

**DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**PRESIDENT'S CABINET**  
*Minutes*

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**Meeting date: March 20, 2017**

**Members in attendance:** President William LaForge, Dr. Vernell Bennett, Mr. Keith Fulcher, Dr. Leslie Griffin, Dr. Chris Jurgenson, Mr. Ronnie Mayers, Dr. Charles McAdams, Ms. Allie Rose Parker, Dr. Michelle Roberts, Ms. Christie Rocconi, and Mr. Jamie Rutledge (Ms. Claire Cole – recorder)

**Members not in attendance:** None

**Guests:** Dr. Temika Simmons, Chair, Winning the Race Committee

**Call to Order:** A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on March 20, 2017. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

On motion by Dr. Jurgenson, seconded by Mr. Rutledge, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on February 27, 2017.

**GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- President LaForge gave an overview of the past few weeks. He participated in a panel discussion on the Fulbright program led by Dr. Jamie Dahman, professor of music. The panelists provided students with information about studying abroad. He attended the BPAC performance of STOMP, and hosted mayors from local municipalities as his guests. President LaForge attended the Cleveland Music Foundation's monthly board meeting. He said the Museum is doing well and recently opened a new exhibit, The Taylor Swift Experience. President LaForge hosted his monthly Friday Faculty meetings and had the chance to meet with a couple of faculty members. President LaForge met with Ms. Arlene Sanders, Chair of the Diversity Committee, to discuss upcoming projects sponsored by the committee. He also attended the annual Thacker Mountain Radio Show hosted by the DMI, and stated it continues to be an excellent event and produces a great crowd.
- President LaForge commended Ms. Rocconi for her diligence and effort with the U.S. Department of Education's Program Review. Ms. Rocconi stated she is working with the Department of Education on the areas that need to be corrected. President LaForge said the review will make us a better university.
- The Mississippi Municipal League hosted their Annual Statewide Youth Leadership Summit on campus earlier this month. Mayor and Mrs. Billy Nowell stated the weekend went very well, and they received great feedback. President LaForge gave a welcome to the group at the opening session and hosted a breakout session. Members of Delta State's SGA hosted a breakout session, as well.
- President LaForge and Dr. Roberts traveled to Washington, D.C. for congressional visits. They met with Senators Thad Cochran and Roger Wicker, filmed a Fireside Chat with Mr. Tyler Sullivan, hosted a luncheon with senate staff members, and met with staff members from the offices of Congressmen Palazzo, Kelly, Harper, and Thompson. President LaForge stated they gave to the Senators and other

staff members Delta State’s funding requests.

- Ms. Parker informed Cabinet Members of the great Student Legislative day that was held at the State Capitol a few weeks ago. The event was well attended by legislators. Ms. Parker thanked Dr. Roberts for helping organize the event and Dr. Bennett for attending.
- Dr. Roberts informed Cabinet Members of the House and Senate dinners that took place last week. The Senate dinner was very well attended. The House dinner had a small number of attendees, but they appreciated the outreach.
- Last week, President LaForge traveled to Jackson to attend the IEO meeting and IHL Board meeting. Several major topics were discussed during the IEO meeting. Commissioner Boyce plans on changing the evaluation process of the university presidents. A new, system-wide Financial Sustainability Policy was put into place as a better way to measure the financial stability of the universities. Several university presidents want Board approval on an additional tuition increase for Fall 2017 to offset the budget cuts of this fiscal year. President LaForge wants to try to handle the budget cuts internally before increasing tuition. Commissioner Boyce announced that IHL Board meetings will not be held on university campuses during the next two years due to the increased cost as well as the amount of work for the campuses. President LaForge plans to sign a letter as part of the AAUW initiative to help improve job availability for women in higher education. Commissioner Boyce wrote an op-ed piece refuting the argument about the cost of student remediation within the IHL system. Within the IHL system, there are 3,000 remediation students, costing a total of \$1.2 million. The legislature is determining the best way to fund IHL’s move toward a faster, more capable IT system for all universities through MISSION IT. During the IHL Board meeting, the Board approved our request to bestow honorary degrees on two individuals.
- Mr. Mayers gave an update on Athletics. Mr. Mayers stated the NCAA Championship meet for swimming went well. Ms. Melanie Tombers won the Elite 90 award during the championship meet. Men’s basketball finished the season after losing to Rollins College in the NCAA South Region tournament. Mr. Devin Schmidt broke the all-time leading scorer record for the GSC during the game. Baseball is going strong and softball has had a slow start. The football team has a new Defensive Coordinator, Mr. Jerry Partridge.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the upcoming week. Tonight, we will attend the BPAC performance of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, and has invited Dr. and Mrs. Chip Morgan, Mr. and Mrs. John Lamar, Ms. Grace Clarke and Ms. Paula Clarke, Ms. Brenda Outlaw, and Dr. and Mrs. Charles McAdams to be his guests. On Tuesday, President LaForge will meet with Mr. Mike Walker, External Relations Director of AT&T. Mr. Fulcher explained AT&T is looking to sponsor larger projects in higher education, and Mr. Walker can help Delta State with securing funding. On Tuesday afternoon, President LaForge will meet with representatives of the National Panhellenic Conference. President LaForge and Dr. Gary Bouse will meet with Mr. Billy Cummins to finalize the scholarship guidelines for the Karen Cummins Scholarship. On Friday, President LaForge will travel to Jackson for a recruiting trip to visit with Madison-Ridgeland Academy students. The Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) Province Council is meeting on Delta State’s campus this weekend, and President LaForge will welcome them on Friday. The Winning the Race Conference begins on Sunday.
- Ms. Parker informed Cabinet Members she accepted a position with the Disney College Program and will begin work in August.

