

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: August 31, 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), Mr. Rick Munroe (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: None

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 31, 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 Mr. Word, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on August 24, 2020.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge gifted Mr. Word with an Emerging Artist membership to GRAMMY Museum® Mississippi. President and Mrs. LaForge received this “gift membership” as part of their membership package, and they have decided to gift this to the SGA president each year.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the last week. He participated in the GSC Board of Director's meeting on Tuesday. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors participated in a Zoom meeting with VisionFirst to hear the new strategic plan for the Chamber. President LaForge had his first monthly meeting with Ms. Michelle Johansen in her new role as Coordinator of Diversity and Inclusion, and he has invited Ms. Johansen to a Cabinet meeting in October to discuss her plans for the year. The Greater Jackson Alumni Chapter met virtually last week. Mr. Munroe stated 27 alumni participated.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. Some athletic teams began their non-competition practice consisting of four hours of weight lifting and four hours of group activity per week. The football team will host a Unity Walk on Thursday at 3:30 p.m. to bring awareness to social injustice. The walk begins at Horace-McCool Stadium and ends at the H. L. Nowell Student Union. The Gulf South Conference Athletic Directors continue to meet weekly to discuss sports schedules and other issues related to COVID-19.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. A formal complaint was filed with the Bureau of Buildings and the architect of the Walter Sillers Coliseum renovation for the condensation on

the floor caused by the boiler. Young-Mauldin Cafeteria was featured in the *Mississippi Heritage Trust Magazine*. Repairs on a pool leak within the Mayers Aquatics Center are underway. The elevator project will be bid this week, and the project should begin in 45 days. The remaining six Hill Apartments being used for student quarantine purposes will receive new fire alarms by Thursday.

- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge participated in the weekly COVID-19 update conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and the other Institutional Executive Officers this morning. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce meets on Tuesday. The Labor Day holiday is Monday, September 7, and the next Cabinet meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 8 at 2:00 p.m.

CABINET TOPIC

COVID-19 Plans for Fall 2020 President 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 (IEO) this morning to discuss COVID-19 related issues. The conversation focused on the recent COVID-19 Isolation, Quarantine, and Outbreak Guidelines for Colleges and Universities provided by the Mississippi State Department of Health. Dr. Thomas Dobbs, State Health Officer, and Dr. Paul Byers, State Epidemiologist, visited Mississippi State University and the University of Mississippi last week, and they spoke with each university's COVID-19 response teams about the guidelines. After their visits, Dr. Dobbs and Dr. Byers agreed to review and modify the guidelines based upon their productive meetings at both universities. The IEOs expressed their desire to respond individually to the virus and not have a one-size-fits-all model to follow. The Institutional Executive Officers gave an update on COVID-19 cases on their respective campuses, and a few shared their experiences with increasing, unfounded criticism over their respective university's COVID-19 plans and protocols. The IHL Board of Trustees meets in September for their annual retreat. During this time, each Institutional Executive Office will present an update to the Board of Trustees on their university's COVID-19 cases and protocols. Last week, President LaForge participated in the GSC Board of Directors meeting. The conference awaits clarification on NCAA legislation related to Spring competition for Fall sports. President LaForge stated the Board of Directors relies heavily on the input of the GSC Athletic Directors when making decisions that impact the conference. Ms. Douglas provided Cabinet members with an update on several items related to her efforts as the COVID-19 Response Coordinator. She shared the current number of positive cases among faculty, staff, and students, and she reported on the number of students in quarantine and isolation. Dr. Edwin Craft and Ms. Douglas have worked together to create a COVID-19 Dashboard for the Delta State website. This dashboard will provide the status of student and employee cases, isolations, and quarantines. The dashboard will be updated daily by 9:00 a.m. The Student Health Center is open, and a Healthcare Specialist is now available to help with COVID-19 related issues. Ms. Douglas will work with Mr. Munroe on releasing information on the Student Health Center and Healthcare Specialist to the campus. Ms. Douglas shared with Cabinet members a few differences she found between Delta State's current protocols and the COVID-19 Isolation, Quarantine, and Outbreak Guidelines for Colleges and Universities provided by the Mississippi State Department of Health. Once the guidelines have been modified by Dr. Dobbs and Dr. Byers, Ms. Douglas will incorporate the guidelines into our current protocols. Ms. Douglas announced the travel protocols will be revised to allow university-affiliated, domestic travel upon Cabinet approval. All travel will need vice president approval. Currently, the Daily Symptom Checker delivers a "do not proceed to work" notice to employees if only one symptom is reported. With guidance from Dr. Steven Clark, Ms. Douglas is working with Dr. Craft to change the Daily Symptom Checker to deliver a "do not proceed to work" notice to employees if two or more symptoms are reported. Ms. Douglas recommended to Cabinet members a change in the protocols to include neck

