

# DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S CABINET

### *Minutes*

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**Meeting date: April 27, 2020**

**Members in attendance:** President William LaForge (via Zoom), Dr. Vernell Bennett-Fairs (via Zoom), Dr. Tricia Killebrew (via Zoom), Mr. Mike Kinnison (via Zoom), Dr. Charles McAdams (via Zoom), Dr. Beverly Moon (via Zoom), Mr. Rick Munroe (via Zoom), Mr. Cetin Oguz (via Zoom), Dr. Michelle Roberts (via Zoom), Mr. Jamie Rutledge (via Zoom), and Ms. Elizabeth Swindle (via Zoom) (recorder – Ms. Claire Cole)

**Members not in attendance:** None

**Guests:** Chief Jeffrey Johns, Chair-Elect, Administrative Staff Council (via Zoom)  
Mr. Jeff Slagell, Representative, Academic Council (via Zoom)  
Dr. Jonathan Westfall, President-Elect, Faculty Senate (via Zoom)

**Call to Order:** A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom conference call on April 27, 2020. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

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

On motion by Ms. Swindle and seconded by Mr. Rutledge, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on April 21, 2020.

#### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. He thanked Cabinet members for their continued diligence in working from home and keeping the university open behind the scenes. President LaForge and Mr. Rutledge had a conference call with Mr. John Pearce, Ms. Jane Mapp, and Mr. Quentin Whitwell last week to discuss the golf course development feasibility study. Mr. Slagell shared with Cabinet members the Virtual Academic Research Poster Showcase went very well, and he thanked Dr. Todd Davis for his help with the virtual setup. Fourteen students participated in the showcase. Ms. Swindle shared with Cabinet members the results of the SGA elections—Mr. Richard Word was elected President; Mr. Will Young was elected Vice President; and, Ms. Celeste Turner was elected Treasurer. Run-off elections for Attorney General, Chief Justice, and Secretary begin tomorrow and conclude on Thursday.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. All GSC athletic directors continue to have a weekly conference call to discuss the effects of COVID-19 on their respective campuses and the overall picture of athletics. GSC staff asked each athletic director to provide the amount of days needed for a team to prepare for competition.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. Delta State received the Notice to Proceed for the Mayers Aquatics Center HVAC project, and both contracts for the storm damage projects were signed. The roofing project for the residence halls stalled due to the Bureau of Buildings.

Mr. Rutledge hopes to still finish the project during the summer. The Facilities Management Director decided yesterday to bring back employees in the Landscaping, Grounds, Electrical, Carpentry, and Custodial departments. All employees will continue to abide by social distancing protocols.

- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. The Foundation Task Force met this morning virtually, and IHL will host a conference call following the Cabinet meeting to discuss distribution guidelines for CARES Act funds.

## **CABINET TOPIC**

### **Campus Budget Review recap ..... President LaForge**

President LaForge thanked those who assisted with the Campus Budget Review session: Mr. Rutledge for his hard work in preparing the budget presentation; Cabinet members for responding to questions from faculty and staff; Dr. Killebrew and Mr. Oguz for fielding questions prior to the Campus Budget Review and during the event; Ms. Swindle for providing an update on how students are faring during this time; and, Dr. Edwin Craft and his staff for the technology setup and support. The Campus Budget Review lasted three hours and peaked at 218 participants. Dr. Killebrew and Mr. Oguz shared with Cabinet members the overall response of the Campus Budget Review was positive, and several faculty and staff members liked the virtual format more than in-person forums. Dr. Westfall stated the Campus Budget Review ignited an interest in faculty and staff members about the university and future long-term planning. Mr. Kinnison shared some feedback he received from his staff with regards to international students. Coaches for teams with a large majority of international students are concerned these students are being alienated since their tuition would increase at a higher percentage than non-international students. Also, there is concern over a higher tuition rate hindering recruitment of new international student-athletes. President LaForge asked Cabinet members if the recording of Campus Budget Review should be shared with faculty and staff who were unable to participate last week. Cabinet members discussed the pros and cons of offering the recording to faculty and staff members. Mr. Rutledge reminded Cabinet members preliminary budget discussions and data are typically not made available to the public. The Campus Budget Review was an attempt to be transparent about budget planning and to engage faculty and staff and not outside entities. President LaForge thanked Cabinet members for their input and stated he would provide an answer to Cabinet members by email by the end of the day.

