The University That Works

These are trying times for American colleges and universities as well as times of great opportunity. Higher education in Indiana, at Ball State, and throughout the nation is driven by forces outside the academic community to make significant changes in the way it operates.

Consider this report from the Pew Charitable Trust:

The changes most important to higher education are those that are external to it. What is new is the use of societal demand—in the American context, market forces—to reshape the academy. The danger is that colleges and universities have become less relevant to society precisely because they have yet to understand the new demands being placed on them.

...a rising anxiety about jobs and careers among Americans of all ages, the emergence of a technology that promises both new forms and new suppliers of post-secondary education, and a seemingly irresistible impulse on the part of policymakers and public agencies to rely on markets and market-like mechanisms to define the public good.

Middle-class Americans fear that rising tuition is putting a college education out of reach; corporate leaders worry about the ability of graduates to analyze data and communicate effectively; and elected
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commitment

Ball State promises an unwavering commitment to the highest quality classroom teaching
officials complain that public universities, unwilling to contain their costs, simply demand more money every year.

In 1835 Alexis deTocqueville said, "No sooner do you set foot on American soil than you find yourself in a sort of tumult, all around you everything is on the move."

DeTocqueville's observation certainly applies to higher education today. But just as Chicago has been called the city that works, Ball State can be described as the university that works.

It works, first, because of a clear sense of institutional identity. We have carved an enviable niche as an affordable, mid-size doctoral institution with a rock-solid tradition and unwavering commitment to the highest quality classroom teaching. Other universities are being forced by outside pressures to move toward what Ball State already has achieved.

Twelve years ago we made a decision to use computer and telecommunications technology to enhance teaching and learning and set out to be a premier teaching university. We reallocated our resources to support this vision and, like American business and industry, made the tough decisions to become more competitive:

- we teach nearly 12 percent more students today than we did in 1985, but the state appropriation per student declined 15 percent during that time;
- we became more energy efficient and less dependent on single sources of fuel to heat and cool the campus;
- we switched to high voltage, more efficient sources of electricity;
we kept our costs low. The combined
room, board, and tuition charge at Ball
State is among the lowest 15 percent of
any college or university
east of the Mississippi River.
For example, in-state tuition
at Ohio universities is 34 to
60 percent higher than Ball
State's in-state tuition:

we made improvements in
our health care program to
reduce the acceleration of
costs, and we administer our
own health insurance program because it
is cheaper than paying someone else to
do it for us.

Ball State concentrated its resources
on its core business—teaching students—and
has been careful not to squander them
trying to be all things to all people.

Is it working? Even with the belt-
tightening taking place, the university's
assessment program shows that both the
breadth of academic programs
and the quality of education at
Ball State have increased. All
graduates regardless of major
are computer competent and
must demonstrate writing
competency before receiving a
degree. Ball State's increased
quality at a lower cost is a
textbook model of productivity
in higher education.

While it is true that Ball State tuition
has increased an average of 7 percent per
year since 1985—about the same rate as
public universities around the country—one
must acknowledge all that our students
receive for their money. They receive up to
The breadth of academic programs and the quality of education have increased.
students receive admission to hundreds of concerts and theater productions
thirty-four credit hours of classroom instruction each year taught by excellent faculty. At no additional cost, students receive admission to hundreds of special lectures, concerts, art exhibits, theater productions, and men's and women's athletic contests. They receive unlimited access to more than twenty public computer labs, transportation on the campus-wide shuttle bus system, access to the university mainframe computer from every residence hall room, psychological counseling, academic tutoring, and learning center assistance. There are state-of-the-art exercise and weight training facilities, an extensive intramural athletic program, and the opportunity to participate in more than 300 student organizations and to learn from students from eighty foreign countries.

Board of Trustees President Thomas DeWeese recently told a newspaper reporter, "Considering what you get for your money, Ball State tuition is a bargain."

But low cost is only one factor. Ball State also distributed $78 million in financial aid last year, with nearly 70 percent of our students receiving some form of assistance through loans, part-time jobs, scholarships, or grants. We will continue to work hard to keep costs down while improving the quality of education offered, allocate resources to only essential tasks, and follow the example of American business by doing more with less.
For several years we concentrated our efforts on providing the most modern computer and telecommunications technology to support classroom teaching. The campus-wide Visual Information System, interactive televised classes, and the complete MBA degree by television are shining examples. In many important respects we succeeded beyond our own expectations.

