



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMENTS BY GEOFFREY S. MEARNs
DECEMBER 13, 2019**

I want to begin my remarks by expressing my gratitude to you, our Board, for approving a one-percent salary supplement for all qualifying University employees. This investment in our faculty and staff reflects our collective commitment to provide competitive wages and benefits that attract and retain talent. Our faculty and staff have earned this investment.

I also want to express my appreciation to you for approving the President's Strategic Imperative Fund. This \$5-million investment demonstrates the Board's ongoing support of the implementation of our new strategic plan. The purpose of this fund is to generate proposals that will make significant contributions to the strategic imperatives outlined in the five goals of the plan. All proposals submitted for consideration will be reviewed by an evaluation team comprising members of our University Strategic Planning Committee. These individuals will provide their

recommendations to me, and I will announce my final funding decisions no later than April 30, 2020.

On behalf of the University, I am grateful—and excited—that the Lilly Endowment has chosen to award our institution \$250,000 as part of its new “Charting the Future” grant initiative. This initiative is helping colleges and universities across Indiana seize opportunities to build dynamic institutions for the 21st century. We will use the funds to explore and evaluate various programs that support key imperatives of our strategic plan. The Lilly Endowment has been a generous supporter of our University in the past, and we appreciate their ongoing investment in our mission of preparing our graduates to have successful careers and to lead meaningful lives.

I also want to express my appreciation for one of our colleagues who will conclude her service to our University at the end of this month.

Dr. Kay Bales deserves our sincere appreciation for her numerous contributions to this institution, including her exceptional administrative leadership and her instrumental role in creating multiple policies and programs that have influenced every student’s experience on our campus.

I want to thank the Board for naming the Dr. Kay Bales Excellence in Leadership Program. This honor is a fitting tribute to a colleague who, for more

than 30 years, has been a student advocate at heart and who has served our University with distinction for much of her professional career.

I also want to express my appreciation to Tom Bracken for serving as a member of our Board of Trustees. As Board Secretary, Tom offered valuable and creative insights to the Board's decision-making process. He has been—and will continue to be—a passionate advocate for the institution that his family founded more than 100 years ago. Jennifer and I are especially grateful to Tom and to Sheila for welcoming us as neighbors when we moved into Bracken House. As many of you know, Bracken House underwent renovations three years ago, and Tom played an important role in securing the funding that made this work possible. We are grateful to Tom and to his family for ensuring that Bracken House will remain a warm and inviting gathering place for our University community for years to come.

Finally, I am looking forward to tomorrow's Commencement ceremony. Thank you for approving my recommendation that we honor Freeman Hrabowski III with an honorary degree—a recognition that is much deserved for his extraordinary contributions to higher education.

Dr. Hrabowski has served as the president of the University of Maryland Baltimore County since 1992. In that time, he has helped build UMBC into an institution that is nationally recognized for innovation and teaching. He is

renowned for his leadership in increasing minority participation in STEM fields. His career accomplishments have earned him the title of being named one of “America’s Best Leaders” by U.S. News and World Report and one of the “100 Most Influential People in the World” by TIME magazine. It is our privilege to recognize his professional achievements, and I look forward to hearing his inspiring address as our Commencement speaker.

It is also a privilege to recognize those graduates who have completed their degree requirements this Fall. Tomorrow we will honor more than 1,500 candidates for doctoral, master’s and bachelor’s degrees. I am proud of their accomplishments, and I offer them best wishes for their future endeavors as alumni.

Thank you.