

# Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Planning and Management/Executive Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships

## Executive Summary

Ball State University seeks a strategic, collaborative, and student-centered leader to serve as its next Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Planning and Management and Executive Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships. Reporting to the Vice President for Enrollment Planning and Management, the AVP/Executive Director will provide leadership for a comprehensive financial aid enterprise, aligning strategy, policy, and resources to advance institutional goals for enrollment, retention, affordability, and student success.

This search follows the retirement of a long-tenured leader and presents an opportunity to build on a strong, student-focused culture defined by dedicated staff, long tenure, and a deep commitment to supporting students. The next leader will be expected to build strong relationships across campus, sustain this culture, and guide the team through a thoughtful period of transition and evolution.

Serving a high-need student population, Ball State relies on financial aid as a central driver of student success. The AVP/Executive Director will play a critical role in strengthening the alignment between financial aid strategy and institutional priorities, including improving retention and graduation rates, and leveraging aid in creative, data-informed ways to support student persistence.

A key member of the Enrollment Planning and Management leadership team, this individual will partner closely with colleagues across campus to advance recruitment and student success goals. The role requires a visible and relationship-oriented leader who can communicate effectively, foster collaboration, and position financial aid as a strategic asset. The AVP will also work closely with the Ball State University Foundation to enhance donor-funded scholarship processes and expand support for student emergency funding needs.

The AVP/Executive Director will lead a team of approximately 20 staff with varied levels of experience and will be expected to prioritize mentorship, professional development, and accountability. The ideal candidate will bring progressively responsible financial aid experience, including expertise in leveraging, compliance, and budget management, along with strong analytical, communication, and leadership skills. Engagement in professional associations such as NASFAA and a demonstrated commitment to innovation and continuous improvement are also valued.

For more information on applying, please see the Procedure for Candidacy section on Page 7.



## About this Position

Reporting to the Vice President for Enrollment Planning and Management, the Assistant Vice President and Executive Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships provides strategic leadership and operational oversight for all need-based and merit-based aid programs. This senior leader partners with stakeholders across the University to develop data-informed fund utilization strategies that advance enrollment goals while ensuring a seamless, student-centered experience. The successful candidate will foster a culture of compliance and continuous improvement, balancing high-level vision with administrative excellence to support Ball State University's mission.

The AVP is responsible for:

- Ensuring the integrity of all financial aid programs. The AVP will create and update policies and procedures to ensure accuracy and regulatory compliance, and all federal and state reporting and reconciliation is complete.
  - Providing leadership as it relates to the impact of federal, state, and institutional financial aid budgeting decisions. The AVP will remain current on all regional and national financial rules, regulations, policies, and trends, and on financial aid best practices.
  - Establishing and executing policies and procedures to support the objectives, goals, and priorities of the EPM Division and the University Strategic Plan. The AVP will collaborate and develop strong working relationships with the EPM Leadership Team and other campus partners to help Ball State reach enrollment and retention goals through financial aid optimization, including but not limited to discount rate and net tuition revenue. The AVP will meet with campus partners regularly and serve on institutional committees to resolve issues and proactively work toward greater cross-campus efficiencies to ensure full compliance and greater customer care.
  - Serving as an administrator within the Division of Enrollment Planning and Management, as a member of the EPM Leadership Team contributing to strategic planning, policy development, and institutional decision-making.
  - Leading and overseeing the preparation and submission of all required reporting and audits (FISAP, A-133) and ensuring the federal program participation agreement remains current and in effect; working with staff to develop reports to support daily operations and that provide insights and can guide strategy.
  - In collaboration with, and at the discretion of, the Vice President for Enrollment Planning and Management, performing divisional responsibilities associated with division, University, and Board of Trustees priorities, including strategic planning initiatives and expected outcomes.
  - Collaborating with the Vice President for Enrollment Planning and Management, the EPM Leadership Team, Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, Student Financial Services, and other campus units to ensure the effective delivery of services that support student recruitment, retention, and success.
- With the approval of the Vice President for Enrollment Planning and Management, developing, managing, and maintaining the Financial Aid and Scholarships unit budget. The AVP will review income and expense reports, approve expenditures, and prepare reports that support accountability, transparency, and understanding of the value and impact of Financial Aid and Scholarships, including justification for continued or additional funding.
  - Proposing strategic goals and direction for the Financial Aid and Scholarships unit aligned with the Division of Enrollment Planning and Management and the Ball State University Strategic Plan for approval by the Vice President for Enrollment Planning and Management. The AVP will communicate approved goals and plans to staff and ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of all unit services.
  - Providing leadership and supervision for unit staff by assigning and reviewing work; orienting and training employees; and making recommendations related to personnel matters, including interviewing and selection, compensation, discipline, performance evaluation, and professional development.
  - Demonstrating responsible personal and professional conduct that supports the mission, goals, and presidential priorities of Ball State University. The AVP will accept responsibility for the quality and timeliness of work; build trust and credibility with colleagues; promote open-mindedness and collaboration; foster a positive work environment; and treat others with respect.

