

# DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S CABINET

### *Minutes*

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**Meeting date: September 12, 2016**

**Members in attendance:** President William LaForge, Dr. Vernell Bennett, Mr. Keith Fulcher, Dr. Chris Jurgenson, Dr. Charles McAdams, Dr. Michelle Roberts, Ms. Christie Rocconi, and Mr. Jamie Rutledge (Ms. Claire Cole – recorder)

**Members not in attendance:** Dr. Leslie Griffin, Mr. Ronnie Mayers, Ms. Allie Rose Parker

**Guests:** Mr. Jeff Barkman, Director, Facilities Management  
Ms. Meredith Brown, Vice President, Student Government Association  
Mr. Mike Little, HVAC and Energy Manager

**Call to Order:** A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on September 12, 2016. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

#### **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

On motion by Dr. Jurgenson, seconded by Dr. Bennett, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on August 29, 2016.

#### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- Mr. Rutledge brought two guests to the Cabinet meeting. First, he introduced the new Director of Facilities Management, Mr. Jeff Barkman. Mr. Rutledge stated Mr. Barkman has been on campus two weeks, and he believes Mr. Barkman will be a great fit for Delta State. Second, Mr. Rutledge introduced the HVAC and Energy Manager, Mr. Mike Little. Mr. Little went above and beyond the call of duty to repair the chiller problem at Chadwick-Dickson and the Dorgan Center. Mr. Rutledge stated that Mr. Little located a portable chiller and worked long hours to ensure it was set up correctly. Cabinet Members thanked Mr. Little for his great work in addressing the problem so quickly.
- President LaForge, Dr. McAdams, and Dr. Rolando Herts met with a representative from the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Services regarding hosting an "Engage Mississippi President's Summit on Community Engagement" at Delta State. President LaForge agreed to host this summit, and stated it fits nicely into our visioning principle regarding community engagement.
- President LaForge stated the *Mississippi Today* events held a few weeks ago with Mr. Andrew Lack, Mr. Walter Issacson, and Mr. Jim Barksdale went very well and could lead to future partnerships between *Mississippi Today* and Delta State students. President LaForge thanked his office staff for their efforts in working with the *Mississippi Today* staff to ensure a grand event for guests.
- President LaForge asked Dr. Bennett to give an update on the events surrounding Welcome Week. Dr. Bennett has heard great feedback from students. One complaint was received from a community member about the noise level of the Foam Party; so, Dr. Bennett has resolved to move the Foam Party's location to the front of the H.L. Nowell Student Union next year.
- Dr. Bennett hosted a Leadership Retreat last weekend for all presidents and vice presidents of student

organizations. She stated the event received great reviews, and the students thoroughly enjoyed the keynote speaker, Mr. Del Suggs.

- President LaForge began teaching his Leadership Class last week. He expects it be a great semester with guest speakers every other meeting. His next speaker will be IHL Board of Trustees member and Executive Director of Delta Council, Dr. Chip Morgan.
- In Mr. Mayers' absence, President LaForge gave an update on Athletics. The football team won their first game against Kentucky Wesleyan, lost their second game against Texas A&M University-Commerce, and will play at the University of West Georgia on Saturday. Over the weekend, Delta State's men's soccer team had a great, winning game.
- President LaForge gave an update on his football receptions. The President's football receptions are an exclusive event for the President's guests, and a new guest list is created for each football game. Individuals with All-Access passes and Media passes from the Athletics Department are not automatically included on the President's reception invitation list. President LaForge asked Cabinet members to send any inquiries about inclusion on the guest list to Ms. Cole.
- Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet Members of Governor Bryant's announcement of an additional budget cut for the fiscal year to correct an accounting error. Mr. Rutledge stated each state agency will receive approximately a 1% cut, which equates to an estimated \$185,000 for Delta State. This cut will take place in November. Due to our increase in enrollment and budget savings, the university will be able to address the cut from the State without having to alter departmental budgets.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the week's activities. The Student Government Association will host a Meet and Greet for Dr. Bennett on Tuesday afternoon from 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. in the Union to give all students a chance to come by and meet Delta State's newest Vice President. The Levitt AMP Music Series will continue on Tuesday evening with Chambless and Muse beginning at 7:30 p.m. on the green space in downtown Cleveland. The BPAC has its first Main Stage performance Thursday evening with Travis Tritt and Luke Combs. A pre-show dinner beginning at 5:30 p.m. will be available in the Sculpture Garden, and the show begins at 7:30 p.m. President LaForge will travel to Cleveland, OH on Friday for the Federal Bar Association Convention.
- President LaForge reminded Cabinet Members of the Colloquia Lecture Series on Tuesday, September 20 with Judge Gustavo Gelpi. Judge Gelpi will arrive on campus on Monday for two days of tours, classes, and his speech.
- Dr. Roberts announced the Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce Annual Banquet is on Monday, September 26 with a reception at 5:30 p.m. and the dinner at 6:30 p.m. with special guest speaker, Mr. Samuel Jones. If any Cabinet Members would like to attend, Dr. Roberts asked them to contact Ms. Cole.
- President LaForge announced the Mississippi Association of Colleges Conferences will be held October 10-11 at Copiah Lincoln Community College. Due to low registration for the event, the President of Copiah-Lincoln Community College has asked for help in increasing attendance. Dr. Roberts will send an email to Cabinet Members with details of the conference.

