

# DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S CABINET

### *Minutes*

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**Meeting date: May 10, 2021**

**Members in attendance:** President William LaForge (via Zoom), Dr. Vicki Bingham (via Zoom), Dr. Kurt Keppler (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), Ms. Nakikke Wallace (via Zoom), Dr. Andrew Wegmann (via Zoom), and Mr. William Young (via Zoom) (recorder – Ms. Claire Cole)

**Members not in attendance:** None

**Guests:** Mr. Mikhail Collins, Director, Student Business Services  
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 May 10, 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. Bingham, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on April 26, 2021.

#### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- Mr. Rutledge introduced Mr. Mikhail Collins to Cabinet members. Mr. Collins is the new Director of Student Business Services.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the last two weeks. The Student Government Association (SGA) hosted a campus forum for students, followed by their inauguration of their newly elected and appointed officers. Approximately 50 students attended the events. President LaForge had a meeting with the newly elected SGA officers to discuss their upcoming terms of office. President LaForge met with DMI staff member Ms. Laeitta Wade and Mr. Victor Famodimu to discuss the Healing with a Groove project. The 2020 and 2021 Student Hall of Fame classes were inducted the night prior to Spring commencement. Delta State hosted three, in-person commencement ceremonies. Dr. McAdams stated graduates and their guests followed COVID-19 protocols, and all ceremonies ran smoothly. The livestream of the ceremonies has been viewed by 2,800 people, and 76% of viewings were live. Also, people from 26 countries viewed the livestream. President LaForge participated in the inauguration of Dr. Carmen Walters, President of Tougaloo College. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors met last week. Also, Mr. Rutledge, Dr. Roberts, and President LaForge had a meeting with the golf course development team. Dr. Temika Simmons and Dr. Natasha Barnes provided President LaForge with a debriefing of the Winning the Race conference and plans for the next conference. Lieutenant Governor Delbert Hosemann was in Cleveland last week speaking to business leaders and elected officials, as well as being the speaker at the Rotary Club

meeting. President LaForge was able to attend both meetings. President and Mrs. LaForge toured the newly opened West End District property. President LaForge attended the awards day at two area high schools, Bayou Academy and Indianola Academy, to award incoming freshmen their scholarships.

- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. Mr. Kinnison thanked Mr. Cody Clark, Mr. Fred Sington, and Mr. Phillip Tang for the great job they did creating the virtual Green and White Awards ceremony, which honored our student-athletes. The Charles S. Kerg Senior Student-Athlete of the Year award winners were Mr. Giulio Brugnoli and Ms. Lucia Martelli. The Athletic Department funded an end-of-year celebration for each individual team to present their individual team awards. The men’s tennis team advanced to the DII Regionals tournament, but they fell to Saint Leo University in the first round. This is the men’s tennis team’s first appearance at the DII Regional tournament since 2008. Overall, the men’s tennis team had a great season. The baseball team is competing in the Gulf South Conference tournament, and they won their first two games against Valdosta State University and Lee University. They compete against University of Alabama-Huntsville today, and a win advances them to the finals in Pensacola against University of West Florida on May 18-20. The Athletic Department has hired Ms. Kaitlin Moore as the new Business Manager, as a result of the retirement of Ms. Kim Pongetti.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project is complete, and Facilities Management will continue to landscape around the sidewalks. The Mayers’ Aquatics Center HVAC project is complete, and the final walk through meeting is later this week. The pre-construction meeting for the campus-wide elevator project is Thursday, and the project will begin immediately after the meeting. The remainder of the roofing project materials will not be delivered until the end of the month. The contractor for the roofing project plans to hire additional crew members in order to finish the project by the agreed upon deadline of August 1. The residence halls renovations are in full force in Lawler-Harkins Hall and Brumby Castle Hall. All cleanup from the storm last week will be complete by the end of the week. The university bore a substantial amount of damage; however, the damage does not exceed the amount of our insurance deductible at this time. The ribbon cutting event for the President’s new house is tomorrow at 3:00 p.m. Faculty and staff will be excused from their duties to attend. Last week was the first week of the summer work schedule. Two staff members will work in Kent Wyatt Hall on Fridays to answer phones and greet guests. This past Friday, a total of 97 calls were answered, and 14 visitors came into Kent Wyatt Hall.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge invited Cabinet Members to the ribbon cutting ceremony for the President’s home, and he thanked Mr. Rutledge and his staff for their excellent work in planning the event. The GRAMMY Museum® Mississippi Board meets on Thursday.

**CABINET TOPIC**

None

**BUSINESS**

**Action**

**COVID-19 Protocols - revised ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge provided an overview of the recommended revision to the COVID-19 Protocols. He recommended revising the COVID-19 Protocols to reflect changes from Executive Order 1551 by Governor Tate Reeves. Executive Order 1551 repeals Executive Order 1549, which had limited attendance in indoor arenas to 75%. Attendance at events held in indoor arenas and outdoor spaces can now be filled

to 100% capacity. It is recommended all persons continue to follow the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s and Mississippi State Department of Health’s guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 including: wearing a mask; maintaining social distancing; and, staying home when feeling ill. Ms. Douglas will post the update to the COVID-19 webpage on the Delta State website, and the revised protocols will be sent to the campus via listserv.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the recommended revision to the COVID-19 Protocols and seconded by Mr. Munroe. The motion was approved with one “no” vote and one “abstaining” vote.

