David Letterman honored

I have great news, and I wanted to share it with you before you returned to campus.

On September 7, we will have the grand opening of our new Communication and Media Building. In naming our newest academic building this afternoon, the Board of Trustees put an end to one of the longest-running gags on television. They voted unanimously to name the $21 million structure in honor of one of our most famous alumni, David Letterman, who will join us for the opening ceremonies.

For years, Dave Letterman has jokingly questioned why the university hasn’t named a building after him. With this honor we’re bestowing on Dave -- a high-achieving individual and the king of late-night television -- the joke officially ends.

There’s no doubt that Dave truly deserves a building named in his honor. Here at Ball State, he has inspired hundreds of students to pour their souls into their creative endeavors and strive to achieve the same standards of excellence he established for his television show and production company. He has been honored with a George Foster Peabody Award, the most prestigious award in television, and garnered 97 Emmy nominations, winning 16 of the awards for variety, music, and comedy programs.

Over the years, Dave has been a staunch supporter of Ball State. Millions of people know of Ball State because of his frequent on-air references to his alma mater. The 1970 graduate assisted the launch of the student-run radio station WCRD-FM, continues to serve as one of the station’s benefactors, and he created the David Letterman Scholarships. Since 1985, the scholarship fund has annually awarded three top telecommunications students with $10,000, $5,000, and $3,333, respectively. The scholarship has a rich history of going to the department’s most-talented students, like Jaron Henrie-McCrea, who earned Ball State its first
Student Academy Award in 2005.

The structure, which connects the Ball Communication Building and the Art and Journalism Building, brings all of the departments of the College of Communication, Information, and Media under one roof. The building will be the most technologically advanced structure on campus -- giving our students access to equipment that will make even the professionals at the Late Show envious.

This fall, students will put their hands on a $1 million post-production studio where they can cut together their high-definition footage and mix in surround sound to produce a film or music video. When they graduate, they will have already honed their skills on the same equipment found in Hollywood and New York studios. They'll view their final projects in an enhanced screening room that is optimized for the best possible presentation of their work. This not only will inspire them, but it also will allow them to see their work as it would be presented in the real world. Access to this equipment will make our graduates highly marketable by giving them a leg up on experience.

The Letterman building stands not only as an example of our commitment to immersive learning, but also to being good stewards of our environment. It has received Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification as a high-performance green building in terms of sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality.

(And once we learned the structure could survive a severe storm with hail the size of canned hams, we knew Dave would certainly appreciate that.)

Dave's mom, Dorothy Mengering, attended the trustees meeting this afternoon. As a mom, I could tell how very proud she is of Dave and how much this honor means to her.

I can't think of a better way to kick off the new academic year than by giving Dave and his mom the best Ball State welcome ever. So I'd like to invite everyone to the grand opening at 4 p.m. on September 7. Dave and Dorothy plan on attending, and I'd like everyone to welcome them back to campus.

Jeffrey Smulyan, chairman of the board of Emmis Communications Corporation, will be the event's keynote speaker. In addition, many other VIPs will take part in the ceremony as well as panel discussions involving the future of communications and media. Some of the special guests and panelists include Congressman Mike Pence; Andy Alexander, Cox Newspapers Washington bureau chief; Jane Clark, Time Warner Global Marketing's vice president of insights and innovation; Dennis Ryerson, vice president and editor for The Indianapolis Star; and Michael Smith, executive director of Northwestern University's Media Management Center.

I'm looking forward to the grand opening already so we can thank Dave properly in person.

**Scheumann Stadium and Park Hall**

On August 28, we will dedicate the extensively renovated Scheumann Stadium.
The improvements have done wonders to update the gridiron arena, which is one of the first structures to greet visitors to our campus. Immediately, they'll spot the new ticket office, the stately brick and wrought iron fencing that match the original facility, and the improved disabled accessibility.

Once inside, they'll see the enclosed north end with a grass seating area as well as the larger and greatly improved communications center. In addition, there will be new club-level seating, restrooms, concession areas, and 16 individual entertainment suites. Peering down on the field, they'll see our agile players kicking upuffs of crushed rubber as they sprint toward the end zone, a telltale sign of the new synthetic grass playing surface -- just like in the NFL.

We will also be opening Park Hall August 22, our first new residence hall since 1969.

Park Hall, named after Don Park and his family -- who represent 87 years and five generations of affiliation to Ball State -- will house more than 500 students in a luxurious setting. Bringing the residence hall online has already had a direct impact on keeping our students on campus. Comparing this year to last, there will be 230 more students living on campus. And as we all know, students living on campus typically perform better than their off-campus counterparts.

And the ones living in the LEED-certified Park Hall will have many of the latest advantages at their fingertips. They will live in four-room clusters that share two bathrooms and have access to music practice rooms and technology areas. A centrally located desk, which is staffed 24/7, exudes a welcoming atmosphere, yet also ensures security. Art, purchased from Ball State students, adorns the communal areas. And two-story student lounges promote interactivity between floors, to help build a community both vertically and horizontally. The intentional design will help students make new friends, adjust to their academic environment, and help them succeed at Ball State.

Lettgan dedication. Park Hall and Scheumann Stadium grand openings. The start of the fall semester. I can't remember a time when I've been this excited for the beginning of an academic year. We should be quite proud to be a part of such a fine institution -- one that is definitely on the move.

As we put the final touches on our summer research projects, literature reviews, and catching up on developments in our respective fields, I hope you'll join me in rededicating ourselves to the remaining objectives set out in our strategic plan and the additional rewards they promise to bring the university in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

Jo Ann M. Gora
President