

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY
PRESIDENT'S CABINET
Minutes

Meeting date: December 5, 2023

Members in attendance: Dr. Dan Ennis, Dr. Edwin Craft, Mr. David Gladden, Dr. Ellen Green, Dr. Leslie Griffin, Dr. Christopher Jurgenson, Dr. Eddie Lovin, Ms. Holly Ray, Dr. Michelle Roberts, Ms. Haley Rooks, and Mr. Larry Wakefield (recorder – Ms. Claire Cole)

Members not in attendance: Mr. Mike Kinnison

Guests: Dr. Megan Smith, Director, Office of Financial Aid

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on December 5, 2023. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with Dr. Ennis presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Dr. Lovin and seconded by Dr. Roberts, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on November 6, 2023.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- Dr. Ennis gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. Dr. Ennis met with Dr. William Bell of the Casey Family Programs. As part of his external relations, Dr. Ennis convened a group of local leaders to provide updates on Delta State. Faculty and staff gathered for the Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony. Dr. Ennis traveled to Greenwood to visit a donor. Dr. Ennis welcomed guests to the Planned Giving Society meeting hosted by the Foundation. Dr. Ennis and other Delta State representatives attended the SACSCOC Annual Meeting.
- Dr. Ennis shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. Final exams began yesterday, and they continue through Thursday. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors met today, and Dr. Ennis thanked them for their support in providing a Thanksgiving meal for student athletes. The BPAC performance of Diamond Rio Holiday and Hits is tonight. Dr. Craft shared 842 tickets have sold for the event, and he shared ticket sales for the spring performances are going very well. The Robert E. Smith School of Nursing has their White Coat Ceremony and Pinning Ceremony on Thursday. Dr. and Mrs. Ennis are hosting a Student Christmas Party at their home on Thursday evening and a Faculty and Staff Christmas Party on Friday evening. Delta State's Fall Commencement ceremonies are Friday at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. A reception honoring Connerly Award winner Patrick Shegog is Saturday at The Warehouse at 3:00 p.m.

CABINET TOPIC

None

BUSINESS

Action

Employee Background Checks policy (revised) Mr. Wakefield

On the recommendation of the University Leadership Council, Mr. Wakefield presented the revised Employee Background Checks policy for a final reading. Cabinet members requested editorial changes be made to the policy including changing “he and she” to “they or them.” Dr. Ennis reminded Cabinet members all editorial changes should be made within University Leadership Council.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Wakefield to approve the Employee Background Checks policy for a final reading and seconded by Dr. Lovin.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Wakefield to withdraw the Employee Background Checks policy for further revisions to be made by the University Leadership Council and seconded by Dr. Lovin. The motion was approved.

Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) State Retirement System policy (revised) Mr. Wakefield

On the recommendation of the University Leadership Council, Mr. Wakefield presented the revised Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) State Retirement System policy for a final reading. Cabinet members requested editorial changes be made to the policy. Dr. Ennis reminded Cabinet members all editorial changes should be made within University Leadership Council.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Wakefield to approve the Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) State Retirement System Policy for a final reading and seconded by Dr. Jurgenson.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Wakefield to withdraw the Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) State Retirement System Policy for further revisions to be made by the University Leadership Council and seconded by Dr. Jurgenson. The motion was approved.

Social Security policy (revised)..... Mr. Wakefield

The Social Security policy was withdrawn for further revisions to be made by the University Leadership Council.

State Employees Health Insurance Plan policy (revised)..... Mr. Wakefield

The State Employees Health Insurance Plan policy was withdrawn for further revisions to be made by the University Leadership Council.

Volunteer – Non-Employee policy (new) Mr. Wakefield

The Volunteer – Non-Employee policy was withdrawn for further revisions to be made by the University Leadership Council.

Password policy (new) Mr. Wakefield

The Password policy was withdrawn for further revisions to be made by the University Leadership Council.

Reallocation of project funds – Broom Hall to BPAC ADA.....Dr. Craft

Dr. Craft advised Cabinet members on the need to reallocate project funds from the Broom Hall renovation project to the BPAC ADA project. During the 2022 Mississippi legislative session in HB1353, Delta State was granted \$1.8 million for the BPAC ADA project to upgrade the restrooms and install an

elevator. The lowest bid for the project was \$2.3 million. The only funding Delta State has to make up the shortage of \$590,000 is from the \$2.8 million received for Repair and Renovation funds. The plan was to use the \$2 million to renovate Broom Hall and \$800,000 was to renovate Foundation Hall. Dr. Craft recommended reallocating \$590,000 from the \$2 million set aside for Broom Hall. With the funds left over, all doors will be replaced, and additional funds from another area will be used to replace the HVAC drives and the cleaning of duct work within Broom Hall. This will fix 90% of the moisture issues in building.