### **CABINET TOPIC**

#### **Mississippi Flag..... President LaForge**

President LaForge said the discussions surrounding the Mississippi flag have grown due to recent actions of two of our sister institutions to take down the flag, which has put a spotlight on Delta State being the last public university to fly the flag. President LaForge referenced the Campus Update he sent last week on this issue, which spells out the process that will be followed to engage the campus in an important dialogue that deserves the attention and consideration of the entire university community. He has asked the leaders of Faculty Senate, Administrative Staff Council, and Student Government

Association to give thought to this matter. President LaForge feels confident it is best not to rush this decision. After careful examination, President LaForge and Cabinet Members will make a decision. President LaForge shared with Cabinet the 33 responses he has received related to the flag: two to keep the flag, 27 to remove the flag, and three miscellaneous responses. Twenty-one of the responses to remove the flag were part of a writing campaign from individuals not associated with Delta State. President LaForge reiterated the point that Delta State's decision will not be grounded in a social media or email campaign. President LaForge asked Ms. Parker, Ms. Rocconi, and Dr. Jurgenson to give a summation of the opinions/responses they received from their constituency groups.

Student body - Ms. Brown stated the general consensus via word of mouth is that students do not understand why the university has not taken down the flag. Also, several students are very passionate about the flag being taken down. A survey was provided to students to give their opinion on the flag, and the results will be presented at the next Cabinet meeting.

Administrative Staff Council - Ms. Rocconi received 119 responses from staff: 44 were in favor of taking down the flag, 71 were in favor of leaving the flag up, and four responses were indifferent. She stated several staff members feel the university is mandated by the state to fly the flag. Also, several staff members feel the university does not need to support something that is divisive.

Faculty Senate - Dr. Jurgenson stated that Faculty Senate voted in favor of taking the flag down with a vote of ten to four with two abstentions. He felt that many senators did not want to voice their opinion in the meeting.

President LaForge addressed the misconception of state institutions being mandated to fly the Mississippi flag. He said only public schools are required to fly the state flag. President LaForge asked for additional input from Cabinet Members. Mr. Rutledge received an email from an African-American employee stating that he felt by leaving the flag up it caused the needed conversation regarding diversity to continue. Dr. Roberts spoke to an IHL Board member, and they expressed their appreciation for Delta State's thoughtfulness in this matter. The Board member feels it should be the Governor and state leadership to make the decision on what needs to happen with the state flag. This person also said the plan is to replace the Mississippi flag in 2017 with a flag commemorating Mississippi's bicentennial. There is also discussion about reworking the commemorative flag to be the new state flag. Dr. McAdams stated there are several sides and arguments surrounding this issue and he feels by continuing to fly the flag it could show our approval of what it stands for. President LaForge stated that another round of discussions will take place at the next Cabinet meeting in order to get additional input from students, our Alumni Association, and members of our Foundation Board.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Action**

#### **Scholarship Protocols .....Dr. Bennett**

Dr. Bennett created a committee to develop scholarship protocols in order to have a better grasp on the awarding of scholarships. She shared with Cabinet members the "Proposed Scholarship Protocols" report. One aspect of the proposed protocols is the need for more competitive scholarships in order to attract high achieving students. Also, other universities offer their scholarships to prospective students in the fall semester. Delta State needs to offer scholarships earlier and establish a deadline for informing the Director of Financial Aid of the scholarships awarded by December 1. Dr. Roberts

mentioned the need to specify in the fourth protocol that the “room and board expenses” apply to on-campus occupancy only.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. Bennett to approve the Scholarship Protocols and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. **The motion was approved.**

