

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

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**Meeting date: September 8, 2020**

**Members in attendance:** President William LaForge (via Zoom), Dr. Vernell Bennett-Fairs (via Zoom), Chief Jeffrey Johns (via Zoom), Mr. Mike Kinnison (via Zoom), Dr. Charles McAdams (via Zoom), Dr. Michelle Roberts (via Zoom), Mr. Jamie Rutledge (via Zoom), Mr. Jeff Slagell (via Zoom), Dr. Jonathan Westfall (via Zoom), and Mr. Richard Word (via Zoom) (recorder – Ms. Claire Cole)

**Members not in attendance:** Mr. Rick Munroe

**Guest:** Ms. Robin Douglas, COVID-19 Response Coordinator

**Call to Order:** A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom conference call on September 8, 2020. The meeting convened at 2:00 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

On motion by Mr. Word and seconded by Dr. McAdams, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on August 31, 2020.

On motion by Mr. Word and seconded by Dr. McAdams, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the special called Cabinet Meeting held on September 2, 2020.

**GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the last week. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce met last week. Mr. Word hosted a Zoom meeting to introduce President LaForge to the new SGA Appointed Officers. President LaForge and Mr. Munroe had a stewardship visit with the President of Delta Regional Foundation, Mr. Charlie McGuffee.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. Several teams will enter non-competition, eight-hour segment weeks this week. Teams are allowed participate in up to four hours of activity and four hours of weight lifting and conditioning. The football team held their Unity Walk last week, and it was a positive and well-received event.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. Mr. Rutledge met with Bureau of Buildings staff and project architects via Zoom to discuss all projects and ensure the projects are on time. There were difficulties in advertising the campus-wide elevator project, but all issues should be resolved today in order for the advertisement to be posted. The campus roofing project will be re-advertised in November, and the project will begin in January. Some of the HVAC projects and dorm renovations will begin in November. Mr. Rutledge will participate in a meeting with the architect and contractors for the Walter Sillers Coliseum project to discuss the condensation on the gym floor caused

by a boiler issue. Last week, Mr. Rutledge visited each building and spoke with its respective building manager to discuss the cleanliness of all common areas especially the restrooms. All restrooms were thoroughly cleaned, and the building managers were pleased with the cleanliness of their buildings. Mr. Rutledge asked Cabinet members for their assistance in notifying faculty and staff that they should report any issues to the building managers.

- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge participated in the weekly COVID-19 update conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and the other Institutional Executive Officers this morning. The Gulf South Conference (GSC) Board of Directors met this morning to discuss spring competition. On Thursday, President LaForge will host a Zoom meeting for the Office of Admissions staff, the Office of Graduate Admissions, and the Office of International Services to thank those staff members for their recruitment efforts for the 2020-21 academic year. The annual Student Leadership Conference is scheduled for Friday, and the theme will be “Beyond All Limits.” President LaForge will provide remarks to the student leaders regarding “Leadership on Campus.”

### **CABINET TOPIC**

#### **COVID-19 Plans for Fall 2020 ..... President LaForge**

President LaForge led Cabinet members in a discussion of the university’s COVID-19 plans for Fall 2020. As mentioned earlier, President LaForge participated in a conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and all Institutional Executive Officers (IEO) this morning to discuss COVID-19 related issues. He shared with Cabinet members the update on current active cases at all eight universities, as well as the number of employees and students in quarantine and isolation. All IEOs will participate virtually in the annual IHL Board Retreat on September 17 to provide the Board of Trustees with an overall COVID-19 update. The update will include a review of COVID-19 cases for employees and students since the beginning of school; hotspots on campus; the impact on campus finances; and, challenges going forward. President LaForge participated in the GSC Board of Directors meeting this morning. The GSC Joint Administrators recommended the conference conduct no official GSC competition in the sport of football for the 2020-21 academic year. Institutions may schedule contests after January 1, 2021 with outside competition at their discretion. The Joint Administrators also recommended that the conference conduct meaningful competition for the sports of soccer and volleyball in Spring 2021 with the Championships Committee and Coaches Committee to provide a format for the competition. The Board of Directors approved both recommendations. Ms. Douglas provided Cabinet members with an update on several items related to her efforts as the COVID-19 Response Coordinator. She shared the current number of positive cases among faculty, staff, and students, and she reported on the number of students in quarantine and isolation. Ms. Douglas reported 10 units in Hill Apartments will be available for use today as four units are being cleaned. Mr. Rutledge explained the two-day cleaning process of Hill Apartments to Cabinet members. Once Facilities Management receives notice of a student rotating off quarantine/isolation in Hill Apartments, custodial staff requires two days to clean and sanitize the unit for the next student. During last week’s Executive Committee meeting, Executive Committee members voted to revise the Student Protocols to allow for commuter students to be treated as residential students in terms of the quarantine and isolation process as well as meal delivery from the dining hall. Mr. Rutledge stated commuter meals will be paid for through CARES Act funds. The Healthcare Specialists are serving as great resources for campus. Each of these nurse practitioners has done a wonderful job thus far, and they are learning our protocols and how to enter information into our database. Ms. Douglas is in the process of revising the Employee and Student protocol documents with respect to the updated Mississippi State Department of Health guidelines. Final revisions will be reviewed during this week’s Executive Committee meeting and employees and students will be sent the revised protocols upon completion. Mr. Word and his SGA Cabinet created two social

