

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: June 28, 2021

Members in attendance: President William LaForge (via Zoom), Dr. Vicki Bingham (via Zoom), Dr. Kurt Keppler (via Zoom), Mr. Mike Kinnison (via Zoom), Mr. Rick Munroe (via Zoom), Dr. Michelle Roberts (via Zoom), Mr. Jamie Rutledge (via Zoom), Ms. Nakikke Wallace (via Zoom), Dr. Andrew Wegmann (via Zoom), and Mr. William Young (via Zoom) (recorder – Ms. Claire Cole)

Members not in attendance: Dr. Charles McAdams

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

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom video conference on June 28, 2021. 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. Wegmann, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on June 21, 2021.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. The Office of Student Life hosted the third Orientation Session, which included 113 students and their guests. President LaForge, Mr. Rutledge, and other university representatives met with the regional management team of Sodexo Operations, LLC to discuss the annual expectations for campus food service operations. The Major Foundations Task Force met, and President LaForge met with the co-chairs of the International Conference on the Blues for an update on the plans for the Fall 2021 conference. The co-chairs, Dr. Shelley Collins and Mr. Don Allan Mitchell, discussed with President LaForge the idea of changing the focus of the conference; however, this idea is not set in stone. Prior to the conference on October 1, the City of Cleveland is hosting the Music Tourism Convention, and we are hopeful attendees will participate in the International Conference on the Blues, as well. The university hosted members of the Mississippi Legislature, Legislative Budget Office staff, Bureau of Building staff, and Executive Deputy Director Glen Kornbrek of the Department of Finance for the annual Legislative Facilities Tour. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members the tour and presentation were very successful. The second Visioning event for the Capital Campaign was held last week at the home of Delta State alumnus Mr. Peter Woods.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The campus-wide elevator project is underway, and it began in the Roberts-LaForge Library. The next buildings on the list are the H.L. Nowell Student Union and Broom Hall. At the completion of the project, all elevators on campus will be fixed and brought up to code or replaced. The roofing project is delayed until the beginning of August.

The contractors are temporarily patching the roofs to avoid leaks, which would destroy the recent renovations made within the residence halls. Repairs and renovations continue in Lawler-Harkins Hall, Cain-Tatum Hall, and Fugler-Hammett Hall. Lawler-Harkins is getting a new HVAC system, and it will be connected to the university chiller. The FY20 bonds sold, and the university can begin to use those funds to renovate Foundation Hall. Mr. Rutledge moved leftover funds from previous projects around in order to finalize construction documents for the School of Nursing renovation project. Once the FY21 bond funds are available, the School of Nursing renovation project will be ready for bid. The bond fund priorities for FY22 include a continuation of the HVAC, roofing, and Walter-Sillers Coliseum renovations. The campus-wide lighting project made possible with Entergy grants continued in Ewing Hall recently. The university installed more than 1,000 LED lightbulbs and 600 light fixtures for less than \$10,000.

- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The Athletics Department continues to plan for their upcoming seasons. Most sports are holding camps this summer, and they are underway. On July 6, a large influx of student-athletes will return to campus for summer workouts.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge participated in the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' Committee on International Education meeting this morning. The fourth Orientation session takes place on Tuesday, and more than 100 students are registered to attend. The Marshall Tucker Band performs at the BPAC on Thursday evening.
- President LaForge announced today's Cabinet meeting is Dr. Keppler's last meeting and final week on campus, as well as Ms. Robin Douglas' last week on campus. President LaForge expressed his appreciation to them for their service to the university. Cabinet members shared their appreciation and well wishes with Dr. Keppler and Ms. Douglas. Dr. Keppler and Ms. Douglas thanked Cabinet members for their kind comments.