Motion: Moved by Dr. Jurgenson to approve the reallocation of funds and seconded by Dr. Lovin. The motion was approved.

Discussion

Recruitment Update/Overview..... Dr. Lovin

Dr. Lovin provided an update on recruitment efforts by the Office of Admissions. The staff are hosting several individual tours over the next couple of weeks, and they are gathering dates for Spring 2024 events. Also, staff are working to increase applications submitted for Spring 2024 and Fall 2024

Taskforce proposal: Redesign MS State Aid Program Dr. Lovin

Dr. Lovin invited Dr. Megan Smith to discuss the Redesign Mississippi State Aid Taskforce proposal. The taskforce adopted a proposal called “MTAG Works!” in 2022. The proposal made changes to the HELP Grant and MESG, and it was not successful during the 2023 Legislative Session. Some members of the Taskforce continued to think about redesign and how to address the objections to HELP and MTAG raised last year. Two new proposals were introduced to the Taskforce late this summer. The ultimate goal of the Taskforce is to align state aid with the state’s college attainment goal, ascent to 55%, to improve the state’s workforce and expand economic development opportunities. To do this, underserved populations need to be the focus. The revised proposal would make no changes to the HELP Grant or MESG. All changes would be focused on MTAG, which hasn’t been altered in any way since its creation in 1995. The changes to MTAG for the first proposal would be: expansion to part-time students taking a minimum of 6 hours/semester; initial high school GPA and ACT requirements would be eliminated; removal of the max Pell exclusion; the award would be scaled based on income with the lowest income students receiving the highest award; and lastly, this proposal eliminates the high-value pathway bonus. The result is that no student would lose eligibility or receive less aid under this proposal. The proposal projects an additional 37,800 students will receive aid at an additional cost of \$31.5 million. The second proposal by the Taskforce includes doubling awards for students at 51-100% of the median family income and tripling awards for students at 0-50% of median family income. This award structure would increase MTAG awards for the lowest-income students to have the same purchasing power as they had back in 1995. The proposal projects the same number of new students served; however, the cost increases to \$44 million.

Properties Inventory for Leasing (Chamber Request) Dr. Ennis

Dr. Ennis shared with Cabinet members a request made by the Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce to share any existing space or property Delta State would be willing to lease to a business interested in expanding or locating in the Cleveland area. At this time, the Chamber of Commerce is trying to compile an inventory if a request for available space is made. Prior to providing any potential leasing options to the Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Craft wants to speak with Mr. Brad Rowland at IHL to determine the best course of action.

Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Sustainability Recommendations Dr. Ennis

Dr. Ennis shared with Cabinet members a list of recommendations made by the Ad Hoc Committee on

Budget Sustainability. Cabinet members will vote on recommendations at the December 18 Cabinet meeting.