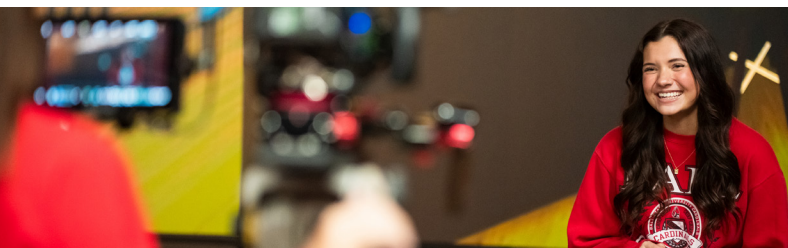


# Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

Ball State University presents a compelling opportunity for a strategic and student-centered financial aid leader to step into a highly visible and impactful role at a pivotal moment of transition. Following the retirement of a long-tenured and respected leader, the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Planning and Management and Executive Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships will build upon a strong foundation while shaping the future direction of financial aid in support of institutional priorities.

The next leader will be expected to:

- **Strengthen the Strategic Alignment of Financial Aid with Student Success.** Financial aid plays a central role in advancing Ball State's commitment to access, affordability, and student success. In alignment with *Destination 2040: Our Flight Path*, the AVP/Executive Director will help ensure that financial aid strategies support comprehensive enrollment management efforts engaging colleges, academic departments, and partners across campus while contributing to relationship-rich student success strategies that support every undergraduate student. Serving a high-need student population, the AVP/Executive Director will be expected to more fully align financial aid strategy with institutional goals to improve retention and graduation rates. This includes leveraging aid in creative, data-informed ways to support persistence and addressing financial barriers that impact student outcomes.
- **Lead a High-Performing and Evolving Team.** The AVP/Executive Director will lead a team of approximately 20 staff within a culture defined by long tenure, strong relationships, and a deep commitment to students. This leader will prioritize mentorship, professional development, and succession planning—investing in early-career staff while ensuring clear expectations and accountability across the unit. Fostering a collaborative, supportive, and high-performing team environment will be essential, aligning with the University's strategic commitment to a vibrant culture of wellbeing where staff are empowered through ongoing professional development.
- **Build Strong Collaborative Relationships Across Campus.** As a member of the Enrollment Planning and Management leadership team, the AVP/Executive Director will serve as a key institutional partner, working closely with colleagues across Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and other units. This role requires a visible and relationship-oriented leader who can build trust, listen actively, and communicate effectively with diverse stakeholders—including faculty and staff—to position financial aid as a strategic driver of enrollment and student success.
- **Enhance Scholarship Strategy and External Partnerships.** The AVP/Executive Director will play a critical role in strengthening processes related to donor-funded scholarships, working closely with the Ball State University Foundation and academic units to ensure effective stewardship, accurate award administration, alignment with donor intent, and clear communication with students. This leader will help improve the transparency and efficiency of scholarship processes while ensuring that philanthropic resources are deployed in ways that support institutional priorities, student access, and student success. Additionally, the leader will be expected to expand strategies to address student financial hardship, including building and optimizing emergency funding resources.
- **Advance Innovation and Operational Effectiveness.** Ball State is navigating a period of technological and operational change, including enhancements to systems such as Banner, adoption of Slate-related functionality, integration of Stellic for transfer articulation, and exploration of AI-enabled tools. The AVP/Executive Director will be expected to lead these efforts with a focus on improving efficiency, reducing manual processes, and enhancing the student experience, in alignment with the Strategic Plan's emphasis on aligning people, processes, technology, policies, and infrastructure; using data analytics to enhance student success and institutional effectiveness; and deploying generative artificial intelligence to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Leverage Financial Aid to Support Enrollment Strategy.** In partnership with the Vice President and EPM leadership team, the AVP/Executive Director will develop and execute data-informed strategies to optimize financial aid utilization in support of recruitment, retention, and net tuition revenue goals. This includes managing aid leveraging, contributing to budget strategy within the University's incentive-based budget model, and ensuring that financial aid policies support both institutional sustainability and student access.
- **Ensure Compliance, Integrity, and Continuous Improvement.** The AVP/Executive Director will maintain oversight of all financial aid programs, ensuring full compliance with federal, state, and institutional regulations while fostering a culture of continuous improvement and strong customer service. The leader will bring a commitment to operational excellence, using data, assessment, and emerging best practices to inform decision-making and enhance service delivery.
- **Engage Professionally and Bring Forward-Looking Perspective.** The successful candidate will bring an active presence in professional associations (e.g., NASFAA and regional organizations) and remain current on national trends, policy changes, and emerging practices in financial aid.



# Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The successful candidate for the Assistant Vice President and Executive Director role will be an experienced, collaborative, and highly analytical financial aid professional. This leader will possess the strategic vision necessary to leverage financial aid in support of enrollment goals, coupled with the administrative acumen to foster a culture of compliance, team development, and continuous improvement. To succeed in this role, the chosen candidate will demonstrate the following qualifications and qualities:

- The ideal candidate will bring significant and progressively responsible experience in financial aid, with a demonstrated record of leadership in complex higher education environments. Experience navigating institutional priorities while maintaining a student-centered approach will be essential.
- Preferred candidates will offer deep expertise in financial aid leveraging and budget management. They should be comfortable using data to inform strategy, optimize aid utilization, and support broader enrollment objectives.
- Strong interpersonal, communication, collaboration, and management skills are essential for success in this role. The successful candidate will be able to manage multiple priorities, exercise sound judgment with confidential information, and build effective partnerships across the University.
- Candidates should demonstrate thorough knowledge of federal and state financial aid regulations, strong computer skills, and the ability to analyze data, think critically, and solve problems creatively. Active engagement in state, regional, and/or national financial aid professional organizations, as well as current authorization to work in the U.S. without employer sponsorship, will further strengthen candidacy.
- A bachelor's degree from an accredited institution is required, and a master's degree or higher is preferred. Candidates must also have at least five years of progressively responsible experience in financial aid, with eight or more years in the profession preferred.
- Candidates should also bring at least five years of increasing responsibility in enrollment management, ideally at a mid-size or large public university. This background will position them to contribute effectively within a complex and mission-driven institution.



# ABOUT BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

Ball State University serves approximately 20,000 undergraduate and graduate students across seven academic colleges with about 190 undergraduate programs. Ball State offers more than 140 certificates and master's, doctoral, and specialist degrees, many of them ranking among the best in the nation. Originally founded to meet the need for more and better teachers, Ball State has earned dual Carnegie Classifications as a Research 2 (R2) and an Opportunity College & University (OCU)—recognitions that reflect the University's impact in both research and student success. Ball State is one of just 27 institutions nationwide—and the only one in Indiana—to receive both distinctions. It serves as one of Indiana's public research institutions while remaining committed to empowering its graduates to have fulfilling careers and meaningful lives.

For 107 years, Ball State has had an unwavering belief in an education rooted in innovation, enduring values, and intellectual curiosity. The institution was founded on the beneficence of the Ball brothers, who gave back to the community that gave them so much. They purchased the land and buildings of a defunct institution and donated them

to the State of Indiana. This gift became the Indiana State Normal School Eastern Division, which opened in 1918.

To recognize the Ball family's generosity, the Indiana General Assembly changed the institution's name to Ball Teachers College in 1922 and then Ball State Teachers College in 1929. By the 1960s, the regional teachers college had begun to attract faculty from outside the Midwest. In 1965, the Indiana General Assembly renamed the college Ball State University, acknowledging its phenomenal growth in enrollment and facilities, the variety and quality of its educational programs and services, and the anticipation of the broader role it would play in the state's future.

