

# DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S CABINET

### *Minutes*

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**Meeting date: April 15, 2019**

**Members in attendance:** President William LaForge, Dr. Vernell Bennett, Dr. Severine Groh, Mr. Charlie King, Dr. Charles McAdams, Dr. Billy Moore, Mr. Rick Munroe, Dr. Christy Riddle, Dr. Michelle Roberts, and Mr. Jamie Rutledge (recorder – Ms. Claire Cole)

**Members not in attendance:** Mr. Mike Kinnison

**Guests:** Ms. Tricia Killebrew, Chair-Elect, Administrative Staff Council  
Dr. Beverly Moon, Dean, Graduate and Continuing Studies  
Ms. Elizabeth Swindle, President, Student Government Association

**Call to Order:** A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on April 15, 2019. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

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

On motion by Mr. Rutledge and seconded by Mr. King, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on April 10, 2019.

#### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- President LaForge welcomed Dr. Beverly Moon, the incoming Academic Council representative, Ms. Tricia Killebrew, chair-elect for the Administrative Staff Council, and Ms. Elizabeth Swindle, the newly elected SGA President to Cabinet as they begin shadowing their outgoing counterparts on the President's Cabinet.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the last week. President LaForge met with Bayou Academy's new Head of School, Mr. Curt McCain last week. He expressed he plans to collaborate with Delta State on many projects. President LaForge and Dr. Bennett held a Town Hall meeting with members of the National Pan-Hellenic Council last week as a way to convey support for the organizations and their recruitment efforts. Dr. Bennett gave an overview of Student Affairs' activities last week. She informed Cabinet members Spring Preview Day garnered 80 students and their guests. The Office of Admissions did a wonderful job in restructuring the program and experience for the potential students. The first annual OkraFest went very well with 543 attendees, and Dr. Bennett commended SGA for the work they did in providing this experience to students. President LaForge hosted his semiannual Graduating International Student Reception last Thursday. The Bolivar County Alumni Crawfish Boil had several hundred attendees, and Mr. Munroe stated it was a great event. President LaForge welcomed guests to campus for the Sammy O. Cranford Memorial History Lecture and the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual F. E. Woodall Conference. President LaForge met with Mr. and Mrs. Bill Arnold last week. President LaForge stated Go Green Weekend events were a success including the screening of

the Coach Wade documentary by Matteo and Elisabetta Zengaro and the renaming of the Aquatics Center in honor of Dr. Ronnie Mayers.

- In the absence of Coach Kinnison, President LaForge gave an update on Athletics. The baseball team won both of their games against the University of West Alabama yesterday. The softball team lost both of their games to the University of West Alabama. Both teams honored their senior players yesterday during their respective senior days. Both teams are finishing their series today.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on facilities projects. Mr. Rutledge introduced Interim Director of Facilities Management, Mr. Gerald Finley, to the staff of Facilities Management this morning. The lighting project continues with Bailey Hall; this project saves the university on utilities. Facilities Management will begin renovations to the Odealier Morgan Laundry soon for the new DMI and Art Department digital lab. Another project Facilities Management is working on is updating Hill Apartments for instructors in the Department of Commercial Aviation The MDOT grant project to replace sidewalks and ramps on campus will begin this summer. Bids for the Walter Sillers Coliseum project will open on May 7 with work commencing late June. Sodexo, the new food service company, will take over operations on June 1. Mr. Rutledge has a walk-through of the golf course with four interested developers tomorrow. A contract for the President’s home was created, and Mr. Rutledge hopes to have it in hand within the next few days.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet Members some of the meetings and events planned for the week. President LaForge and Dr. Bennett continue their Town Hall meetings with the Panhellenic Council tonight. The Presidential Forums for faculty, staff, and students occur tomorrow. President LaForge travels to Jackson on Wednesday for the IHL Finance Committee meeting and the IHL Board meeting on Thursday. The university is closed on Friday for Good Friday.

**CABINET TOPIC**

**Business Card Template.....Mr. Munroe**

Mr. Munroe shared with Cabinet members the revised business card template. The card features a horizontal design allowing additional room for information. Employees can choose between three options for the back of the card: blank, the elevator speech, or a picture of the Quadrangle.