- In considering the IHL Retirement Incentive Rules and Regulations, the Committee recommends pursuing the 25% paid over five years, assuming that we will not fill more than 50% of those positions at the original salary or less, so as Delta State does not take on additional debt.
 - If the recommendation is adopted, it would be voluntary.
 - Dr. Ennis believes this recommendation could pan out in three ways: 1) we accept retirement and save on a suspended position; 2) the position is needed; however, we hire with a lesser salary; or, 3) the position is needed, and the replacement salary is higher than before.
 - Initial funds will be needed to finance this incentive.
 - Mr. Wakefield and Ms. Lisa Giger are waiting to hear from PERS on the eligible individuals that could benefit from this incentive.
 - If the recommendation is adopted, savings will not be achieved for this fiscal year.
- In reviewing the FY2024 Monthly Vacant Position Report, the Committee recommends deleting all open positions that have an end date prior to July 1, 2022.
 - Currently, Delta State considers this as savings each month.
 - Does a department/division need this position to fulfill the responsibilities of their department/division?
- In reviewing the FY2024 Monthly Vacant Position Report, the Committee recommends any open position with end dates after July 1, 2022 must submit a brief statement that includes: the essential functions of the position; how the unit is currently managing its operations without the open position, including statements of real harm the open position is causing to the operations; and, a contingency plan for continuing operations should this position be permanently eliminated.
 - If the recommendation is adopted and approved by Cabinet, the statement on open positions must be submitted by January 18 for review by Cabinet members at the January 22 Cabinet meeting.
 - If a position is being advertised, the position was approved by Dr. Ennis to be filled for FY24 and statements do not have to be written.
- The Committee Recommends reducing \$250,000 from salaries in Executive, Administrative, and Managerial (61100) or salaries in Professional Non-Faculty (61300), along with corresponding fringe benefits from the adjusted FY24 budget.
 - The rationale made by the Committee: The reduction offsets budget cuts starting in 2019 that were made by reducing faculty positions. The reduction brings parity to a situation that has seen increases since 2019 in 61100 and 61300. This also acknowledges that these increases in 61100 and 61300 occurred during a time where enrollment decreased by approximately 20%, making it difficult to justify maintaining these increased salaries and positions.
 - Dr. Ennis requested to view the Reduction in Workforce Policy from the State. Several of the positions within 61100 and 61300 are contractual positions.
- The Committee Recommends reducing \$500,000 from salaries in Executive, Administrative, and Managerial (61100) and salaries in Professional Non-Faculty (61300) each, along with corresponding fringe benefits from the FY25 budget.
 - The rationale is the same as above.

Budget Update Mr. Wakefield

Mr. Wakefield shared budget savings are not being seen in other areas. In reviewing spending, Mr. Wakefield has seen accelerated spending; however, it could be due to the use of purchase orders. Additional ideas on how to garner savings for the FY24 budget is needed.

FY24 Zero-Based Budget Process/Schedule Mr. Wakefield

Mr. Wakefield announced the FY25 budget process will be to implement a zero-based budget. No line items will be carried over from the prior fiscal year, and all line items will need justification to be added. Mr. Wakefield and his staff will assist to decide on what are crucial items for the budget.

Dual Enrollment Scholarship..... Mr. Wakefield

Mr. Wakefield informed Cabinet members of the Dual Enrollment Scholarship. The State is set to give a scholarship to students participating in Dual Enrollment. The scholarship is more than we charge per hour for Dual Enrollment. Mr. Wakefield encouraged Cabinet members to consider the University’s current rate for Dual Enrollment and potentially increasing it for next fall. The scholarship is based off of community college rates. Public school and homeschool students are eligible for the scholarship, and it can be used at any institution.

Gordian Facilities Consultants..... Mr. Wakefield

Mr. Wakefield shared with Cabinet members the hiring of Gordian Facilities Consultants by IHL. The consultants will review Delta State’s facilities to see how are buildings are being utilized. Within their study of the facilities on campus, they will determine the soundness and quality of the building and what the building needs. The consultants will create a list of priorities based on need that will assist with our legislative priorities and Repair and Renovation funds. The consult will occur in approximately six months.

Hiring Requests and Report of Approvals Cabinet members

In following the hiring guidance set forth by Dr. Ennis, Dr. Lovin and Mr. Kinnison presented their requests for review. After review by Cabinet members, Dr. Lovin, Mr. Kinnison, and Mr. Wakefield will meet with Dr. Ennis and provide additional context as to the need for the given positions prior to Dr. Ennis granting or denying hiring approval.

Student Affairs requests

Dr. Lovin requested the Director of Counseling and Student Health. The current Assistant Director of Counseling and Student Health will be converted to a 10-month Counselor position. The salary of the Director will be reduced to meet goals. The Counselor position will be a 10-month contract to address an increase in visits during the academic year. Also, a Community College Relations Coordinator position will be created to assist in actively engaging stakeholders at community colleges. This position will be funded by the Foundation and will be for one year.

Athletics requests

In the absence of Mr. Kinnison, Dr. Ennis informed Cabinet members he approved the search for a Head Coach for the Women’s Soccer Team.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Fall Exams, December 4-7
- RESSON White Coat Ceremony, December 7, 10:00 a.m., BPAC

- RESSON Pinning Ceremony, December 7, 2:00 p.m., BPAC
- Holiday Party for Students, December 7, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m., President’s Home
- Holiday Social for Faculty and Staff, December 8, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m., President’s Home
- Fall Commencement, December 8, 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., BPAC

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, December 18, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

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