What began as a teachers college has grown into a world-class University with highly respected programs in education, architecture, business, communications, fine arts, sciences, humanities, and the health professions. Symbolized by the statue *Beneficence*, our enduring values—excellence, integrity, inclusiveness, innovation, courage, social responsibility, and gratitude—guide us today and will endure as we enter a bright future.

## The best is yet to come.

[Destination 2040: Our Flight Path](#) establishes Ball State University's ambitious goals for our second century. This strategic plan was designed with input from faculty, staff, students, alumni, community partners, and benefactors. It provides a strategic framework with five long-term goals for 2040 and a set of strategic imperatives to be implemented by 2030.

### Mission

We engage students in educational, research, and creative experiences that empower our graduates to have fulfilling careers and meaningful lives enriched by lifelong learning and service, while we enhance the economic, environmental, and social vitality of our community, our state, and our world.



# Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships

The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships is committed to providing students with accurate and timely financial assistance while maintaining the highest standards of confidentiality for students and their families. The office serves each student and family with care, respect, and individualized support, recognizing that every circumstance is unique. It also works to educate students about available financial aid resources through multiple methods of communication and strives to obtain and maximize funding opportunities in support of student success.

The AVP/Executive Director will lead a team of approximately 20 individuals with two direct reports.

## Enrollment Data

Ball State University's total Fall 2025 enrollment of more than 20,000 students exceeds pandemic-adjusted projections, with 15,148 attending on campus.

Students come from all 50 states, 74 countries, and every county in Indiana. Out-of-state students represent approximately 24 percent of enrolled students. Almost 6,000 students are enrolled fully online.

The Class of 2029 comprises 3,733 full-time students, of whom 38 percent are men, 62 percent are women, and 29 percent are African American, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander, or identify with two or more races.

The average high school GPA was 3.58, and more than half of the class earned the Indiana Academic Honors Diploma. More than 600 students enrolled in the Honors College with an average entering GPA of 4.06. The University's Strategic Enrollment Plan guides our ongoing efforts to enroll and retain a highly qualified and diverse student population. This includes a policy to make submitting standardized test scores optional for undergraduate admission. The retention rate for Ball State students is 78 percent. The four-year graduation rate for the Fall 2018 student cohort was 49 percent, exceeding the state average. The University is closing the achievement gap among all the students we serve. Ball State administrators almost \$250 million in merit- and need-based aid each year.

## Fall 2025 Enrollment

- 20,241 total students
- 14,399 undergraduate and 5,842 graduate students
- 3,733 first-year students
- 55% earned the Academic Honors Diploma
- 3.58 average GPA

## Career Outcomes

Students who graduated in May 2024 reported the following placement outcomes:

- 93% career placement rate
- 84% employed in their field of study
- 80% work in Indiana



## Enrollment by College

*(includes associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees by highest degree being pursued, undeclared and non-degree-seeking not shown)*

Estopinal College of Architecture and Planning .....	1,252
College of Communication, Information, and Media .....	1,540
College of Fine Arts .....	1,674
College of Health .....	3,029
College of Sciences and Humanities .....	4,226
Miller College of Business .....	2,516
Teachers College .....	4,958

# University Leadership

## Geoffrey S. Mearns, President

President Geoffrey S. Mearns serves as the 17th president of Ball State University. After joining the University in May 2017, President Mearns helped to develop a new strategic plan. *Destination 2040: Our Flight Path* establishes a long-range vision for the University that sets priorities across five key areas: undergraduate excellence, graduate education and lifetime learning, community engagement and impact, scholarship and societal impact, and institutional and inclusive excellence.

During his tenure, President Mearns has pursued initiatives that have produced the largest freshman class in history and increased alumni engagement and fundraising. President Mearns has also strengthened the University's relationship with the community, most notably through its innovative partnership with Muncie Community Schools.

President Mearns earned his undergraduate degree in English from Yale University and a law degree from the University of Virginia. After a legal career that included serving as a federal prosecutor, President Mearns held academic and administrative roles at Cleveland State University, and then he served as president of Northern Kentucky University. He and his wife, Jennifer, have five children.



