

# DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S CABINET

### *Minutes*

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**Meeting date: December 2, 2019**

**Members in attendance:** President William LaForge, Dr. Vernell Bennett, Ms. Tricia Killebrew, Dr. Charles McAdams, Dr. Beverly Moon, Mr. Rick Munroe, Mr. Cetin Oguz, Mr. Jamie Rutledge, and Ms. Elizabeth Swindle (recorder – Ms. Claire Cole)

**Members not in attendance:** Mr. Mike Kinnison and Dr. Michelle Roberts

**Guests:** None

**Call to Order:** A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on December 2, 2019. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

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

On motion by Ms. Swindle and seconded by Mr. Rutledge, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on November 18, 2019.

#### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the past week. President LaForge and other university representatives met to discuss the Local Government Leadership Institute and reflect on the organization's purpose, mission, and the focus for the funds from grantors. The IHL Board of Trustees met last week at Mississippi Valley State University, and IHL staff member, Ms. Kim Gallaspy, met with Delta State's Alumni Advocacy Group after the meeting. She gave the group their charge for the upcoming legislative session, and she shared some of the agenda for the session. President LaForge and Ms. Heather Miller attended the Robert M. Hearin Foundation Beneficiaries meeting last week, and President LaForge shared Delta State will be able to submit a proposal for additional funding for the TFA Graduate program. President LaForge had a call with the Phi Theta Kappa National president to discuss Delta State's changes to Phi Theta Kappa scholarships. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce has undergone some reorganization, and it includes some restructured committees. President LaForge met with Mayor Billy Nowell, Dr. Ned Mitchell, and Dr. Kent Wyatt to discuss a committee that will liaise between the Chamber and Delta State. The committee would like to see more engagement from the university and more communication between the two organizations. At the beginning of the new year, President LaForge and Executive Committee members will meet with Mayor Nowell, Dr. Mitchell, and Dr. Wyatt to discuss the ways each vice president portfolio touches city relations.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The Walter Sillers Coliseum project is on schedule with the roof and HVAC system. The HVAC system installation will be complete this week. The third layer for the roof of Walter Sillers Coliseum will be complete in January. The roof for the Fielding Wright Art Gallery and Holcombe-Norwood Hall is on schedule again after a hiatus due to rain damage within the buildings. The roof on the Facilities Management Building began last week. The

relocation of the Student Success Center to Bailey Hall is on schedule, and the Center will be in Bailey Hall once students return from the holidays. The Broom hall lab will be completed in two weeks. MR. Rutledge sent five new projects to the Bureau of Buildings for approval last week including the preplanning for the Robert E. Smith School of Nursing addition, elevators, campus roofing, HVAC project, and residence halls. Golf course, confirmed by IHL – feasibility was approved, signing the contract yesterday.

- Mr. Rutledge gave an overview on the budget. The budget amendments approved by Cabinet, both temporary and permanent, have been uploaded into Banner. The budget decreased by \$3.2 million, and it is reflective of the university’s actual expenditures for the year. Prior to final approval of the Delta State’s budget plan, IHL has requested a Cash Flow report as well as requiring a CPA firm to approve our plan. Once approved, the plan will be brought to Cabinet. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the university’s cash position looks good, and it is better this year than this time last year.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet Members some of the meetings and events planned for the week. The Annual Christmas Tree lighting Ceremony occurs Tuesday at 3:00 p.m. in the Leroy E. Morganti Atrium, and the BPAC performance of A Charlie Brown Christmas Live occurs Tuesday evening. On Wednesday, President LaForge will visit the Communications and Marketing Department, and he will host the International Student Graduation Reception. University Advancement will host their Annual Retiree Christmas Party on Thursday.

#### **CABINET TOPIC**

#### **Free Speech on Campus ..... Drs. Bennett and McAdams**

Dr. Bennett and Dr. McAdams shared with Cabinet members the importance of free speech on campus, as well as, pertinent examples of free speech on university campuses. Dr. Bennett referenced the American Council of Trustees and Alumni’s guide for higher education called *Guarding the Freedom to Speak, Freedom to Hear* by Joyce Lee Malcolm. This guide describes the importance of free speech and the consequences campuses have had when denying it, and they offer solutions to help guide campuses when creating guidelines and protocols for free speech. Those who fear the free and open exchange of ideas that challenge their own have found many ways to impose their will and ideology on college campuses called a “heckler’s veto.” Another issue seen on university campuses is the act of disinvitations, which can diminish a university’s reputation. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) states the number of disinvitation incidents has risen dramatically over the last 15 years. FIRE also identifies the following trends: 1) speakers, who express views alleged to be conservative by faculty or students are more likely to fall victim to a disinvitation; 2) successful disinvitations remain on the rise; 3) disinvitations occur equally among the public and private sector; and, 4) institutions with the most disinvitations have oppressively speech-restrictive policies. Institutions need to clearly express their willingness for people to have free speech on their individual campuses and reinforce their commitment by adopting clear policies regarding demonstrations and invited speakers.