media videos targeted at our student body. One video addressed how to have a safe and healthy Labor Day weekend, and it was released last week on the SGA Facebook page. The other video will answer frequently asked questions related to COVID-19, and it will be released today on the SGA Facebook page. Ms. Douglas stated professors have helped tremendously in minimizing the problem of students not self-reporting to the Office of Student Life. Professors are referring students to the Office of Student Life after the student self-reports to the professor. The Counseling Center continues to contact students in quarantine and isolation to offer their services. Lately, we have been experiencing extended wait times in receiving test results for employees and students in quarantine. Ms. Douglas has arranged with Bolivar Medical Center for all COVID-19 test results for a Delta State employee or student to be emailed to Ms. Lisa Giger in Human Resources or Ms. Rochelle Owsley in the Office of Student Life, respectively. Ms. Douglas has also looked into our Student Health Center providing COVID-19 rapid tests administered by our Healthcare Specialists. She will bring a report to the Executive Committee once all information is received. Ms. Douglas reported the Wesley Foundation donated goodie bags for the students in quarantine/isolation, and the goodie bags will be delivered today by Housing and Residence Life staff. If any Cabinet members want to donate items or funds for the goodie bags or know of someone wanting to donate, Ms. Douglas is accepting both as she would like to provide goodie bags to students in quarantine/isolation once a week. Dr. McAdams reported the number of students who requested to take all Fall courses online is 212. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members that Sodexo has modified plans for Phase II of re-opening the Young-Mauldin Cafeteria. They have postponed the “in person” dining date from September 14 to September 21, in case a surge of cases arises from the Labor Day holiday. Also, they have reduced the number of customers who can eat in the cafeteria at one time from 100 to 75. Customers can sit at tables of two or four, and the tables will be socially distanced from others. Once the 75-person capacity is reached, customers will be able to get their meals to go. All meals will be served—self-service is not available. Phase II re-opening will be evaluated after two to three weeks to see if it is working. Mr. Rutledge stated the phone app that allows advanced ordering and payment should be live later this month. He will invite Mr. Kelvin Davis to Cabinet to discuss the app in full. Mr. Rutledge provided Cabinet members with an update on CARES Act funds unobligated. Currently, \$253,000 of the State CARES Act funds are unobligated. Also, Mr. Kinnison and Mr. Rutledge will review potential ways to save money on required athletic testing to allow the university to obligate some of those funds for other purposes.

**BUSINESS**

**Action**

None

**Discussion**

**Enrollment Update ..... Dr. Bennett-Fairs/Dr. McAdams**

Dr. Bennett-Fairs provided Cabinet members with an update on enrollment. Currently, 485 new students are registered for their Fall courses. The Office of Admissions has now turned their focus to recruiting for Fall 2021. Dr. Bennett-Fairs shared with Cabinet members the Office of Admissions’ new recruitment video. Dr. McAdams reported 18 of the 723 graduate students enrolled for Fall 2020 were purged from their courses, and the Graduate Admissions staff worked with those students to help them re-enroll in their courses.

**Fall 2020 International Student Statistics .....Dr. McAdams**

Dr. McAdams shared with Cabinet members the Fall 2020 International Student Statistics document. Delta State has 105 international students from 41 countries enrolled for Fall 2020, and England is represented most with 13 students. The document provides a break down on different areas including: classification, gender, athletes, first-time vs. returning, majors, and countries represented. *\*See document*

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

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget. The FY21 budget allows for a possible decrease in enrollment of up to 11%, which can be covered with the \$500,000 contingency fund, delay of \$620,000 of capital assets purchases, and \$480,000 that was set aside for a potential 5% decrease in State appropriations. Mr. Rutledge reviews enrollment figures each day, and he will have a better grasp on our next step once enrollment figures are final. Mr. Rutledge has reviewed the cash flow reports from the first two months of the fiscal year, and they look great.

Dr. Westfall requested an update on the reopening of the water fountains in all buildings. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Mr. Rutledge doesn't have an answer; however, he has looked into purchasing stations for refilling water bottles stations that could be put in buildings. Also, he will communicate with PepsiCo about providing bottled water to faculty and staff in all buildings.

**Additional information**

- Mr. Slagell announced the plans for celebrating Delta State's 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary include the launch of a new webpage containing new resources, oral histories, and old footage converted to YouTube videos. Also, Ms. Emily Jones, University Archivist, plans to create a display honoring the 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in the window unit at the Jimmy R. William Bookstore.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- Virtual Student Leadership Conference, September 11
- Delta State University's 95th Anniversary, September 15

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, September 14 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 3:09 p.m.