**Revised Policy: Undergraduate Admission Requirements (first reading) .....Dr. McAdams**

Dr. McAdams brought to Cabinet the revised “Undergraduate Admission Requirements” policy, following approval of Academic Council. Dr. McAdams informed Cabinet Members the changes to the first four pages are changes established by the Board of Trustees of Mississippi’s Institutions of Higher Learning for all public universities. Our Enrollment Management office made an additional change to the policy on page five by including the application fee as part of the admissions process. The application fee is not a new addition to the admissions process, but the staff in Enrollment Management thought it would be beneficial to include it in the policy. Dr. Jurgenson posed a question about the waiving of the Admissions application fee. Dr. McAdams stated the practice used by Enrollment Management is to waive the application fee if the student can provide proof of a waiver of the ACT fee.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the revised “Undergraduate Admission Requirements” policy for a first reading and seconded by Dr. Jurgenson. **The motion was approved.**

**Non-Resident Tuition Waiver ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge brought to Cabinet two reports regarding the non-resident tuition waiver, one for the IHL System and one for Delta State. Since its approval by IHL, the non-resident tuition waiver has resulted in additional revenue at Delta State of approximately \$1.1 million in gross tuition and \$600,000 in net room and board. Also, Delta State has experienced an increase of 88 out-of-state students since 2014. Mr. Rutledge believes more non-resident students are attending Delta State because of the tuition waiver, but we do not know this for a fact.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to continue the Non-Resident Tuition Waiver policy, and to review the effectiveness of the waiver every two years and seconded by Dr. Bennett. **The motion was approved.**

**Discussion**

**Anniversary of September Tragedy ..... President LaForge**

President LaForge informed Cabinet Members of the Executive Committee’s stance on not hosting an event for the anniversary of the September tragedy. President LaForge asked Dr. Jurgenson and Ms. Rocconi to share the opinions of their respective constituency groups on this issue. Dr. Jurgenson stated Faculty Senate was in favor of lowering the DSU flag to half-mast and chiming the bells, based on the time the tragedy occurred last year. Ms. Rocconi said that the Administrative Staff Council was in favor of having a moment of silence, lowering the DSU flag to half-mast, and chiming the bells. Also, the Administrative Staff Council agrees this should be the only year that this event is formally acknowledged. Dr. Roberts will convey this information to Communications and Marketing and Dr. Bennett will communicate with the Police Department and Housing and Residence Life.

**Motion:** Moved by Ms. Rocconi to change this discussion item to an action item and seconded by Dr. Jurgenson. **This motion was approved.**

**Motion:** Moved by Ms. Rocconi to lower the DSU flag to half-mast and chime the bells at 10:18 a.m. and seconded by Dr. Roberts. **This motion was approved.**

**Enrollment Report.....Dr. McAdams**

Dr. McAdams stated enrollment, as of Friday, September 9, was 3,588 students. This number shows an increase of 128 more students than the final number submitted to the Institutions of Higher Learning last fall. President LaForge told Cabinet Members that the IHL Commissioner and the Board of Trustees are very pleased with Delta State’s efforts in recruitment. President LaForge thanked Dr. McAdams for his role in the increase in enrollment and retention and all Cabinet Members for their efforts. President LaForge stated the university is bolstering its recruitment efforts this year with increased marketing and focusing on key areas to recruit top-notch students.

**Other Discussion**

- President LaForge encouraged Cabinet Members to participate in Delta State’s 91<sup>st</sup> Anniversary celebration on Thursday at the Alumni Brick Plaza and to invite their spheres of influence.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- DSU’s 91<sup>st</sup> anniversary celebration, September 15, 12:00 noon, Ward Hall, Brick Plaza
- BPAC Performance: Travis Tritt, with special guest Luke Combs, September 15, 7:30 pm
- Colloquia Lecture Series, Judge Gustavo Gelpi, September 20, 6:00 pm, Jobe Auditorium
- Pig Pickin’, September 23-24
- DSU vs. Shorter University, September 24, 6:00 pm (Wear Green), Reception – 5:30 pm
- Homecoming, October 14-15
- Colloquia Lecture Series, Congressman Bennie Thompson, November 9, 6:00 pm, Jobe Auditorium

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, September 19 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – SGA Plans for the Year (Ms. Allie Rose Parker)

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.