



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Office of the President

**GEOFFREY S. MEARNES
FALL COMMENCEMENT
WORTHEN ARENA
DECEMBER 14, 2019
10:00 A.M.**

This morning, we have gathered to celebrate the achievements of our students, who will now begin the next stage of their life journeys.

But before I offer them a few words of advice and encouragement, I want to acknowledge one of my colleagues who is concluding her service at our University at the end of this year.

Dr. Kay Bales has served our University with distinction for more than 30 years. Over the course of her career, she helped establish a new division of enrollment planning and management, she led efforts to promote student success, and she developed many policies and programs that have influenced every student's experience on our campus. Kay, your contributions have had a significant, enduring impact on this University. You will be remembered. Thank you, Kay.

And now to you, our graduates. You are the reason we are here today. We are here to celebrate you.

But as you know, your academic success is not just the product of your individual effort. Rather, it is the result of the sustained and collective commitment of many people, some of whom are here today.

At Ball State, we have hundreds of distinguished faculty who are dedicated to teaching and to scholarship, and they engage our students as partners in the quest for knowledge and greater understanding. Some of our faculty members are here now wearing academic regalia. This tradition symbolizes their commitment to sharing their knowledge with others, while they continue the search for truth and wisdom.

We also have thousands of talented, supportive staff members who are equally dedicated to your accomplishments. We don't make them dress in caps and gowns, but we know and appreciate their contributions to you and to our University.

And we have trustees who care deeply about your success. Their commitment to our mission is a source of strength for all of us. Now, to another special group of people who deserve our recognition: your family and friends. These are the men and women who have guided you. They have been there to support you with enthusiastic encouragement, with good advice, and with unconditional love. Graduates, please join me in a round of applause for your families and friends.

Earlier, you heard Dr. Hrabowski speak about how your dreams and your values shape who you will become in the days and years ahead.

As you leave our campus, and as you begin making your first major life choices as young graduates, I hope that you will reflect on the aspirations articulated in our University's mission statement: we believe that we have prepared you for a fulfilling career, and we hope that we have inspired you to lead a meaningful life.

But what is a fulfilling career?

And what is a meaningful life?

I cannot answer those important questions for you. Rather, each one of you will provide your own individual answers to those questions, based on your own experiences, your own circumstances, and your own unique aspirations—your own personal dreams. And your answers will almost certainly evolve and grow with the passage of time.

But I know this: professional success and career fulfillment are not the same. People generally equate success with financial rewards, with impressive titles, and with notoriety or fame. Those are external indicators of success, and I fear that you may very well find that they are temporary and hollow.

So, I encourage you to seek fulfillment. Set professional goals that will make you and your families and your friends proud of your professional contributions—because your contributions have improved the lives of other people. That impact is enduring.

I also encourage you to pursue a life of meaning. Life is a gift—a precious gift. And to lead a meaningful life, you should share that gift with people who need you.

To lead a meaningful life, you must also embody certain core values, such as the enduring values articulated in the Beneficence Pledge.

Be sincere, and speak the truth.

Model integrity, and value integrity in others.

Be grateful, and demonstrate your gratitude through your actions.

Through your character and commitment, please help us to create a world that is more peaceful and more just. We believe in that brighter future, because we believe in you.

Graduates, good luck. Godspeed.