**CABINET TOPIC**

**Winning the Race Conference ..... President LaForge**  
President LaForge introduced Dr. Temika Simmons and asked her to give an overview of the upcoming Winning the Race Conference. Dr. Simmons stated the race conference is scheduled for Sunday, March 26

through Tuesday, March 28, and the theme for the conference is Advancing Education in the Mississippi Delta. New features were added to the conference this year including a unique track for high school students, sponsored by the Mississippi Humanities Council, and the opportunity for counselors and teachers to earn professional development credits. Dr. Simmons reminded Cabinet Members of the immense support the conference received from Casey Family Programs and stated their President and CEO, Dr. William Bell, is the keynote speaker for the opening session. Dr. Simmons announced both houses of the Mississippi Legislature recently passed a resolution honoring Dr. Bell and his accomplishments, and he will be recognized on Tuesday, March 28 at the State Capitol. Dr. Simmons thanked Cabinet Members for their support and encouraged them to attend all areas of the conference. President LaForge expressed his gratitude to Dr. Simmons and her committee for their diligence in creating another great conference.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Action**

#### **Hiring Requests ..... Mr. Rutledge/Dr. McAdams/Dr. Roberts**

In response to the Cabinet's decision that only those vacant positions deemed essential to university operations will be filled, and that requests to fill these essential positions be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Cabinet, Mr. Rutledge, Dr. McAdams, and Dr. Roberts brought to Cabinet several positions for consideration. All of the positions presented do not impact the salary savings identified previously to offset the mid-year budget cuts.

Mr. Rutledge recapped the three positions (Program Associate for Healing with Groove project, Assistant Football Coach, and Accounting Clerk) that Cabinet members voted on via email two weeks prior. Mr. Rutledge stated the search and hiring of the three positions passed with eight approvals and one non-response.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to ratify the vote made by email of the searching and hiring of three positions and seconded by Dr. McAdams. **The motion was approved.**

#### **Academic Affairs Staff Requests**

The Delta Center for Culture and Learning has a grant funded position available and the Student Success Center has the Coordinator of Academic Support Services available. Both departments wish to search and hire for FY17.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the searching and hiring of two staff positions for the Delta Center for Culture and Learning and the Student Success Center and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. **The motion was approved.**

#### **Academic Affairs Faculty Requests**

The Department of Counselor Education and Psychology has one Counselor Education position open, the Department of Music has the Director of Choral Activities/Assistant Professor of Music position available, the Division of Languages and Literature has three open positions in English and Communications, and the Robert E. Smith School of Nursing has two instructor positions available. All faculty positions would start July 1, 2017.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve searching and hiring for faculty positions for FY18 for the Department of Counselor Education and Psychology, Department of Music, Division of Languages and Literature, and the Robert E. Smith School of Nursing and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. **The motion was approved.**

**University Relations Staff Requests**

Communications and Marketing requests approval to hire for FY17 a new Senior Secretary and Graphic Designer, and the Postal and Copy Center requests to hire for FY17 a new Director. The Director of the Postal and Copy Center is an auxiliary position and is not funded through Fund 10.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. Roberts to approve the hiring of a new Senior Secretary and Graphic Designer for Communications and Marketing and a new Director for the Postal and Copy Center and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. **The motion was approved.**

**Staff Emeritus..... Ms. Rocconi**

Ms. Rocconi shared with Cabinet members the names of two staff members who have been recommended for Emeritus status by the Administrative Staff Council. All staff members listed were unanimously approved for Staff Emeritus status by the Administrative Staff Council Executive Committee on March 8, 2017.

