

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: April 19, 2021

Members in attendance: President William LaForge (via Zoom), Chief Jeffrey Johns (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), Dr. Jonathan Westfall (via Zoom), Mr. Jeff Slagell (via Zoom), and Mr. Richard Word (via Zoom) (recorder – Ms. Claire Cole)

Members not in attendance: None

Guests: Dr. Vicki Bingham, Incoming Representative, Academic Council
Ms. Robin Douglas, COVID-19 Response Coordinator
Dr. Andrew Wegmann, President-Elect, Faculty Senate
Mr. William Young, President-Elect, Student Government Association

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom video conference on April 19, 2021. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Mr. Word and seconded by Chief Johns, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on April 12, 2021.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. President LaForge provided a welcome for the Southwest Airlines Day hosted by the College of Business and Aviation. The College of Education and Human Sciences hosted their scholarship and awards ceremonies, as did the Humanities division. The DSU Research Showcase was held virtually. The Institutional Executive Officers met, and President LaForge gave a report of the topics discussed during their meeting. The topics discussed included: the State's new transgender legislation being at odds with NCAA policy; 2021 legislative session and the increase in State appropriations; salary increases; and, the possibility of gun legislation during the 2022 legislative session. President LaForge traveled to Jackson for the IHL Board of Trustees meeting and a recognition luncheon honoring the four Board members whose service is ending. The four Board of Trustees members honored were Dr. Ford Dye, Mr. Shane Hooper, Ms. Ann Lamar, and Mr. Hal Parker. During the Board of Trustees meeting, the following Delta State agenda items were approved: Educational Specialist in Curriculum and Instruction degree program; Educational Specialist in Higher Education degree program; FY22 tuition, room, and board rates; and, Spring 2021 degrees to be conferred. The FY22 appropriation allocation and salary guidelines were approved, as well. The Greek Awards took place last week, and President LaForge participated in the inauguration of Dr. Felecia Nave, President of Alcorn State University.

- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The football team finished their spring drills with a scrimmage last Thursday, and they have one more week of weight training workouts for the semester. The golf team is at the Gulf South Conference tournament in Mobile, AL, and they began the final round today in sixth place. The men’s tennis team won two matches over the weekend against Harding University and Auburn University at Montgomery, and they will participate in the Gulf South Conference tournament on Thursday. The women’s tennis team lost to Harding University last week, and they will participate in the Gulf South Conference tournament on Thursday. The baseball team won their series against University of Montevallo over the weekend, and they will compete against University of Arkansas – Monticello on Tuesday. The softball team lost their series to the University of Montevallo over the weekend. The baseball and softball teams host University of Alabama at Huntsville this weekend. The Athletics Department’s annual Green and White Awards will be held virtually on May 4 beginning at 6:00 p.m. The Hey Coach Radio Show will broadcast from Lost Pizza Co. tonight beginning at 6:00 p.m. on 107.5 FM. President LaForge announced Mr. Kinnison’s jersey number will be retired this weekend, prior to the first baseball at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. On behalf of Facilities Management, Mr. Gerald Finley participated in a walk-through last week to check off all punch list items for the Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project. Facilities Management will install sod along the sidewalks beginning tomorrow, so it will be complete by Commencement on April 30. The contractors for the campus-wide elevator project, residence hall roofing project, and residence halls renovations projects are in the process of ordering materials for their respective projects in order to begin work May 3. The residence halls renovations and roofing projects should be complete by the first day of the Fall semester.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. The final candidate for the Vice President for Academic Affairs is on campus today, and President LaForge met with him this morning. GRAMMY Museum® Mississippi will host their first in-person event tonight — Women in the Round, featuring Delta State’s own Ms. Tricia Walker and some of her colleagues from Nashville, TN. The Campaign Steering Committee, as well as the Gulf South Conference Board of Directors, will meet on Tuesday. Also, President LaForge will meet with Mr. Will Young about his upcoming term as President of Student Government Association. The BPAC will host on Tuesday evening their first event for the season — the Allman Betts Band will perform two shows. President LaForge will meet with GRAMMY Museum Mississippi Executive Director Emily Havens and Ms. Michelle Johansen to discuss the museum’s diversity and inclusion initiatives. The Campus Forum for faculty and staff will be held Wednesday at 3:00 p.m. President LaForge will film another segment of his Statesmen Insider on Thursday regarding Spring Commencement. The Greenville Rotary Club invited President LaForge to be their guest speaker on Thursday. Human Resources will host the Retirement and Service Awards Ceremony on Friday. President LaForge stated that both vice presidential searches are nearing completion, and he will make his decisions in a very consultative way during the next couple of weeks.

