

Hello. Now that final exams and Commencement are over, and we are about to take a break, I wanted to reflect on 2019 and the many accomplishments that resulted from your hard work and dedication.

It has been a remarkable year at Indiana State University --- and we haven't even closed the book on 2019's honors and achievements.

Tonight, ISU Communications major Tiarra Taylor, Miss Indiana, will be on national television competing in the Miss America Pageant. Tiarra is a first-generation college student who will graduate in May. While speaking with the media before serving as grand marshal of our Homecoming Parade, Tiarra said, "I would not be half the woman I am if not for this university." Regardless of the outcome tonight, Tiarra has represented ISU with such class and grace. We are so proud of her.

Once again, Indiana State University has been recognized as best in the state for educating and placing into good jobs students of limited financial means and first-generation college students. CollegeNet's Social Mobility Index speaks to what we want more folks to know: ISU's distinctiveness and impact. Please share that message when you're home talking with family and friends during the break.

Financially, we hit our benchmarks in every category for the state's performance funding. That included degree completion and on-time graduation.

During the 2019 fiscal year, our fundraising increased 40 percent. Give to Blue Day raised \$436,000 --- the largest single fundraising day in ISU's history. But we have more work to do. In this season of giving, please consider a gift to the university.

Thanks to the foresight of our state legislators, we continued to improve our beautiful campus with building renovations, two of which were finished in 2019. We dedicated the College of Health and Human Services building and we re-dedicated the Fine Arts Building. Both were transformed into bright, modern spaces for learning and teaching.

We're currently halfway through a \$50 million renovation of the Hulman Center. A year from now, we will have an updated multi-purpose facility that will serve as a point of campus and community pride for decades to come. The next project is a renovation of Dreiser Hall.

In the coming year, we will finish our Mission, Vision and Values statement, which will guide the creation of a new Strategic Plan. We are also preparing for a visit in September by the Higher Learning Commission for accreditation.

Like every other institution, we have challenges. But we cannot let that distract us from celebrating the positive impact our university makes every day with its dynamic students, faculty, staff and alumni.

You are what makes Indiana State University special.

Happy holidays, everyone.