CABINET TOPIC

None

BUSINESS

Action

AASCU's COVID-19 College Vaccine Challenge President LaForge

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) is asking colleges and universities across the country to join them, The White House, and the U.S. Department of Education to end the pandemic by signing up for the COVID-19 College Vaccine Challenge. Participating colleges commit to taking three key actions to help get their campus communities vaccinated: 1) engaging every student, faculty, and staff member to ensure the campus community knows they are eligible for a vaccine and has the resources to find one; 2) organizing their college communities by identifying champions for vaccine efforts across campus and implementing a plan to get as many members vaccinated as possible; and, 3) delivering vaccine access for all by bringing vaccines on campus or to a nearby location. With the approval of Cabinet members, Delta State will embrace AASCU's COVID-19 College Vaccine Challenge. President LaForge asked Dr. Keppler to pass along the information on the challenge for to Dr. Lovin and to ask Ms. Kashanta Jackson to inform the appropriate authorities of Delta State's participation.

Motion: Moved by Dr. Keppler to participate in AASCU's COVID-19 College Vaccine Challenge and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

Writer’s Trail Marker President LaForge

President LaForge informed Cabinet members the Mississippi Writers Trail is working with the family of former Delta State professor, Ms. Dorothy Shawhan, to erect a Writer’s Trail marker in her honor. The Mississippi Writers Trail pays tribute to the state’s most acclaimed and influential writers through a series of historical markers that recognize the importance of place in an author’s life while educating the public about the history and legacy of Mississippi writers. Her family requested the maker be erected on Delta State’s campus, near Kethley Hall, where Ms. Shawhan taught. President LaForge stated the Executive Committee discussed the marker in their last meeting and agreed to bring it to Cabinet for a vote. President LaForge will share the Cabinet’s decision with the Chair of the Division of Languages and Literature and Ms. Shawhan’s family.

Motion: Moved by Dr. Wegmann to approve a Writer’s Trail Marker for Ms. Dorothy Shawhan be placed on Delta State’s campus and seconded by Ms. Wallace. The motion was approved.

Graduate Course Repetition and Grade replacement policy (new – final reading)..... Dr. Bingham

On the recommendation of the Academic Council, Dr. Bingham brought the new Graduate Course Repetition and Grade replacement policy to Cabinet for a final reading. The Graduate Course Repetition and Grade replacement policy describes the avenues for course repetition and grade replacement for graduate courses. Credit hours for repeated courses are only applied once towards overall required hours for the degree. Graduate students who repeat courses taken at Delta State and who earn a higher grade the second time may submit a Grade Replacement Request form for the lower grade to not be counted. The grade replacement policy may be used a maximum of two times during the student’s graduate academic career. An exception will be made for cohort-based, linked courses for which one common grade is given up to a maximum of four courses.

Motion: Moved by Dr. Bingham to approve the new Graduate Course Repetition and Grade replacement policy for a final reading and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

Discussion

University Action Concerning Former Foundation Trustee..... President LaForge

President LaForge shared verbally the memo that he wrote to Cabinet Members regarding University action concerning former Foundation Trustee John Cox. He stated a printed copy would be shared with them after the meeting and that the associated documents would be placed in the files of the President’s Office, Human Resources Office, and the Office of University Advancement and External Relations.

In the fall of 2019, then-Foundation Trustee John Cox, a Delta State alumnus and local attorney, served as legal counsel representing a Delta State employee in an administrative appeal process against the University regarding the staff person’s dismissal, and eventual resignation, from the University. Mr. Cox provided legal advice to the University employee, and appeared on the employee’s behalf at a personnel hearing that also involved a University Vice President, the Director of Human Resources, an attorney representing the IHL, and members of the Delta State Personnel Advisory Committee (appeals committee) comprising a Dean, a Chair, a professor, and two professional staff members.

Mr. Cox’s role in that personnel hearing on behalf of his client was adverse to the University and its best interests. Prior to the hearing, the University deemed Mr. Cox’s representation of an employee in an adverse personnel action against the University to be a conflict of interest, or, at minimum, very poor judgment, and advised the Foundation President and Executive Director of the University’s position. The

Foundation President and Executive Director each advised Mr. Cox not to pursue his representation, but he continued his representation nonetheless. At the time, Mr. Cox was also serving as an adjunct instructor in the University's College of Business and Aviation.

