

# DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S CABINET

### *Minutes*

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**Meeting date: November 2, 2021**

**Members in attendance:** President William LaForge, Dr. Vicki Bingham, Mr. Mike Kinnison, Dr. Eddie Lovin, Mr. Rick Munroe, Dr. Andy Novobilski, Dr. Michelle Roberts, Ms. Nakikke Wallace, Dr. Andrew Wegmann, and Mr. William Young (recorder – Ms. Claire Cole)

**Members not in attendance:** Mr. Jamie Rutledge

**Call to Order:** A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on November 2, 2021. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

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

On motion by Dr. Lovin and seconded by Dr. Novobilski, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on October 26, 2021.

#### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. The Delta State Foundation, in partnership with Dr. and Mrs. Ned Mitchell, hosted a Vision event for Athletics at the President's home. Later that evening, Don Felder provided a wonderful performance at the BPAC. President LaForge hosted the Alumni Association Board of Directors and Foundation Board of Directors for lunch at his home. Faculty, staff, students, and alumni celebrated Homecoming 2021 last weekend. Events began on Friday with the Amanda and Joe Baker Laboratory Dedication, the Golden Circle Reception, and the Alumni Awards Gala and Golden Circle Induction Ceremony. Festivities continued that Saturday with a Golden Circle and Veterans Breakfast, Athletic Alumni meeting, Veterans Ceremony, Homecoming Parade, Homecoming tailgating, and announcement of the 2022 Athletic Hall of Fame, and ended with a win by the football team. All departments involved in Homecoming preparations are reviewing their events to ensure it continues to be successful in years to come.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge participated in the weekly teleconference with Commissioner Al Rankins and the IEOs to discuss COVID-19 related issues, and he attended the Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors meeting. Following the Cabinet meeting today, President LaForge has a departmental visit with Alumni Affairs. On Wednesday, President LaForge will film a Statesmen Insider with Ms. Celeste Turner regarding the swimming and diving team and season. Dr. Wegmann's book signing event will take place on Thursday in the Roberts-LaForge Library, followed by the College of Business and Aviation Scholarship Reception. Country music band Lonestar will perform at the BPAC on Thursday evening. The Office of Admissions will host a Preview Day event on Friday. GSC Commissioner Matt Wilson plans to attend the Delta State football game on Saturday, and President LaForge and Mr. Kinnison will host him for lunch prior to the game.

**CABINET TOPIC**

**Enrollment and Budget Outlook..... President LaForge**

As a follow up to last week’s enrollment and budget outlook discussion, President LaForge asked the constituency group leaders to share their thoughts and questions about the information provided. Constituency group leaders stated the information shared last week was an eye-opener, and they are pleased the Executive Committee, along with Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning and OIT, are working with departments to clean up the university’s data and create a dashboard of data that can be used to make informed decisions regarding recruitment and retention. The big questions from faculty and staff will be: “how did the enrollment decrease happen?”; “how does the university plan to increase enrollment?”; and, “how does the university plan to address the budget deficit?” Several issues will need to be addressed during discussions about increasing enrollment including: prospective student groups being overlooked; better use of scholarships to recruit students; retention of faculty members to provide students a sense of continuity; a focus on student interests for campus initiatives and events; and, building relationships between enrollment management offices and academic departments and divisions for better collaborations. All areas of the university — academic and non-academic — ill need to work hard to fill holes in the university’s recruiting process. Students will need to be persistently recruited until their arrival. Faculty and staff will need to be taught how to recruit and to be given opportunities to do so. President LaForge thanked the constituency group leaders for their input.

President LaForge shared with Cabinet members the news release published by the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning today regarding Fall enrollment of the Mississippi Public Universities system. In the news release, it states Delta State lost 272 students from Fall 2020 to Fall 2021 or a 9.1% decrease. Dr. Roberts provided Cabinet members with the total number of core students (no Dual Credit students) for Fall 2021 – 2,456, which is a 6% decrease from Fall 2020. Dr. Roberts reminded Cabinet members the projected enrollment (not including Dual Credit students) for Fall 2022, which is what will be used to build the FY23 budget, is 2,190 students.

**BUSINESS**

**Action**

None

**Discussion**

**Campus Forum ..... President LaForge**

Dr. Roberts provided Cabinet members an overview of the talking points for the upcoming Campus Forum, which will be held on Thursday, November 11, at 3:00 p.m. in Room 302A in the H. L. Nowell Union. The Campus Forum is open to all faculty and staff. Topics for the campus forum include: a COVID-19 overview; enrollment challenges and budget impact; the FY22 budget status; campus projects; and, new initiatives. Questions can be submitted to constituency group leaders prior to the forum or asked during the event. Due to concerns expressed by faculty and staff, Cabinet members agreed to move the Campus Forum location to Jacob Conference Center in Ewing Hall.

**Federal Mandate re. COVID-19 Vaccine..... President LaForge**

President LaForge informed Cabinet members that, at this time, Delta State and its employees are not covered by the IHL vaccine mandate. IHL’s legal staff advises that, since Delta State currently does not have a federal contract containing the vaccination mandate clause, we are currently not bound by the Presidential Executive Order regarding vaccine mandates; however, this could change at any time. If Delta

State receives a federal contract renewal or any amendment that adds the vaccination mandate clause, then the university will have 60 days from the date of execution of the document to comply with the Order (meaning that all employees would then have to be fully vaccinated). The university will continue to provide updates as more information becomes available.

**COVID-19 Protocols re. Masks..... President LaForge**

President LaForge informed Cabinet members the campus mask requirement will continue system-wide for the Fall 2021 semester. Regardless of vaccination status, all persons must properly wear a face covering indoors, except when alone in a personal space or within a small “bubble group.”

**Additional Information**

- Dr. Novobilski informed Cabinet members of several new staff positions that have been added due to new grant programs in the Center for Community and Economic Development. Dr. Novobilski will reach out to the Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce to share information about the new programs.
- Mr. Munroe announced the Associated Press reached out to Delta State for comment on our decrease in enrollment, which was recently reported by the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning in a news release. Ms. Brittany Davis has created a response, and she will send it to President LaForge, Dr. Roberts, and Dr. Lovin for their approval.
- Mr. Kinnison announced the football team hosts Mississippi College on Saturday at 2:00 p.m., and the women’s soccer team will host Mississippi College on Thursday at 12:30 p.m. The women’s soccer team competes in the first round of the Gulf South Conference tournament on Sunday at 1:00 p.m. The Office of Student Affairs purchased 100 tickets for the women’s soccer game on Sunday to help encourage students to attend. SGA will hold a raffle at the game, as well.
- In lieu of a student forum, President LaForge, Dr. Lovin, and Mr. Young will meet with students in the H.L. Nowell Union on November 29 and 30 for a “Q&A Session” with them.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- Pre-Registration Week, November 1-5
- French Connections: Cultural Mobility in North America and the Atlantic World, 1600–1875 Celebration and Signing, November 4, 2021, 2:00 p.m., Roberts-LaForge Library
- Lonestar performance, November 4, 2021, 7:30 p.m., BPAC
- Delta State football vs. Mississippi College, November 6, 2:00 p.m., Parker Field
- Miss Delta State University Scholarship Competition, November 9, 7:30 p.m., BPAC
- Campus Forum, November 11, 2021, 3:00 p.m., Jacob Conference Center, Ewing Hall

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, November 8, 2021 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – Campus Forum (President LaForge)

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 3:26 p.m.