

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: September 26, 2016

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

Members not in attendance: None

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on September 26, 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 September 19, 2016.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge said the first Colloquium of the semester with Judge Gustavo Gelpi was successful. He felt Judge Gelpi was well received, and said the Judge enjoyed his visit.
- President LaForge and other DSU personnel hosted a meeting of representatives from Mississippi State University to discuss the notion of a local government leadership training program. President LaForge stated MSU will help with the tutorials on training local administrators, clerks, mayors, etc. Along with MSU, President LaForge stated he is also considering Mississippi Valley State University as a partner for this venture. The Robert M. Hearin Support Foundation has agreed to consider a proposal for funding for this project. President LaForge stated a pre-proposal will be submitted to them prior to November 15, and a full proposal will be submitted in the new year.
- Dr. Roberts gave an update on the meetings DSU personnel had with Teach For America officials last week. Dr. Roberts stated the CEO and COO of TFA's national team were in Cleveland to meet with TFA Delta Region officials to learn more about the work in the Delta. The TFA Delta Region is reimagining their programming and how the Delta Institute is organized. Dr. Roberts said the meetings allowed us to show our continued support for our partnership with TFA. They also discussed the possibility of expanding the Delta Institute to include other regions. Delta State would be the first regional institute to include more than one region. Dr. Roberts stated everything looks very positive.
- President LaForge, Ms. Rocconi, and Ms. Caitlyn Thompson visited Jackson Academy last week in our ongoing effort to create a pipeline into the Jackson area. Delta State alumnus and former headmaster, Mr. Peter Jernberg, made the visit very hospitable. President LaForge stated several students at JA are already interested in Delta State with regards to our Delta Music Institute and aviation programs.
- President LaForge and Dr. Roberts met with five legislators last week regarding the state flag. These local legislators asked President LaForge to take down the state flag because they feel it is a barrier to progress. President LaForge explained to them that Delta State is handling the state flag situation

differently than our sister institutions, and our process will be deliberate and thoughtful. President LaForge said the state legislature has left the university in an untenable situation due to ignoring the issue at hand. The legislators were very supportive of the stance Delta State is taking. Dr. Roberts stated she thought it was a great conversation, and our stance was well received.

- President LaForge said Pig Pickin’ was a success. He asked Mr. Fulcher to give an update of the weekend’s events. Mr. Fulcher stated this Pig Pickin’ was one of the best ones yet. The crowd and atmosphere were unmatched. One issue for his staff in the past was the need for more servers for the serving lines and having someone available to sell tickets and t-shirts. This year the serving lines included pre-packed lunches, which made for smoother service. He stated he was pleased with the turn out for tailgating, as well. President LaForge asked Dr. McAdams to give an update on DSU Day. Dr. McAdams said the day was full of energy and large crowds, and Delta State’s hospitality was at its best. Both faculty and staff were in attendance to help with the academic fair. He stated 171 prospective students participated in DSU Day this year—55 more students than last year. He believes this trend will continue, which will lead to a larger crowd next year. President LaForge asked Mr. Mayers to give an update on athletics. Mr. Mayers stated it was a great weekend for athletics with two days of double-header soccer games, the first swim meet, and the football team win against Shorter College with a stadium full of fans.
- President LaForge and Dr. Roberts met with the newly-installed State Representative for District 29, Mr. Abe Hudson, to talk about various issues and opportunities at Delta State, such as budget cuts, enrollment, retention, and facility projects. Dr. Roberts stated Representative Hudson is very eager, and wants to help Delta State as much as he can.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the week’s activities. The Chamber Annual Banquet is tonight at the Cleveland Country Club, and Delta State will have two tables at the event. On Tuesday, President LaForge will be interviewed by Levitt AMP officials for a promotional video, he will receive an update on the Race Conference from Dr. Temika Simmons, and he will host Judge Linda Coleman as the guest lecturer for his Leadership Class. On Wednesday, President LaForge will visit Madison County with Ms. Rocconi and Ms. Caitlyn Thompson for a recruiting visit to Canton Academy and St. Joseph Catholic School. The Annual Faculty Art Exhibition opens on Thursday with the opening reception beginning at 5:00 p.m. in the Fielding Wright Art Gallery. The President’s football reception begins at 5:30 p.m. and the kickoff against Mississippi College is at 6:00 p.m. GSC Commissioner Matt Wilson and Mississippi College President Lee Royce and his wife will be in attendance. Delta State’s Foundation Board will host their quarterly meeting on Friday. Mr. Fulcher stated Cabinet members are welcome to attend the luncheon that begins at 12:30 p.m. The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi is hosting an event at GRAMMY Museum® Mississippi on Friday called “Delta Conversation with Tom Brokaw,” and tickets are available for purchase. The International Conference on the Blues begins on Sunday with an event at Dockery Farms and continues on Monday and Tuesday.

CABINET TOPIC

Hotel/Housing Proposal..... President LaForge

President LaForge provided Cabinet Members with an update on the status of the hotel and housing development proposal. The land in question for the hotel and housing development is the area north of the Kent Wyatt Hall parking lot as well as the golf course. Currently, the golf course is underutilized, with only 24 community users, who pay \$600 a year in dues, and five Senior users, who pay \$450 a year in dues. The golf course is not generating a profit, and would need 222 new members in order for it to break even. Students are allowed to play any time because the fees are included in the student activity fee. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet Members he has not seen the golf course generate a profit in the seven years he has worked at Delta State. He said he spoke with officials at other universities

with golf courses, and they are experiencing the same situation. If the golf course was updated and developed, it would need to benefit the university and generate a profit.