When Mr. Cox refused to act on the advice of Foundation officials, and subsequent to the date of the personnel hearing itself, the President of the University wrote to the President of the Foundation to ask that Mr. Cox be removed or asked to resign from the Foundation Board due to the conflict. After the passage of several months of no Foundation action on the matter, the University then wrote Mr. Cox directly in April 2020 to request his resignation. In a response that came six months later, Mr. Cox refused to resign, and suggested that he deserved a "pass" because of his history of loyalty and service to the University. What ensued were several months of discussions and correspondence between the University and the Foundation leadership, during which time the University repeatedly requested that the Foundation urge Mr. Cox to resign from the Board.

In this matter, the University's position is that Mr. Cox breached a duty of loyalty to the Foundation and to the University. His actions clearly put him in a position of conflict with Delta State, and jeopardized his credibility and trust as a Trustee of the Foundation that, by definition, exists solely to support Delta State University. It is untenable and regrettable that Mr. Cox intentionally engaged in such actions when he knew, or should have known, especially as an attorney, that his actions would create a conflict and at the very least the appearance of impropriety. Mr. Cox refused to step away from the case when advised to do so by the Foundation leadership. Subsequently, he refused to resign from the Foundation Board when requested to do so by the Foundation leadership and by the University President, and he has continually refused to acknowledge the error of his ways.

To ensure a sense of proper grounding and an objective perspective in this matter, University leadership discreetly consulted with a number of university authorities and executives inside and outside of Mississippi, including IHL staff and other Mississippi university presidents. Those leaders were unanimously shocked by the action of a sitting Foundation Trustee in this matter, considered the action to be a conflict with the university and improper conduct for a sitting Foundation Board member, and believed strongly that a Trustee who engages in that type of action should not be allowed to serve on the Foundation Board.

During the course of the year and a half of discussions and correspondence between the University and the Foundation leadership, the Foundation decided there was no conflict of interest based on current bylaws and the collective judgment of its leadership, and agreed to update the conflict portion of its bylaws to provide better guidance in the case of future similar incidents. The Foundation Executive Committee initially adjudged the Cox matter not serious enough to force or request Mr. Cox's resignation from the Board, and was generally very reluctant to force or request Mr. Cox's resignation. Eventually, it was reported that Foundation leadership did request that Mr. Cox resign, but that effort was to no avail. At one point, the Foundation leadership reported to the University that Mr. Cox had informed them that he was going to resign, but he did not resign. University and Foundation leadership came to an understanding in early 2021 that Mr. Cox would resign or be allowed to serve out his current term, which was scheduled to end in April 2021, with no possibility of a next term, and that the Foundation leadership would memorialize its decision and findings, and share that information with the Executive Committees of both the University and the Foundation, as well as with Mr. Cox.

Mr. Cox's term of service ended April 9, 2021, the date of the Foundation's Spring Board Meeting, and his term was not renewed by the Foundation leadership. He no longer serves as a Foundation Trustee. Subsequently, the University requested that the Foundation provide documentation of its decision and

findings, which the Foundation leadership had previously agreed to share, in order to bring closure to this matter for all parties. The University renewed its request for that information from the Foundation several times. Reportedly, the Foundation leadership engaged in discussions about whether to share its decision and findings memorandum with the University. Confidential memoranda were prepared by the Foundation leadership in April 2021 to create an internal record of its deliberations and actions in this matter. After numerous requests by University leadership to Foundation leadership for information to bring closure to this matter, appropriate information was finally presented to the University on June 22, 2021. It is unknown whether any notice or documentation has been provided to Mr. Cox by the Foundation.

President LaForge stated that this memorandum serves as a final report to the President’s Cabinet and to the files of the President’s Office, Human Resources, and the Office of University Advancement and External Relations concerning an unfortunate matter involving a former member of the Delta State University Foundation Board of Trustees.

Organizational Chart..... Dr. Roberts

Dr. Roberts shared with Cabinet Members the draft FY22 organizational chart. She asked Cabinet Members to review the organizational chart and to send changes — including new hires, new positions, new titles, or any reorganization in the upcoming fiscal year — to Ms. Cole by end of day Tuesday. The revised organizational chart will be marked final on July 1.

