

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: August 17, 2020

Members in attendance: President William LaForge (via Zoom), Dr. Vernell Bennett-Fairs (via Zoom), Chief Jeffrey Johns (via Zoom), Mr. Mike Kinnison (via Zoom), Dr. Charles McAdams (via Zoom), Dr. Michelle Roberts (via Zoom), Mr. Jamie Rutledge (via Zoom), Mr. Jeff Slagell (via Zoom), Dr. Jonathan Westfall (via Zoom), and Mr. Richard Word (via Zoom) (recorder – Ms. Claire Cole)

Members not in attendance: Mr. Rick Munroe

Guest: Ms. Robin Douglas, COVID-19 Response Coordinator

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom conference call on August 17, 2020. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Mr. Rutledge and seconded by Dr. Westfall, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on August 10, 2020.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the last week. The GSC Board of Directors met to discuss the Fall sports schedule and decide upon postponing or cancelling Fall sports. The Board of Directors decided to postpone football, soccer, and volleyball until the Spring, and continue golf and cross country as planned. President LaForge participated in the virtual DMI Annual Retreat for their faculty and staff. He also participated in the Cleveland Music Foundation's Quarterly meeting, which was held via Zoom. Delta State's virtual Convocation and President LaForge's State of the University Address aired last week. Due to some technical glitches, Dr. Edwin Craft will send a link to all faculty and staff today to give them another opportunity to view the virtual Convocation and President LaForge's State of the University address. Dr. McAdams thanked all individuals who participated in creating the virtual Convocation. Dr. Bennett-Fairs stated all three Move In Days ran smoothly, and 617 students have moved in to the residence halls thus far.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The Athletics Department will have several meetings throughout the week for their student-athletes, including introductory meetings by the coaching staff and meetings on compliance and code of conduct.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The demolition portion for the HVAC project at Mayers Aquatics Center started. The contractor plans to remove one Dectron unit and replace it prior to removing the other Dectron unit. Mr. Rutledge has a meeting with the architect and the Bureau of Buildings this week to discuss the elevator project, and the project will be released for

bids next week. The roofing project for the residence halls will be released for bids in January. Facilities Management staff continue to prepare campus for the students' arrivals and their class meetings this week. Dr. Westfall and Mr. Kinnison shared concerns with the James M. Ewing Hall's roof and Walter Sillers Coliseum HVAC system, respectively. Mr. Rutledge will work with Facilities Management and architects to address the problems.

- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge participated in a conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and the other Institutional Executive Officers this morning. In addition to their discussion on COVID-19 related issues, two additional items were discussed—enrollment reporting and Spring calendars. Each university will not report on their enrollment figures until after IHL releases enrollment figures in November. Also, institutions can plan their Spring calendars at their own discretion. There will not be any limitations put forth by IHL. Day and night classes began today with students attending all classes virtually. Dr. Bennett-Fairs shared with Cabinet members the schedule for Welcome Week: Monday - virtual reality games in the Union and a firework show/ice cream social/Wendy's Frosty eating contest; Tuesday - drive-in movie; Wednesday - virtual organization fair and comedy show; Thursday - sip and paint event; and, Friday - grocery bingo and virtual Family Feud. Dr. Bennett-Fairs assured Cabinet members special attention was made to ensure all safety protocols will be met during all events. Human Resources offers its open enrollment Benefit Fair on Tuesday and Wednesday by appointment in the Janice Wyatt Conference Room. The IHL Board of Trustees meets on Thursday, and President LaForge will provide an update to them on the commercial development of the golf course.

CABINET TOPIC

COVID-19 Plans for Fall 2020President LaForge

President LaForge led Cabinet members in a discussion of the university's COVID-19 plans for Fall 2020. As mentioned earlier, President LaForge participated in a conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and all Institutional Executive Officers this morning to discuss COVID-19 related issues. All institutions reported smooth move in days over the weekend, and a few institutions are already seeing positive COVID-19 cases within their residence halls. State Health Officer Thomas Dobbs requested another virtual meeting with the IEOs, and he would like to include the mayor of each respective city where the university resides. Dr. Dobbs wants to ensure each university and their respective city are collaborating and cooperating with one another and to make sure their protocols are in sync. President LaForge sent our external COVID-19 Action Plan to Mayor Billy Nowell, County Administrator Will Hooker, and Mr. Judson Thigpen, Executive Director of the Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce. He also offered his assistance to ensure all entities harmonize our approaches during the pandemic. The IHL Board has not provided guidelines on a tipping point/threshold as to when an institution must move to online instruction and working remotely. President LaForge shared with Commissioner Rankins Delta State's threshold for action, and he reported Delta State would make decisions on a case-by-case basis. President LaForge shared with Cabinet members the breakdown of faculty, staff, and students opting to teach/work/learn remotely for the Fall semester: 35 full-time faculty members; five adjunct instructors; 45 staff members; and, 125 students. Coach Kinnison provided an update from the weekly GSC Athletic Directors meeting. As mentioned earlier, all fall sports were postponed until Spring except for cross country and golf. The two remaining Fall sports will have a delayed start to their season including the start of practice. The GSC continues to discuss Spring competition and what it will look like for each member institution. Basketball was postponed until the Spring with practices beginning on January 1 and competition beginning later in the month. It is unknown if basketball will have a full season. A full season depends upon the NCAA adjusting the postseason championship to a later date. Currently, Winter and Spring championships will continue as planned. Due to NCAA guidelines, each university has a tremendous financial burden ahead with regards to COVID-19