CABINET TOPIC

COVID-19 Response Update and Plans President LaForge

President LaForge led Cabinet members in a discussion of the university’s COVID-19 response and plans. 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 faculty, staff, and students in quarantine and isolation. Ms. Douglas reported there is one student in Hill Apartments, and there are no students in the off-campus location. Currently, the university has no hot spots. The Bolivar County drive-through COVID-19 vaccine

distribution site has provided more than 2,500 vaccinations, and 1,386 people have completed their vaccination process. Beginning this week, the Bolivar County drive-through COVID-19 vaccine distribution site will be without Delta State School of Nursing faculty and student-nurses as part of their volunteer base. Ms. Douglas is working with Communications and Marketing on a marketing campaign for the Student Health Center and their ability to provide basic health services to students and employees. The purchase of medical supplies for the Student Health Center has stalled due to a required credit application from the medical supplier. In an effort to recognize employees for going above and beyond the call of duty with regards to COVID-19, Ms. Douglas created the “COVID-19 Response Team Hero of the Week” recognition. Ms. Crystal Beach will be the “COVID-19 Hero of the Week” for April 19-23. Dr. Keppler participated in a conference call hosted by the Mississippi Department of Health and other health experts from Jackson to discuss how to get students more involved in the vaccination process. Jackson State University will host a meeting for student leaders to discuss this issue and determine how to increase student interest on each university’s respective campus. Dr. Keppler informed Cabinet members the federal Coronavirus Responses and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act funds disbursements are completed for the semester. Approximately \$400,000 will be made available to students enrolled in the Summer or Fall. Mr. Kinnison stated student-athletes in active competition — baseball, golf, softball, and tennis — are subjected to COVID-19 testing every two weeks, with 25% of each team being tested, and this is a testing week. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the university has not yet received its second round of Higher Education Emergency Relief funds; however, the university will receive additional funds during the third round of Higher Education Emergency Relief.

BUSINESS

Action

Emeritus Status – Staff (revised – first reading) Chief Johns

On the recommendation of the Administrative Staff Council, Chief Johns brought to Cabinet the revised Emeritus Status - Staff policy for a first reading. The policy was revised to mirror the Emeritus Status – Faculty policy. All staff employees in good standing who have served at least ten consecutive years at Delta State are eligible for emeritus status in their final year of service, once their official date of retirement has been determined. Previously, staff employees had to serve at least 15 consecutive years at the university. The nomination process was revised to include: a February 1 deadline for Human Resources to notify department heads of any staff members who are retiring and eligible for emeritus status; a recommendation must be submitted to the Chair of the Administrative Staff Council by March 1; the Chair of the Administrative Staff Council will present staff nominees for approval to the President’s Cabinet; and, the final decision will be made by the President. Dr. Roberts recommended additional changes be made to the policy to mirror the Emeritus Status – Faculty policy: 1) add a deadline of March 15 by which the Chair of the Administrative Staff Council must present nominees to the President’s Cabinet for approval; 2) add a deadline of May 1 by which the President will notify staff of the final determination of emeritus status; and 3) add that staff members will be recognized at the Retirement and Service Awards Ceremony hosted by Human Resources. One final suggestion made by Dr. Roberts was for the Administrative Staff Council and the Faculty Senate to discuss the eligibility of a faculty or staff member. Currently, the Emeritus Status – Staff policy states a staff member is eligible upon retirement, and the Emeritus Status – Faculty policy states a faculty member is eligible in their final year of service. Dr. Roberts suggested that faculty and staff should be treated the same way.

Motion: Moved by Chief Johns to approve the first reading of the revised Emeritus Status – Staff policy and seconded by Dr. Westfall. The motion was approved.

FY22 Budget Plans Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members a revision made to the FY22 budget approved by Cabinet members at the April 12, 2021 Cabinet meeting. At the request of the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration, IHL staff requires the Repair and Renovation funds (capital expenditure funds) to be included in each university's Fund 10 budget for FY22. As this was a new request, Mr. Rutledge did not have the Repair and Renovation funds listed in the FY22 budget proposal last week. The Repair and Renovation funds are now included in the proposed revenue and proposed expenditures; thereby, increasing the university budget by \$607,055. The proposed university budget for FY22 is now \$49,865,599.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the FY22 budget revision and seconded by Mr. Slagell. The motion was approved.