gaiters as permissible forms of face coverings. She also suggested changing the protocol to include that face masks with vents are permissible forms of face coverings as long as the face mask includes a filter. Ms. Douglas stated there is still an issue with students contacting only their faculty members to report symptoms or a positive case, and they are failing to contact the Office of Student Life, as well. Ms. Douglas wants to do a big push on education for students to help them better understand the student protocols. As part of the student protocols, the Counseling Center contacts quarantined/isolated students to make them aware of the various counseling resources made available to them. The Counseling Center was not aware of this step, but Ms. Douglas has spoken to Ms. Kashanta Jackson to remedy this. The Counseling Center has begun making calls to offer their services to students. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members the Young-Mauldin Cafeteria will proceed with Phase II of re-opening on September 14. The next phase will allow up to 100 customers at a time to eat in the cafeteria during meal times. Customers can sit at tables of two or four, and the tables will be socially distanced from others. Once the 100 capacity is reached, customers are able to get their meals to go. All meals will be served—self-service is not available. Only students and employees are allowed in the dining hall. Phase II re-opening will be evaluated after two to three weeks to see if it is working. Seating in the food court in the Nowell Union will remain at two customers per table. Mr. Rutledge provided Cabinet members with an update on CARES Act funds provided by the State. Delta State received \$1,946,000 in CARES Act funds from the State, and only \$127,302 remains unobligated. Mr. Rutledge will provide an overview of the obligated funds and their balances at the next Cabinet meeting. As a reminder, State CARES Act funds must be obligated and the items must be received/signed for by December 30.

BUSINESS

Action

Travel Protocol revision President LaForge

Ms. Douglas presented to Cabinet members the revised travel protocols which allows university-affiliated, domestic travel with the approval of their supervisor and vice president.

Motion: Moved by Chief Johns to revise the travel protocols and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

FEMA Designation of Applicant Agent for Public Assistance Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members that he filed a claim with FEMA to help with damage costs resulting from a storm in February 2020. Delta State will receive \$250,000 from FEMA to help cover the costs, and these funds will be put back into the university's bond budget. A final step in the claim process involves Cabinet members approving Mr. Rutledge as the Applicant Agent and Mr. Gerald Finely, Director of Facilities Management, as the Certifying Official. As the designated Applicant Agent, Mr. Rutledge will be authorized to execute applications for the purpose of obtaining and administering certain federal financial assistance under the Disaster Relief Act of 1974 (Public Law 93.228), amended by Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988, (Public Law 100-707) and to file them with the Governor's Authorized Representative.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Munroe to approve Mr. Rutledge as the Applicant Agent and Mr. Finley as the Certifying Official and seconded by Chief Johns. The motion was approved.

Request to use Parker Field-McCool Stadium Mr. Kinnison

Mr. Kinnison received a request from Bayou Academy to use Parker Field-McCool Stadium for two of their

football games. Currently, K-12 schools in Mississippi are only allowed two guests per one player by order of Governor Tate Reeves. Bayou Academy would like to rent our stadium to allow a larger number of their fans to attend their football games. The Governor’s Executive Order No. 1519 addresses attendance at events held in college and university outdoor stadium, and the facility attendance policy for an event allows for 25% seating capacity. This attendance policy applies to any event held in the stadium whether by the college or university itself or another separate entity leasing. In addition to the 25% capacity limit, Executive Order No. 1519 also requires the college or university to follow the other limitations such as concession stands, social distancing, prohibition on tailgating, and importantly, the college or university must designate a Safety Officer with sufficient staff to ensure compliance with all requirements of Executive Order No. 1519. Cabinet members discussed the request and concerns regarding the university’s ability to ensure compliance, as well as issues regarding liability. Dr. Roberts stated that Governor Reeves had a press conference today to discuss increasing spectator requirements at K-12 sporting events. Mr. Kinnison decided to withhold a request for action so that he can discuss this request with the Executive Committee after the new requirements for K-12 sporting events are released.

Discussion

Enrollment Update Dr. Bennett-Fairs/Dr. McAdams

Dr. Bennett-Fairs provided Cabinet members with an update on enrollment. Currently, 484 new students are registered for their Fall courses. There were 43 new students who were released from their Fall courses due to the financial purge. The Office of Admissions staff has reached out to the 43 students to see what their needs are and to help the students re-enroll in their courses. Dr. Bennett-Fairs stated that Dual Enrollment has decreased this semester due to two changes: 1) a sub-test score of 20 or better in Math is required to take a dual credit course in a college-level math course, and 2) Delta State cannot accommodate schools on a nine-week academic schedule. Dr. McAdams reported 18 graduate students were purged from their Fall courses, and the Graduate Admissions staff are working with those students to help them re-enroll in their courses.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge reported that tuition revenue is currently down approximately 8-8.5%. This figure could change, and he is evaluating it every day. Mr. Rutledge and his staff review the university’s cash flow reports monthly, and the university has a better cash position from this time last year.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS:

- Dr. Bennett-Fairs announced the Okra Works program has 60 community partners, an increase of 29 more than last year.
- Dr. Roberts offered to share with Cabinet members the *Chronicle of Higher Education’s* annual Almanac report. She stated it is a great resource for data.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Labor Day holiday, September 7

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Tuesday, September 8 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:32 p.m.