**BUSINESS**

**Action**

**Hiring Requests ..... Cabinet Members**

In response to the Cabinet’s decision that all requests to search for and fill vacant positions will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Cabinet, Dr. Bennett brought to Cabinet a position approved for consideration by the Executive Committee. The position presented does not impact the salary savings identified previously to address the budget shortfall.

**Ratification of Requests**

Motion: Moved by Dr. Bennett to ratify and affirm the following action taken by the Executive Committee, on behalf of the Cabinet, since Cabinet last met on April 10, 2019 and seconded by Dr. Roberts. The motion was approved.

- April 12, 2019 – Request from Dr. Bennett for approval to search for and hire an Admissions Recruiter for the Office of Admissions.

**Discussion**

**Admissions Update.....Dr. Bennett**

Dr. Bennett shared with Cabinet members an Admissions update. At this time last year, 50 transfer students and 400 freshmen were admitted for Fall 2018. Currently, 305 transfers and 787 freshmen are admitted for Fall 2019. 815 admitted freshmen are needed to make the Office of Admissions hard goal. Dr. Bennett stated Mr. Merritt Dain and his staff had a hard goal of 300 new first-time, full-time freshmen for Fall 2019, and their soft goal is 500 students. The Office of Admissions staff is working diligently to recruit potential students, but Dr. Bennett stated the new staff is playing catchup as they weren't here during peak recruiting season. Dr. Bennett believes there will be a decline in transfer students for the fall as our Phi Theta Kappa scholarship was cut 66%.

**Budget Update ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members the FY19 budget had to be reduced by \$1.4 million due to a decrease in expected tuition, and the university overspent \$1.2 million in scholarships. Last fall, the university had \$2.4 million in deficits to overcome by freezing positions and cutting spending. For the FY20 budget planning process, the university had to find a way to reduce the budget by \$1.2 million, and this included cutting scholarships. The FY20 budget will have an increase due to a State mandated increase to PERS and health insurance paid by the university; however, the State funded this increase through State appropriations. The university received \$7.3 million in bond funds and \$600,000 in R&R funds for our building projects. Mr. Rutledge stated Phase III of the budget planning process has begun. The budget spreadsheets were sent to the vice presidents last week for distribution to their direct reports. Mr. Rutledge stated totals cannot be increased, but line item totals can be adjusted.

**Bond Funds for Facility Projects ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge attended a bid opening for the roofing project last week, and the bids came in over the bid price. Due to state laws, the university has to decline the bids and rebid. Mr. Rutledge wants to rearrange the bond funds to increase the roofing project to \$1.5 million instead of \$1 million. By rebidding the project, it will extend the project by several months. Mr. Rutledge was hopeful the Walter Sillers Coliseum project would not use the entire \$2.5 million allotted to its renovations in order to move it to the roofing and HVAC projects, but he has heard from the Bureau of Buildings it undoubtedly will. Mr. Rutledge would like to use the remaining \$1 million to purchase dectron units for the Aquatics Center and complete all HVAC projects in FY20. If the units are not purchased, the Aquatics Center would be shut down. EC is working on the bond fund priorities for next year; Mr. Rutledge will present these priorities to Cabinet next week.

**Presidential Forums..... Dr. Roberts**

Dr. Roberts reminded Cabinet Members of the Presidential Forums occurring tomorrow, April 16, and she distributed a handout detailing the topics to be discussed at the forums. The first forum for staff members begins at 10:00 a.m.; the student forum begins at 12:15 p.m.; and, the faculty forum begins at 3:00 p.m. A representative from Staff Council, SGA, and Faculty Senate will serve as the moderator for their respective forums and will introduce the panel and field questions from the audience.

**Additional information**

- Mr. King announced the SGA Induction ceremony will be on Friday, April 26 at 5:00 p.m. The location is to be determined.
- Dr. Riddle informed Cabinet members the deadline to nominate a staff member for the H. L. Nowell Outstanding Support Staff Award is today.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- Presidential Forums, April 16 (Staff-10:00am, Students-12:15pm, Faculty-3:00pm)
- Easter Holiday, April 19
- 38 Special performance, April 25, 7:30 p.m., BPAC
- Retirement and Service Awards Ceremony, April 26, 2:00 p.m., Union
- Spring Exams, April 29-May 2
- Spring Commencement, May 3, 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., BPAC

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, April 22 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – Ways to increase participation/involvement/contributions of/from black community members and black alumni (President LaForge)

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m.