President LaForge stated the hotel proposal and housing development could improve the property values in the area and as well as public impressions of the City of Cleveland. The developers interested in the property initially proposed a hotel with a conference center, bar, and restaurant. The hotel and conference center would benefit Delta State greatly and provide additional lodging and much-needed meeting spaces. This venture would provide jobs, new facilities, and help with the hospitality/welcoming attitude Delta State has adopted. One of the biggest advantages for this venture is it wouldn't cost the university any money, and we would have input in the development of the property. The university faces three hurdles before any project can begin: (1) the Board of Trustees of Institutions of Higher Learning approval to lease public land to an outside developer, (2) legislative approval for the lease of land, and (3) a competitive and successful RFP bid process.

President LaForge confirmed there are two other hotel projects underway in Cleveland. After meeting with representatives attached to both projects, President LaForge said he does not believe our project is in a competitive market with the other projects. One hotel will be located downtown where the old Perry Pawn Shop was located and will have ninety-rooms. This property is being built to support downtown shopping and dining. This property has local investors tied to it, and they have zero interest in any other lodging projects. The start date for construction of this hotel is not known. The second hotel project is being built by Mr. Dinesh Chawla, who owns other hotels in Cleveland. This project will have more than 100 rooms with a three-tier pricing structure. This hotel will offer amenities such as conference spaces, two restaurants, a bar, and a lake. Mr. Chawla wants this hotel to be a part of the destination circuit. Construction on this project has begun, and the plan is to open by Labor Day 2017. He is supportive of Delta State's project, but suggested fewer rooms. He thinks the mix of housing and hotel was a good combination. President LaForge said he received a copy of the Lodging Market analysis the Chamber of Commerce conducted in 2014. Cleveland has a total of 460 rooms available in local hotels, with December and January being the slowest months. The busiest months are July and October with 68% occupancy rates during those times. Most other months have a 60% occupancy rate. The study recognized a need for lodging in walking distance of downtown to increase Cleveland as a destination location.

President LaForge stated there would be challenges if Delta State proceeds with the hotel/housing project, such as: drainage issues with the City of Cleveland, payment of taxes for a commercial entity on university property, perceived competition with the other hotels, and loss of the golf course. There was consensus among Cabinet Members that action needs to be taken to find a solution to reverse our money loss from the golf course. Several Cabinet members liked the idea of a housing development for students, graduate students, students with families, and retirees/alumni. Mr. Mayers offered the suggestion of building the hotel behind the baseball field, stating there would be plenty of parking, and drainage wouldn't be an issue. Overall, there was a consensus to move forward with the project.

BUSINESS

Action

None

Discussion

Capital Campaign.....Mr. Fulcher

Mr. Fulcher brought to Cabinet an update on the progress of the planning phases of the Capital Campaign. The Foundation has hired Alexander Haas as the campaign consultant to conduct our feasibility study. This group is based out of Atlanta, GA, and is one of the nation’s leading fundraising consulting firms. They are very eager to begin, and have sent to Foundation staff a document requesting organizational charts, campus master plans, financial statements, past fundraising data, Board member giving history, etc. by October 7 to help them with their study. The firm has indicated to Mr. Fulcher the importance of the next step in the campaign, which is the case summary. The case summary is a three- to four-page document highlighting the key themes and/or priorities of the university. The Foundation will write the case summary with help from Alexander Haas regarding clarity and appropriate language. By November 1, the case summary will be finalized and approved by the university. The case summary will be presented to the top 20-30 donors to see if our priorities match their philanthropic priorities. Mr. Fulcher stated the Capital Campaign is on track, and the consulting firm will present their final report to the Foundation Board on April 7.

Other Discussion

- Ms. Parker informed Cabinet Members the Homecoming elections end on Wednesday. She will bring to Cabinet on Monday the results of the state flag referendum.
- Mr. Mayers informed Cabinet Members of a survey Institutional Research conducted with students to inquire about other sports interests for the university. He stated the biggest interest was women’s volleyball.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- DSU vs. Mississippi College, September 29, 6:00 pm (Wear White), Reception – 5:30 pm
- International Conference on the Blues, October 2-4
- The Avett Brothers, BPAC, 7:30 pm
- Kent Wyatt Lecture Series, October 10, 12:00 noon, Jacob Conference Center
- Homecoming, October 14-15
- DSU vs. Univ. of W. Florida, October 15, 4:00 pm (Wear Green), Reception – 3:30 pm
- Mavis Staples and the Blind Boys of Alabama, BPAC, October 20, 7:30 pm
- DSU vs. Univ. of N. Alabama, October 29, 2:00 pm (Wear White), Reception – 1:30 pm
- Colloquia Lecture Series, Congressman Bennie Thompson, November 9, 6:00 pm, Jobe Auditorium

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, October 3 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – Visioning Process Implementation (President LaForge)

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:41 p.m.