named the winner of the 2021 John R. Emens Award.

Beginning tonight, we will celebrate the accomplishments of all graduating members of our Class of 2021 during our Spring Commencement exercises at Scheumann Stadium. The resumption of our in-person ceremonies marks the return of a cherished University tradition, and I am grateful to the women and men who have been working hard these past few months—especially these past few weeks—to make these ceremonies possible.

This evening, we will honor candidates who are receiving doctoral, masters, and specialist degrees. And tomorrow, we will hold four separate ceremonies to honor the candidates who are receiving their bachelor's and associate degrees. Then, on May 15, we will recognize graduates from our Class of 2020 who are returning to campus to participate in two additional Commencement ceremonies that we have scheduled at Scheumann Stadium.

It is a privilege to recognize all of our graduates who have completed their degree requirements since this pandemic began. I am proud of their collective accomplishments and of their ability to finish their degrees in the midst of an ongoing public health crisis.

Now, I know that many of you will not be able to attend one of the ceremonies, so I want to conclude my remarks by showing you a special video.

As you may recall, as part of an event during which we launched our “We Fly” campaign, I asked a group of our students—members of our theater department’s cabaret class—to write a song for us—a song that would capture the passion and the pride of our University.

In what has become a tradition, I’ve asked members of this year’s cabaret class to perform this song for us during our Spring Commencement ceremonies. Our

students graciously accommodated my request by creating this video of their performance, which also features students from our dance program.

As you watch and as you listen, I hope you join me in sharing the passion in our University and the pride in our people that I feel when I watch their performance.

Thank you.