Dr. McAdams shared with Cabinet members an article published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* titled “The Professor’s Views are Loathsome, Stupid, and Ignorant, the Provost said. But He won’t be Fired.” The article portrays a university’s distaste for a professor’s views and their stance on not firing him due to the first amendment right to free speech. Also, Dr. McAdams shared two additional documents that depict how an individual’s free speech protection applies in private and not as a public employee. First, Dr. McAdams shared the primary finding of *Garcetti v. Cabellos* that states the first amendment protections apply only to a public official’s speech in a private context rather than during the exercise of duties. Next, he shared the second academic freedom from the American Association of University Professors handbook: “teachers are entitled to

freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should not introduce controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.” Overall, Dr. Bennett and Dr. McAdams illustrated free speech is not cut and dry and a university’s need to adopt clear policies on free speech.

**BUSINESS**

**Action**

**Vapor and Tobacco Free Environment policy (revised – final reading) .....Dr. Bennett**

Dr. Bennett brought the revised Vapor and Tobacco Free Environment policy to Cabinet for a final reading. She reorganized the policy to ensure the policy followed the university policy protocol.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. Bennett to approve the revised Vapor and Tobacco Free Environment policy and seconded by Ms. Swindle. The motion was approved.

**Tests and Examinations policy (revised – final reading) .....Dr. McAdams**

On the recommendation of Academic Council, Dr. McAdams brought to Cabinet the revised Tests and Examinations policy for a final reading. Dr. McAdams shared the policy was changed to reflect current practice. The final examination schedule for the academic year is published on the Registrar’s Office webpage. It is possible that some students may have two classes scheduled for exams at the same time. In such instances, students should provide documentation (the exam schedule and the student’s class schedule) two weeks prior to final exam week to both class instructors who will make alternate arrangements for the student’s examinations. If a student has more than two final examinations in one day, students may follow the same procedure as examinations at the same time. Cabinet members suggested editorial changes to the documents by eliminating the additional Related Documents section.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the revised Tests and Examinations policy and seconded by Dr. Moon. The motion was approved.

**Search and 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. McAdams and Mr. Rutledge brought to Cabinet positions for consideration. The positions presented do not impact the salary savings identified previously to address the budget shortfall for this fiscal year.

**Academic Affairs Staff Request**

Dr. McAdams presented to Cabinet members the request to search for and hire a Veterans Affairs Clerk in the Office of the Registrar. The position is currently filled; however, the employee has resigned.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the searching and hiring of a Veterans Affairs Clerk and seconded by Ms. Swindle. The motion was approved.

**Finance and Administration Staff Requests**

Mr. Rutledge presented to Cabinet members the request to search for and hire two custodians.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the searching and hiring of two custodians and seconded by Dr. Bennett. The motion was approved.

**Discussion**

**Commencement .....Dr. McAdams**

Dr. McAdams reminded Cabinet members Commencement occurs Friday, December 13 with ceremonies at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. The 10:00 a.m. ceremony will consist of graduate students and the Robert E. Smith School of Nursing undergraduate students. The 2:00 p.m. ceremony will consist of the remaining undergraduate students. The speaker at both ceremonies will be Delta State’s 2019 S. E. Kossman Award Winner, Dr. Corlis Snow.

**Additional information**

- President LaForge announced the Cabinet Christmas party will be Monday, December 9.
- Ms. Swindle announced Ms. Sarah Cathryn Snellgrove will serve as her new Vice President of SGA, and she will hold interviews tomorrow for the vacated secretary position. During the new year, she will bring Ms. Snellgrove and her new secretary to Cabinet for introductions.
- Mr. Munroe reminded Cabinet members tomorrow is Giving Tuesday. President LaForge asked Cabinet members to share the Giving Tuesday video to help increase giving.
- Mr. Rutledge announced the Interim Comptroller will begin on January 2. Following the Cabinet meeting, Mr. Rutledge will make an offer for the Purchasing Coordinator position, and the Grants Accountant began today.
- Dr. Bennett announced a retirement reception for Dr. Houston will occur on December 19.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony, December 3, 3:00 p.m., Leroy E. Morganti Atrium
- Fall Exams, December 9-12
- Fall Commencement, December 13, 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., BPAC
- Christmas Holidays, December 23 – January 1

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, December 9 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.