



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMENTS BY GEOFFREY S. MEARNES
October 1, 2021**

I begin my remarks by expressing my gratitude to Jim Williams and Dr. Lee Ann Kwiatkowski for joining us today to provide the Board with an update about our partnership with the Muncie Community Schools.

Since our University's historic and innovative partnership with MCS started in July 2018, there have been many positive outcomes taking place in our city's public schools. These outcomes—from stabilized enrollment to increased pay for teachers and staff to maintaining a balanced budget—demonstrate that MCS remains on a positive trajectory of improvement and that we are building a bright future for the children of Muncie and our community.

I also want to thank Anand Marri, dean of the Teachers College, for his leadership in helping to coordinate our University's enhanced support for MCS. This Fall, the Teachers College launched an initiative to pair each of our colleges with an MCS school. This program is called MCS-Ball State Connections, and I

am proud of the hard work and the dedication of the women and men who are involved with this new endeavor.

I am also proud of the members of our University community who continue to demonstrate their commitment to our enduring value of social responsibility by helping us to mitigate the spread of coronavirus on our campus. It is because of our high vaccination rates and their collective compliance with our University's mask protocol and our other health and safety protocols that we have been able this Fall to provide a vibrant, on-campus experience for our students, faculty, and staff.

As of this week, 77 percent of our full-time employees are fully vaccinated. That figure includes 87 percent of our professional employees and 85 percent of our faculty. And approximately 70 percent of our eligible on-campus students, including more than 75 percent of those living in our residence halls, have confirmed they are fully vaccinated.

As you know, in 1918, during the last major global pandemic, our University was founded. And now, 103 years later, in the same week that we unveiled a state historical marker commemorating the founding of this very institution, we are celebrating the completion of several new facilities that contribute to the ongoing physical transformation of our vibrant campus.

Later today, we will hold a public ribbon cutting for our new Foundational Sciences Building, an extraordinary five-story structure that will help our

University meet the growing demand for STEM professionals. Then, tomorrow, we will cut another ribbon, this one recognizing the successful completion of our new Scheumann Family Indoor Practice Facility. Finally, on October 23, we will gather together again for another ribbon-cutting for our new Multicultural Center.

These new facilities are a visible representation of the physical growth that is fueling our future success. They are among the points of pride that I include when I talk with our alumni, donors, and friends about the good things that are happening at our University.

Lastly, I want to make you all aware of a new monthly podcast that I launched this week—a podcast that will allow me to share with a wider audience more of the reasons why I am proud to serve as the President of this University.

As host of this podcast, which we are calling “Our Call to Beneficence,” I invite guests to engage with me in conversations about their lives, their stories, and their connections to Ball State. I also ask them what Beneficence—what doing good for others—looks like for them as they go about pursuing their fulfilling careers and meaningful lives.

So far, I’ve published three episodes, featuring graduates Vince Bertram, CEO of the educational non-profit, Project Lead the Way; sports journalist Don Yaeger; and, most recently, debut author Ashley C. Ford. I’ve also recorded two more interviews, one of which was with our Board President, Renae Conley, who

sat down with me in the studio yesterday to record an episode that will air next month. Later this Fall, I will also release an episode featuring graduate Tiara Thomas, who, earlier this year, won a Grammy and an Oscar for her work as a singer-songwriter.

You can find “Our Call to Beneficence” on our website and you can subscribe to the podcast on all major streaming platforms, including Apple, Spotify, and Google.

I hope that, as you listen to these episodes, you join me in feeling inspired and proud to be a Cardinal.

Thank you.