## Leadership

### Paula Luff

Paula Luff began serving as vice president for enrollment planning and management in April 2020. Her personal experience as a first-generation college graduate inspired her to dedicate her professional career to helping others obtain a college education that will change the trajectory of their lives.

With more than 30 years of experience in higher education, Vice President Luff joined Ball State from DePaul University in Chicago, where she was interim vice president for enrollment management. At Ball State, she oversees the ongoing implementation of the University's strategic enrollment plan and provides leadership for all areas of admissions. She also oversees the offices of the Registrar, Financial Aid and Scholarships, and Cardinal Central—our one-stop student support center.

## Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. WittKieffer is assisting Ball State University in this search.

Applications should include, as separate documents, a resume and a cover letter of interest. For fullest consideration, all materials should be received by **July 10, 2026**.

Applicants should submit materials through WittKieffer's [candidate portal](#). Candidates also may access the portal through the [WittKieffer website](#) by selecting the "Become a Candidate" button.

Nominations and inquiries may be directed to:

**Christy Pratt**  
Consultant  
301-788-7883

**Natalie Song**  
Senior Associate  
305-323-0285

# ABOUT MUNCIE

With a population of about 70,000, [Muncie](#) is a dynamic midsize city 55 miles northeast of Indianapolis. Consistently ranked by realtor.com as the No. 1 most affordable college town and described by several national studies as a typical American community, Muncie offers the advantages of larger cities without the hassles and costs of living in major metropolitan areas.

Ball State's cultural venues—including Emens Auditorium, Sursa Performance Hall, the David Owsley Museum of Art, the Charles W. Brown Planetarium, the Dr. Joe and Alice Rinard Orchid Greenhouse, Brown Family Amphitheater, and The Marilyn K. Glick Center for Glass—provide ample opportunities for arts and entertainment. The campus and surrounding community benefit from thought-provoking art exhibitions, top-flight theatrical performances, prominent speakers, and visits by well-known musical acts.

Muncie is home to many unique attractions including Minnetrista and Oakhurst Gardens, the National Model Aviation Museum, and Cardinal Greenway—a recreational trail for athletes of all kinds. The Muncie Symphony Orchestra offers first-rate programs featuring nationally known artists, and the Muncie Civic Theatre produces plays for all audiences. Downtown Muncie offers a lively arts scene along with shops and dining.

For outdoor enthusiasts, Prairie Creek Reservoir is a 1,252-acre man-made lake surrounded by 3,000 acres of rolling hills. The lake is stocked with a variety of fish. Boat docks are available, and a beach provides a popular summer swimming spot. Residents also have easy access to big cities. Muncie is about an hour away from Indianapolis. Other cities within a few hours of driving include Chicago, Cincinnati, Dayton, Detroit, Louisville, and St. Louis.



Prairie Creek Reservoir



Minnetrista Cultural Center



Downtown Muncie



## Indianapolis

Indianapolis, the capital of Indiana, is the 16th-largest city in the United States. Located on land set aside for a state capital in the early 19th century, it was modeled after Washington, D.C., with streets radiating outward from the seat of government. Although it is not situated on a navigable body of water, the city's central location—in relation to the state and to much of the country—has made it an important transport and distribution center since the 19th century.

Since the 1970s, Indianapolis, home to the NFL's Colts, the WNBA's Fever, and the NBA's Pacers, has established a reputation as a sports center by constructing major athletic and visitor facilities and energetically promoting

itself as a venue for a wide variety of amateur sporting events. The city has hosted the NCAA Division I men's and women's basketball championships and the 2012 Super Bowl. However, its most famous athletic event remains the Indianapolis 500, held annually at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

The city is also known for its outstanding dining and cultural options. Among its offerings are The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, Newfields—A Place for Nature and the Arts, White River State Park, the Indianapolis Zoo and White River Gardens, the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, and the Murat Theatre.





# BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

Ball State University is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive equal consideration for employment without regard to race, religion, color, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, disability, genetic information, ethnicity, national origin or ancestry, age, protected veteran status, or any legally protected status. MC-82932-26