testing on top of the lost revenue from ticket sales. Many universities will need to rely on donations for additional revenue. The NCAA releases new updates each week on several items including recruiting, the 50% rule, eligibility, and scholarship. Quiet recruiting, based solely on campus, will cease on September 1 which will allow coaches and their staff better opportunities to recruit for their individual teams. Our Athletics Department and others around the country are experiencing students opting out for the year due to COVID-19. The NCAA allows student-athletes to opt out for any reason related to COVID-19 and keep their scholarship. This disrupts player development and improvement. Also, our international student-athletes are experiencing trouble receiving their visa permits. Ms. Douglas provided Cabinet members with an update on several items related to her efforts as the COVID-19 Response Coordinator. She hired 27 point-of-entry screeners, which are paid through the Mississippi Department of Economic Services. The time slots for the point-of-entry screeners are 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for the morning and 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. for the evening. She still has unfilled time slots for the evening. A few department chairs have requested their Work Study students or Regular Student Employees screen for their area during their allotted work schedule. Ms. Douglas approves of this request as long as the student attends screener training. With regards to the Healthcare Specialist position, Ms. Douglas has had a hard time finding an individual willing to work full-time; however, she has four nurses interested in working part-time. A decision has not been made on whether a rotating group of individuals will suffice for the university's needs in this area. A plan for transporting students to the Cleveland Medical Clinic for COVID-19 testing will be complete this week. Ms. Douglas reviewed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protocols about transportation, and she will implement the plan for transporters to wear masks, practice social distancing, and disinfect before and after transportation. The Office of Student Life will provide transportation to students during business hours, and the Office of Housing and Residence Life will provide transportation to students after hours. In an effort to keep all data about COVID-19 in one place, OIT created a database that, once complete, will be fed from the online assessment form. This database will help with tracking dates, contact tracing, etc. Human Resources and the Office of Student Life have been provided with the links to the database to begin inserting all new, as well as past, data. Ms. Douglas hopes to provide Cabinet members each Monday with a detailed report of the prior week's activity. President LaForge received an open letter from faculty members expressing their concern over the university returning to face-to-face instruction. He was thankful for the faculty members' concerns, perspectives, and suggestions. In his response letter, President LaForge hopes to mitigate some of the faculty members' concerns by sharing the university's protocols and plans and the thought processes leading to those. Upon completing the response, President LaForge will share it with Cabinet members. Dr. Bennett-Fairs was tagged in a social media post in which students were sharing their frustrations on incurring online course fees. The online course fees in question were placed on the students' accounts when the course was changed in Banner from face-to-face to online due to a faculty member opting to teach remotely. Cabinet members discussed the online courses fees and decided students should not be charged fees for courses taught by faculty members who opted to teach remotely after the student registered for the course. Mr. Rutledge and Dr. McAdams provided Student Business Services the list of courses to begin the reversal of the online course fees. Mr. Rutledge received another request for State CARES Act funds. Mr. Kinnison requested \$176,450 to cover the cost of COVID-19 testing for student-athletes, which is required by the NCAA. Also, Mr. Rutledge would like to earmark \$100,000 for additional quarantine space. Cabinet members approved both requests for State CARES Act funds. This leaves a balance of \$147,302 in the State CARES Act budget. Dr. Bennett-Fairs informed Cabinet members nine units of Hill Apartments are complete for use as quarantine/isolation units for students. Currently, six are occupied. Mr. Rutledge stated that 15 units will be completed by the end of day today, and the remaining units should be complete by end of week. Dr. McAdams reported the College of Education and Human Sciences will open the Fitness Center, Mayers Aquatics Center, and Wyatt Center. The protocols for these areas were

approved by the Executive Committee, and were sent to students last week to provide them with the guidelines for using each facility. The protocols will be posted at each facility for all to see, as well.

BUSINESS

Action

Online Course Fees for StudentsPresident LaForge

Dr. Bennett-Fairs recommended reversing the online course fees incurred by students enrolled in courses taught by faculty members who opted to teach remotely.

Motion: Moved by Dr. Bennett-Fairs to reverse the online course fees incurred by students who registered for a face-to-face course, but were moved to online due to the faculty member changing the delivery method after the student had registered and seconded by Mr. Word. The motion was approved.

State CARES Act funds request.....President LaForge

Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members two requests for State CARES Act funds. First, Mr. Kinnison requested \$176,450 to cover the cost of COVID-19 testing for student-athletes, which is required by the NCAA. Second, Mr. Rutledge would like to earmark \$100,000 for additional quarantine space.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve both requests for State CARES Act funds and seconded by Chief Johns. The motion was approved.

Discussion

Enrollment Update Dr. Bennett-Fairs/Dr. McAdams

Dr. Bennett-Fairs provided Cabinet members with an update on enrollment. Currently, 486 students are registered for their Fall courses (198 first-time freshmen and 288 first-time transfer students), and 108 students need to be enrolled in their Fall courses. Of the 108 students needing to enroll in their Fall courses, 74 of the students still plan to attend the university and are waiting on advisors to help register them for their courses. Dr. McAdams shared the current graduate student enrollment stands at 712, which is 54 students more than this time last year.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

The FY21 Annual Operating Budget, approved by Cabinet, will be recommended for approval to the IHL Board of Trustees this week. IHL CFO, Mr. John Pearce, will present each institutions budget along with the list of assumptions each respective university submitted during their budget planning process.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Day and night classes begin, August 17
- Welcome Week, August 17-21

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, August 24 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.