Cabinet Advance..... Dr. Roberts

Dr. Roberts gave Cabinet Members an overview of the Cabinet Advance scheduled for Tuesday, July 20 and Wednesday, July 21. The Cabinet Advance will be held at the President’s home. A continental breakfast and lunch will be served on site 7:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. respectively. The discussions will begin promptly at 8:00 a.m. Discussion topics include a budget snapshot; the campus master plan and golf course; a tour of the residence halls; fundraising and capital campaign; COVID-19 plans for Fall 2021; enrollment management; and a 360° of the new vice presidents. Dr. Roberts stated the Advance will give Cabinet members an opportunity to dig deeper into topics than time allows during a regular Cabinet meeting.

“Return to Normal Operations” Task Force Update Dr. Keppler

Dr. Keppler shared the recommendations made by the “Return to Normal Operations” task force from their last meeting. The task force will meet again during the Fall semester to review the current status of COVID-19 and protocols as a renewed concern exists about the Delta variant of COVID-19, which appears to be impacting 18 to 24 year-old individuals.

1. Face Masks/Cloth Face Coverings: If you are fully vaccinated with an FDA-authorized vaccine, you are not required to wear a mask. However, you may continue to do so. If you are not fully vaccinated with an FDA-authorized vaccine, you should continue to wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth to help protect yourself and others.
2. International Travel: If you are fully vaccinated with an FDA-authorized vaccine or a vaccine authorized for emergency use by the World Health Organization:
 - You should continue to follow CDC’s recommendations for traveling safely and get tested 3-5 days after travel.
 - You do not need to get tested before leaving United States unless your destination requires it.
 - You do not need to self-quarantine after arriving in the United States.
3. International Travel: If you are not fully vaccinated or did not receive an USA approved vaccine:
 - Get tested with a viral test 3-5 days after travel AND stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7

days after travel.

- Even if you test negative, stay home and self-quarantine for the full 7 days.
 - If your test is positive, isolate yourself to protect others from getting infected.
 - Self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms; Isolate immediately and contact Student Life for testing if you develop symptoms.
4. Attestation Form: All students must sign the Delta State University Attestation Form indicating that they understand the institutions policies, guidelines, and protocols regarding keeping the environment as safe as possible, COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, quarantine, and isolation procedures, and that they agree to try in good faith to abide by those policies.
 5. Student Events: Student organizations should still be required to have on/off campus events registered in advance and agree to COVID-19 protocols until further notice.
 6. Vaccines: Delta State should consider having vaccines available during New Student Weekend (Thursday , August 12 – Saturday, August 14)
 7. Vaccines: Delta State should consider weekly drawings/contests for those who have been vaccinated (books discounts, parking decals, food coupons, tickets to events).
 8. Social Distancing: When possible, the university should use classrooms with capacity greater than the course enrollment to allow for social distancing. Students who wish to move their desk to be socially distant, can do so; but should return them at the completion of class.
 9. Symptom Checker and Temperature Checks: The current processes of not using the symptom checker and temperature checks will continue during the Fall 2021 semester.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge gave an update on the FY21 budget. The university’s cash balance at this time last year was \$4,685,000, and it was \$6,898,000 at the end of May this year. Mr. Rutledge and his staff reconcile the university’s cash balance daily throughout the month of June. The university may not reach \$10 million in cash as projected, but we will be very close. The university has not received reimbursement checks from FEMA nor from our insurance for storm damage. With those funds, the university would meet the \$10 million cash projection. IHL measures our days of cash based on our total amount of expenditures, and the university’s expenditures are \$4.5 million less than last year.

Additional information

- Mr. Munroe announced the Alumni Board has added an additional meeting to their bi-annual meeting schedule. The Board will meet on July 14. The Foundation’s Green and White Gala is scheduled for Saturday, July 17 at The Lyric Hotel, and the Greater Jackson Alumni Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 22.
- Mr. Munroe and his staff have contracted with Gonser Gerber for assistance with our Capital Campaign.
- Mr. Rutledge asked Cabinet members to thank their staff who volunteered for the Delta Council Annual Meeting held on campus.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Summer Session II begins, June 28
- Orientation Session #4, June 29, in-person
- Cabinet Advance, July 20-21, President’s Home

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Tuesday, July 6 at 1:30 p.m.

- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.