**Motion:** Moved by Ms. Rocconi to present the two names to President LaForge for his approval and seconded by Mr. Mayers. **The motion was approved.**

**Wayne Blansett Staff Development Day..... Ms. Rocconi**

Ms. Rocconi announced the Wayne Blansett Staff Development Day is scheduled for Thursday, May 18. Staff Development day will have a program in the morning, a picnic at lunch, and games in the afternoon. The Administrative Staff Council has secured a speaker for the morning program, and the topic will focus on customer service. Ms. Rocconi requests approval to close all offices to ensure all staff members, especially Facilities Management staff, can attend. Mr. Rutledge stated Facilities Management has two large projects occurring during that time and he doesn't know if Facilities Management can close for an entire day. President LaForge asked Ms. Rocconi and Mr. Rutledge to work together on a compromise for Facilities Management employees.

**Motion:** Moved by Ms. Rocconi to close all offices on Thursday, May 18 for Wayne Blansett Staff Development Day and seconded by Mr. Mayers. **This motion was approved.**

**Discussion**

**Executive and Staff Evaluation ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge stated the Human Resources staff have updated the Staff Performance Evaluation form and created a new Executive Performance Evaluation form for the direct reports of President LaForge, at his request. An added feature of the new form is the weighting of the annual performance goals. Staff Performance Evaluation forms and guidelines will be emailed to supervisors on March 31 and supervisors are to conduct evaluations from April 6 to April 21. Completed performance evaluations should be submitted to the corresponding Dean or Vice President by April 24 for review. All signed performance evaluations are due to Human Resources by May 1. Dr. McAdams said the timeline for conducting the performance evaluations is during a very busy time of the year. Mr. Rutledge will talk with Human Resources about the possibility of adjusting the schedule, and will report his findings to the Cabinet.

**Budget Update ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet Members that Delta State may receive another mid-year budget cut in April. The additional cut could be \$180,000 to \$200,000. The state is reviewing and considering returning higher education funding to FY13 levels. If the state does this, it will be devastating to Delta State’s budget. Mr. Rutledge has given to the Executive Committee the Facilities requests for the upcoming budget cycle, and will send the requests for “new and expanded activities” soon. Mr. Rutledge stated the spending slow-down is going as planned, and he thinks we will meet our goal. The Executive Committee has been looking into ways to offset an additional budget cut and is working diligently to protect programs and people. Mr. Rutledge reminded Cabinet Members that 75% of Delta State’s budget goes to salaries. If the budget cuts continue, the likelihood of having to cut positions and programs increases. President LaForge said the state has given state agencies the authority to take furlough actions.

**Legislative Update ..... Dr. Roberts**

Dr. Roberts said the last two weeks were busy with dealing with community issues concerning our land lease bill. The signed bill is due from the Governor tomorrow. This week is conference week, and the legislature is scheduled to make budget decisions by Saturday at 8:00 p.m. The probability of the legislature filing dummy bills to continue discussions into next week is high. The revenue projections for the state are worse than expected. Delta State’s bond bill language is included in the current version of the state’s bond bill. Dr. Roberts said she is concerned about the future of Delta State’s four line items in the appropriations bill.

**Other Discussion**

- President LaForge plans to provide a Campus Update to the Bolivar County Board of Supervisors and the Cleveland Board of Aldermen soon, and will invite the Executive Committee to attend.
- Once budget information has been decided, President LaForge will host campus forums for faculty, staff, and students.
- President LaForge stated Delta State is in the early stages of the capital campaign, and he is working with the Campaign Strategy Study Committee to improve the case statement. The Consultants will interview the top 30 to 40 donors to see what changes need to be made with regards to the case statement.
- Mr. Fulcher announced the Lebanese in America Exhibit opens tomorrow night in Jobe Hall.
- Dr. Griffin announced Dr. James Nicholson, former Director of Delta State’s Delta Area Association for the Improvement of Schools program, passed away over the weekend.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- 42<sup>nd</sup> Street performance, BPAC, March 20, 7:30 pm
- Winning the Race Conference, March 27-28
- International Business Symposium, March 29-30
- Colloquia Lecture Series, Dr. LouAnn Woodward, April 12, 6:00 pm, Jobe Auditorium

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, March 27 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 3:19 p.m.