Yet it takes more than a clear sense of direction and solid financial management to foster the quality found at Ball State. It is more than just the technology; it is the people who make this a premier teaching university.

Part of our strength can be attributed to the cooperative relationship between the University Senate and the administration.

Under the leadership of Senate Chair Alice Bennett, the communication has been open and productive. Ball State works because the faculty are genuinely interested in their students' learning. On our campus, professors teach more classes than their colleagues at other institutions and continue to make excellent scholarly contributions in their disciplines.

One example is the research performed by scientists at the world-renowned Human Performance Laboratory. Led by Dr. David Costill, the John and Janice Fisher Professor of Exercise Science, a team of researchers conducted experiments on the physical effects of weightlessness with an international crew of astronauts on a seventeen-day medical research flight of the space shuttle Columbia.
It is the people who make this a premier teaching university
model

The College of Architecture and Planning

is described as a national model for educating future architects
As an example of Ball State's commitment to teaching, we employ 30 percent more faculty than our sister Mid-American Conference institutions—906 full-time faculty at Ball State compared to the MAC average of 689. Equally significant is our success in hiring exceptionally talented new faculty. They come to us from Harvard, Johns Hopkins, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Among the high caliber people who joined us this year was Eric Damian Kelly, dean of the College of Architecture and Planning and a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. Now in its thirty-first year, the college was highlighted in a report published by the Carnegie Foundation as a national model for educating future architects. The three-year study recognizes Ball State's work to promote and teach design that is environmentally, socially, and economically responsible. The College of Architecture and Planning also is the only school in the country to have won the national AIA Education Honors Award three times.

Photographers from the University Relations office won the highest award in a nationwide competition for the third consecutive year—the first university ever to win three times.

National attention also focused on the School of Music that won the top prize in competition recognizing schools for performing and promoting American music—the ninth time Ball State has won the top prize for programming; the College of Business was named by Success magazine as one of the twenty-five best schools in the country for teaching entrepreneurship; and the Ball State Museum of Art received a $70,500 grant for outstanding performance from the Institute of Museum Services.
These accomplishments were produced both by top-notch staff who are devoted to the institution and faculty who have achieved a balance between teaching and scholarly work. The word is spreading among American universities that Ball State is a leader in the movement back to teaching.

In the last year we have been invited to three national meetings and hosted an international video teleconference to present the story of Ball State’s success in using technology in the classroom. The evidence is mounting that technology can help professors cover more material and present it in a more organized and interesting format. Students seem to remember visual information better than material presented in the traditional lecture method of teaching.

The emphasis was on teaching and learning when we created the new College of Communication, Information, and Media—the seventh academic college at the university and the first new college in twelve years. By bringing together the departments of journalism, telecommunications, speech communication, and the graduate program in Information and Communication Sciences, we created the ninth largest college of communication in the country. Another addition was a doctoral degree in audiology, the first new doctorate to be offered by Ball State in many years and one of only three applied doctoral degrees in audiology in the nation.

On the capital improvements side, a new $7.5 million Alumni Center, an architectural masterpiece designed by the
An NCAA report confirms the continuing success of Ball State athletes in the classroom
prominent international firm of Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, will serve both as a conference center and a tribute to 106,000 living alumni who bring credit to the university in all areas of human endeavor. The project manager on the center is, himself, one of our graduates.

Ball State moved up another notch in prominence when it was asked to join in a national project to examine leadership trends in higher education. The university was among five campuses selected to participate in the first phase of the American Council on Education's pilot project.

In athletics the reports confirm Ball State's continuing leadership and success in the classroom. Data submitted to the NCAA shows a 66 percent six-year graduation rate for our student athletes compared with a 55 percent median for the MAC. In fact, Ball State student athletes graduate at a higher rate than those at most Big Ten schools. In a separate report following a year-long self-study and peer review, the NCAA announced that it had fully certified our intercollegiate athletic programs. The certification means that Ball State is in compliance with all NCAA membership standards.

In the areas of long-range planning, financial management, productivity, teaching and research, the use of technology in the classroom, quality faculty, and a balance among academics, athletics, and the arts, we have stepped forward as a leader among American universities.

Now is the time to redouble our efforts to increase student retention, use technology to enhance teaching, and improve opportunities for part-time students.

While these may be trying times for higher education, Ball State University demonstrates the stability, flexibility, and forward thinking that proclaim this is a university that works.
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Ball State University practices equal opportunity in education and employment and is strongly and actively committed to diversity within its community.