Discussion

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget and shared with Cabinet members the Cash Flow projections for March 2021. This report compares the current cash flows to the cash flows from March 2020. The university's bank receipts from March 2020 to March 2021 have increased. The university received payment from IHL for January and February Education Enhancement funds. Federal funds increased from last year to this year due to CARES and Higher Education Emergency Relief funds. Employee payroll increased due to additional employees for the university's COVID-19 response and the Bolivar County drive-through COVID-19 vaccine distribution site. Vendor and student disbursements increased, as well. University travel decreased due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. The March 2021 ending cash balance was \$9,244,838 which is more than this time last year. The university continues to increase its cash balance. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the 2021 Monthly Cash Flow Report that he updates monthly once the bank reconciliations are complete. Mr. Rutledge will update the monthly projections accordingly to adjust for any unexpected expenses or revenues.

Campus Forums Dr. Roberts

Dr. Roberts reminded Cabinet members that the Campus Forum for faculty and staff will be held on Wednesday, April 21 at 3:00 p.m. virtually. She requested help from Cabinet members in promoting the forums and encouraging employees to participate. Questions can be submitted to constituency group leaders prior to the forum or asked during the event. The link for the forum will be emailed to faculty and staff the day prior to the forum. Dr. Roberts shared with Cabinet members the topics to be covered: the COVID-19 Campus Plan for Returning to Normal Operations; Spring 2021 Commencement; academic plans for Fall 2021; 2021 legislative session; an update on vice presidential searches; FY2021 budget status; FY2022 budget plans; summer four-day work week; campus projects; and, new initiatives. Dr. Keppler and Mr. Word discussed the need for a student forum, and it was decided to host a forum prior to the SGA Inauguration on Monday, April 26. The forum will be in person and will begin at 6:00 p.m. President LaForge and Dr. Keppler will serve on the panel, and the other vice presidents will be in attendance to field questions, as well. Topics to be discussed during the student forum include: the COVID-19 Campus Plan for Returning to Normal Operations; Spring 2021 Commencement; academic plans for Fall 2021; 2021 Summer Orientation; tuition increase; meal plan increase; single and double occupancy room rates; campus projects; and, new initiatives.

Early Registration and Orientation Registration Update Dr. Keppler

Dr. Keppler shared with Cabinet members that the Office of Admissions, as part of their recruiting

initiatives, has a pre-registration process for high school seniors and first-time transfer students to register early for their Fall 2021 courses. Currently, 77 students have taken advantage of this opportunity and registered for their Fall 2021 courses. Those seniors and transfers registering early are also encouraged to register for Summer 2021 Orientation. Currently, 63 students have registered for Summer 2021 Orientation; and, the goal is to have 100 students participate at each session.

Additional information

- President LaForge announced the next Cabinet meeting will be in person in the Simmons Room of the Hugh Ellis Walker Alumni-Foundation Building. This will be the last meeting for the four outgoing members — Dr. Westfall, Chief Johns, Mr. Slagell, and Mr. Word. COVID-19 protocols will be followed.
- Dr. Roberts extended a special thank you to Dr. Bingham and her faculty and student nurses for volunteering to work the Bolivar County drive through COVID-19 vaccine distribution site. Dr. Bingham responded that the vaccine site has been a wonderful learning experience in public health nursing for the university's student nurses and that they have enjoyed it. Dr. Bingham thanked Cabinet members for the opportunity.
- Dr. Roberts shared with Cabinet members that last week President LaForge completed his eighth year as President of Delta State.
- Dr. McAdams shared with Cabinet members his sentiments on how dedicated the university's deans are to the university and their respective areas. He echoed the sentiments made about Dr. Bingham, as well, and he thanked Mr. Slagell for the work he does for the Research Showcase each year.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Faculty and Staff Forum, April 21, 3:00 p.m., Virtual
- Student Forum, April 26, 6:00 p.m., Jobe Auditorium
- SGA Inauguration, April 26, 6:30 p.m., Jobe Auditorium
- Student Hall of Fame Ceremony, April 29, BPAC
- Commencement, April 30, Sillers Coliseum

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, April 26 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – COVID-19 Response Update and Plans (President LaForge)

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.