

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY
PRESIDENT'S CABINET
Minutes

Meeting date: June 29, 2015

Members in attendance: President William LaForge, Dr. Wayne Blansett, Mr. Ronnie Mayers, Dr. Charles McAdams, Mr. Steve McClellan, Dr. Michelle Roberts (via phone), Dr. Myrtis Tabb, and Ms. Leigh Emerson

Members not in attendance: Mr. Keith Fulcher, Dr. Debbie Heslep, Ms. Marilyn Read, Mr. Jeff Slagell, Dr. Leslie Fadiga-Stewart, and Mr. Mikel Sykes

Guests: Dr. David Hebert, Past President, Faculty Senate

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on June 29, 2015. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge asked Dr. Blansett to give an update on our Orientation sessions. Dr. Blansett stated we had approximately 114 students and their parents to attend the second freshmen session, which is good because it is usually our smallest. Hopefully the third session will be well attended also.
- President LaForge attended the Gulf South Conference (GSC) meeting last week. The only big change was to increase the basketball season to 22 games instead of 16. Our basketball teams will play everyone in the GSC twice. Delta State was well represented with student-athletes Tyler Sullivan and Taylor Holland both receiving Top 10 awards. The Gulf South Conference is running well, and Matt Wilson is doing a great job in his first year as Commissioner. Also, President LaForge has agreed to be considered for election to the NCAA's Council of Presidents.
- President LaForge said he has been notified that we have a sex offender on campus. Dr. Blansett said the notification was a renewal of this person's status. This individual has been on our campus for a while, and the Police Department is aware of the situation.
- President LaForge reminded Cabinet Members about the Band Perry concert tonight. The DMI All Stars will be the opening act, beginning at 7:30 pm.
- President LaForge shared with the group an article from the *Clarion Ledger* which discusses the print edition of the student newspaper being cut by DSU.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Mr. Mayers, seconded by Dr. Blansett, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on June 22, 2015.

CABINET TOPIC

Student Retention: Overview of Effective Strategies and Next StepsDr. McAdams

Dr. McAdams introduced the topic via a PowerPoint presentation (see handout). He discussed, "Where we have been", "Where we are going", and "How we are going to get there". The Academic

Council approved the plan he is presenting, and it will be discussed further at the Cabinet Retreat in July. He discussed the student retention strategies from all levels of the campus: Faculty, Departments, Student Success Center, and the entire campus. He said the goal is to retain 70% of first time freshmen and transfer students.

BUSINESS

Action

Class Attendance Policy (first reading)Dr. McAdams

Dr. McAdams presented the current policy with changes highlighted. The changes address three areas: 1) two policies were merged to form this policy—the “Class Attendance” policy and the “Attendance of On-Line Classes” policy; 2) It is expected that class attendance be taken at each class period; and, 3) Excused absences do not count in the total number of absences as it relates to students, who have absences greater than 25%, being dropped from a course.

Motion: Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the revised “Class Attendance” policy for first reading and seconded by Dr. Hebert. **The motion was approved.**

Other Discussion

- President LaForge stated that Dorothy Shawhan, Delta State retiree, has left 250 boxes of books and papers to DSU including copies of her book “Lizzie.”
*President LaForge will discuss with Mr. Jeff Slagell and Ms. Emily Jones what we need to do with the gifts. He will also write a letter of thanks to Ms. Shawhan’s family.
- Dr. Blansett discussed the transition with Dr. E.E. “Butch” Caston, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs. He stated they have met several times, and they have met with the Division members. He is a good people-person, and he will be good for the position. He announced that Ms. Jeanna Wilkes, Advisor in the Student Success Center, will be the new Director of Student Life, and Mrs. Bevin Lamb, Secretary in Communications and Marketing, is the new Administrative Assistant.
- President LaForge announced he has received requests from Dr. Chuck Westmoreland, Assistant Professor of History, and Mr. Mikel Sykes to issue a statement regarding the need to change Mississippi’s flag due to the divisive nature of the Confederate symbol. The Executive Committee will discuss this at their meeting tomorrow. We will also seek advice and guidance from the IHL office to see if they will issue a statement from the system.
- Mr. Mayers announced they mailed 6,000 letters requesting donations for Coach Dave “Boo” Ferriss’ statue.
- President LaForge announced the visitation for Mrs. JoBeth Janoush, Delta State alumna, will be tomorrow from 10:00-11:00 am, and the funeral will be at 11:00 am at First Baptist Church.
- Dr. Blansett stated he has thoroughly enjoyed his 40 years at Delta State. He feels the university is headed in the right direction, and he is leaving the Student Affairs division in good hands with Dr. Caston. Even though tomorrow is his last day of employment, he plans to remain active with DSU.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Band Perry, June 29, 7:30 pm, McCool Stadium
- Cabinet Retreat, July 21-22
- Opening Session, August 14, 10:30 am, BPAC
- GRAMMY Museum Mississippi, Grand Opening, November 14