**Discussion**

**Update on Vice Presidential Searches ..... President LaForge**

President LaForge announced the vice-presidential searches are complete, and he made an offer for each position. Dr. Andy Novobilski accepted the position of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Dr. Eddie Lovin accepted the position of Vice President for Student Affairs. Both positions are contingent upon a satisfactory background check, as well as approval of the IHL Board of Trustees at the June meeting. Dr. Novobilski comes to Delta State from the University of North Georgia where he served as Associate Provost for Research and Engagement, Dean of Graduate Studies, and Chief Research Officer during the last six years. During his academic career, he has served as a chair, dean, associate provost, and provost in both public and private institutions. He received his Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Texas at Arlington, Master of Science in Computer Science and Engineering from the University of Texas at Arlington, and his Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from Drexel University. Dr. Lovin comes to us from Cumberland University where he served as Executive Director of Enrollment Services for the last six years. He brings 20 years of experience in higher education to his new role. Dr. Lovin has also served as Director of Residence Life, Greek Affairs, and Orientation at Cumberland University, Residence Life Coordinator at Maryville College, and Senior Academic Counselor for Athletics at the University of Mississippi. He received his Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from Tennessee State University, Master of Business Administration from Cumberland University, Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Personnel at the University of Mississippi, and Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice Administration from the University of Mississippi. President LaForge expressed his gratitude and thanks to the vice-presidential searches committee chairs, Dr. Leslie Griffin and Mr. Kinnison, and their committees for their dedication to their individual search and the university. The official announcement will be made through a campus update later this week, followed by a press release.

**HEERF funds for students – allocation ideas ..... Dr. Keppler**

Dr. Keppler shared with Cabinet members the university will receive another substantial amount Higher Education Emergency Relief funds for students. He and Dr. Megan Smith are reviewing the mode of allocation for previous funds to see which student groups have special needs due to COVID-19. A few of their allocation ideas are: a stipend for students in unpaid internships at businesses suffering due to COVID-19; funds for students in high-cost majors; and, a stipend for students wanting to study abroad. Upon finalizing the allocation method, Dr. Keppler will provide an update to Cabinet members.

**Student Code of Conduct review committee ..... Dr. Keppler**

Dr. Keppler created a committee to review and edit the Code of Conduct in the Student Handbook. The Code of Conduct provides students with the standards and expectations by which the university expects students to follow as a Delta State student. The Code of Conduct needs to be updated to reflect changes in campus culture due to every-changing technology, COVID-19, and the offering of more online instruction. The review committee members charged with updating the Code of Conduct are: Dr. Wegmann, Mr.

Young, Dr. Megan Smith, Mr. Kelvin Davis, Dr. Jonathan Westfall, Ms. Rochelle Owsley, and Ms. Elizabeth Swindle. Once the review and edits are complete, the Code of Conduct will be presented to Cabinet members for approval.

**FY21 Budget Update ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget. Tuition revenue for summer sessions has decreased substantially since last year. The substantial change will affect the university's cash flow. The FY22 budget process continues to wind down. The budget should be finalized this week. Mr. Rutledge will present the Annual Operating Budget to Cabinet members for approval prior to June 4.

**Additional information**

- President LaForge invited the new constituency group representatives to make comments since this is their first meeting as an official Cabinet member.
- Mr. Kinnison shared with Cabinet members the names of additional award winners recognized at the annual Green and White Awards ceremony. Mr. Andrew Swatzell received Athletic Director's Individual Hall of Fame award for the male athlete with the highest-grade point average, and Ms. Lucia Chacon Habis won the Athletic Director's Individual Hall of Fame award for female athlete with the highest-grade point average. Both athletes had a 4.0 GPA. The men's soccer team, women's soccer team, and women's swimming and diving team all won the Athletic Director's Team Hall of Fame award for having the highest-grade point average.
- Dr. McAdams announced that Tri State Educational Foundation will financially support 20 Delta State students in a master's program in the College of Education and Human Sciences. Each student must be a current teacher from a specific county in Mississippi. Dr. McAdams expressed his gratitude to Dr. Leslie Griffin for stewarding a relationship with Mr. and Mrs. Bob Ferguson of the Tri State Educational Foundation throughout the years.
- Mr. Munroe announced Mr. James Forte was chosen to be a speaker at an upcoming Annual Fund conference.
- Mr. Munroe announced the Foundation has received more than \$3 million in donations this year.
- Mr. Rutledge expressed his gratitude to his direct reports for their hand in the ribbon cutting ceremony for the President's home.
- Dr. Roberts announced the Scholarship Task Force will interview scholarship software system vendors this week, and she is hopeful the software system will be in use by August.
- Dr. Roberts asked Cabinet members to provide to Ms. Cole their availability for July so that the annual Cabinet Advance can be scheduled.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- Ribbon Cutting and Open House for President's new home, May 11, 3:00 p.m.
- Bolivar County Alumni Crawfish Boil, May 26, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., Quadrangle
- Martha Reeves performance, May 27, 7:30 p.m., BPAC
- Delta Council Annual Meeting, June 4

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, May 17 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 2:51 p.m.