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, July 6, 2015 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – OIT Control Issues (Steve/Myrtis)
Capital Campaign Overview (Keith)

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:55 pm.

Specific Steps to Promote Academic Success

Delta State University
Office of Academic Affairs

Context for Improving Retention

Research suggests that “First-Generation” and “Pell-eligible” students view and react to the world differently than do other students. These students often come to college with increased fear and anxiety about their ability to succeed. They look around and often do not see others “who look like them” succeeding. Consequently, their aversion to risk is high and their self-confidence and resilience is low. These characteristics are not a reflection of these students’ ability to succeed, but of their mindset which directly impacts their behavior. Many students do not come to Delta State with the tools or habits they need to succeed, but they can be taught how to develop and use the tools required to succeed academically.

Specifically, national research informs us that students are at a greater risk of dropping out if they:

1. Remain “undecided” and are not on a clear path for degree completion by the end of their first year
2. Have not completed a college-level math and English course by the end of their first year
3. Do not attend class regularly
4. Are not involved on campus

Consequently, all students benefit from:

- Strong connections to faculty and to the campus via student organizations
- Early and frequent feedback in their classes
- Academic support and engagement integrated into their learning experiences

Faculty are the guardians of academic integrity and are a crucial component to student success. However, the challenge of significantly increasing student retention and graduation require a team of faculty, the expertise and commitment of the Student Success Center, and caring staff all across campus to be engaged in this effort. We must identify processes and areas of support that can be modified to motivate students to take responsibility for their own learning **and assume an active and engaged role** in their own education.

STRATEGIES FOR RETENTION

FACULTY

1. **Take attendance in every class.** Faculty should consider using the Early Alert program with students after their second absence in a row and also consider emailing students directly to inquire about them and encourage them to “catch up.”
2. **Assess students early and often.** Low stakes early feedback in EVERY class in the first THREE Class periods is critical to help students know if they need help. Use **S.O.S. Early Alert**.
3. Fully use the CAPP curriculum and degree auditing software AND the new Pilot software (when available) to track progress and appropriately advise students. Use these tools to implement **“intrusive advising” techniques** for students who are not on track academically or emotionally.

Proactive

4. Students who are able should be enrolled for 15 hours each fall and spring semester.
5. Submit Mid-term grades for ALL students receiving a D or F.

DEPARTMENTS

1. Consider identifying successful majors (juniors and seniors) who are first-generation students to serve as “peer-mentors” or “success coaches” for freshman or transfer majors. If possible, provide a “success coach” for all majors; if not, provide one for all first-generation majors or majors with an ACT of 20 or below.
2. Pilot the Supplemental Instructor program, as appropriate.
3. Develop or fully support a discipline-specific student organization.
4. Consider offering a summer open online course available to incoming freshmen and transfer students on a topic meaningful to your department. Examples include:
 - what an incoming (biology, accounting, music, etc.) major needs to know
 - a basic introduction to the major
 - a “refresher” or “catchup” class in math skills, writing skills, etc.

STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER

1. Work with chairs to develop **Meta-Majors** to guide the paths of all “undecided” students.
2. Work with Departments to pilot the use of **Supplemental Instructors (SIs)** for select Gateway Courses.
3. Provide Academic Advisors training for faculty using CAPP and Pilot (when it becomes available).
4. Continue to refine FYS 100 and FYS 300.
5. Develop an online version of a “metacognition learning skills” workshop for students.
6. Test and implement the new Pilot student engagement and advising software tool.

ENTIRE CAMPUS

1. Expand programs that immerse students in campus life/volunteerism – **Student ENGAGEMENT in almost ANYTHING is critical. Students need to feel like they belong.**
2. Identify and eliminate or revise processes or practices that contribute to student frustration and create barriers to success.
3. We must all **PROVIDE EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE** to students!