### **FY21 Budget Plan Proposal ..... Mr. Rutledge**

President LaForge began the discussion by asking Cabinet members what suggestions made during the Campus Budget Review need to be added to the FY21 budget plan for consideration. Mr. Kinnison shared a suggestion made by his staff of raising tuition to 6.5% for all students instead of increasing international student fees by \$1,000. Dr. Moon requested a review of online course fees to see if fees could be intermittently increased to generate extra funds. President LaForge asked Mr. Kinnison to contact Mr. Matt Wilson, Commissioner of the Gulf South Conference (GSC), to inquire about tuition and fees of international student-athletes at other GSC schools. Also, President LaForge asked Dr. Bennett-Fairs to research international student fees and tuition at Delta State's comparable schools. Dr. Bennett-Fairs and Mr. Kinnison will provide a report on the tuition and fees prior to Thursday's Executive Committee meeting. Mr. Rutledge will inquire about the online fees and provide a report to the Executive Committee on Thursday. Dr. McAdams shared with Cabinet members a discussion he had with the Interim Chair of the Division of Social Sciences and History, Dr. Charles Westmoreland, following the Campus Budget Review. Dr. Westmoreland, along with Dr. Dave Breaux, would like the opportunity to refine the requirements and look for new efficiencies by combining the Liberal Studies and Community Development programs to better fit our university's needs. Instead of deleting these programs as proposed, Dr. McAdams will suspend until further notice. All savings from the deletion of these programs will be seen with their

suspension. Mr. Rutledge provided a brief recap on the FY21 budget plan proposal. The budget proposal suggested by the Executive Committee and Mr. Kinnison totals \$1,779,805 in budget reductions and includes a one-time transfer of \$169,114 of TFA funds to help reconcile the budget. The FY21 budget has several inevitable expenses that must be added including: \$500,000 for cash reserves; \$500,000 for a contingency fund; and, an increase of \$35,000 for workers' compensation insurance. The total for these inevitable expenses is \$1,035,000. Additionally, Mr. Rutledge was advised by the IHL CFO, Dr. John Pearce, to plan for a decrease of 5% in State appropriations or \$837,000. Several expenses paid each year that have never been a part of the budget will be added in FY21 budget including: GIT Instructor salary; Dissertation Committees fees; Compliance expenses; Radio Station expenses; Athletic Department travel; Student-Athlete meals; Student-Athlete insurance; escalation clauses for long term contracts; and, travel and moving expenses for faculty. These non-budgeted items total \$508,000. With the addition of the non-budgeted items, Delta State needs to reduce expenses or find new revenues in the amount of \$2,380,000. Cabinet members have discussed several items that could bring in new, enhanced revenue and offset some of our expenses including: a \$1,000 per year tuition increase for international students, a decrease in Phi Theta Kappa Scholarships by \$117,000, \$150,000 worth of scholarships rolling off the budget that will not be added back, and a 6% tuition increase. The tuition increase for international students will generate an estimated \$100,000, and the 6% tuition increase will generate an estimated net of \$825,984. An additional way to increase revenue would be to increase Dual Enrollment fees for an extra \$27,500. These enhanced revenue streams could offset expenses by \$1,220,484. Mr. Rutledge shared additional expenses that should be added to the budget in order to stay relevant. Those expenses include computer upgrades for \$300,000; additional technology upgrades for \$150,000; six vehicle replacements for \$120,000; and, an increase to the marketing budget of \$50,000. If these expense items are added to the budget, Delta State needs to reduce expenses or find new revenues in the amount of \$3,000,000. President LaForge shared it is unknown if the IHL Board will allow any university to increase revenue for the 2020-21 academic year, and there is deep concern over enrollment for the fall. The Executive Committee will discuss at their meeting on Thursday the suggestions from the Campus Budget Review and will provide a final FY21 budget proposal to Cabinet members for action.

President LaForge shared with Cabinet members a letter he received from the Mississippi Legislature. The letter states that while Mississippi has received significant federal money, it will clearly sustain significant losses in revenue. Financial concerns will be addressed upon their return to session. The Legislative Leadership asks all state agencies, and arms of the state which receive state dollars of any kind, to be very judicious about spending the rest of this fiscal year. COVID-19 has caused a near shutdown of the economy for a number of weeks, and the projected impact is significant. Legislators believe the State of Mississippi will have less money in the upcoming fiscal year than we had this fiscal year. Also, Legislators continue to work on analyzing any general policy which may be necessary to address the immediate and long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Action**

**Faculty Rights and Responsibilities policy – revised (first reading) .....Dr. McAdams**  
On the recommendation and approval of Academic Council, Dr. McAdams brought to Cabinet the revised Faculty Rights and Responsibilities policy for a first reading. All faculty members have a teaching load of 24-26 hours for the regular academic year regardless of teaching graduate or undergraduate programs.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the revised Faculty Rights and Responsibilities policy for a first reading and seconded by Dr. Moon. The motion was approved.

**Faculty Promotion policy – revised (first reading).....Dr. McAdams**

On the recommendation and approval of Academic Council, Dr. McAdams brought to Cabinet the revised Faculty Promotion policy for a first reading. In observance of the new standards for submitting agenda items to IHL, all submission deadlines for the Portfolio Review and Appeal portions of the promotion process were pushed back two weeks.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the revised Faculty Promotion policy for a first reading and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

**Faculty Promotion – Library Services policy – revised (first reading) .....Dr. McAdams**

On the recommendation and approval of Academic Council, Dr. McAdams brought to Cabinet the revised Faculty Promotion – Library Services policy for a first reading. In observance of the new standards for submitting agenda items to IHL, all submission deadlines for the Portfolio Review and Appeal portions of the promotion process were pushed back two weeks.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the revised Faculty Promotion – Library Services policy for a first reading and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

**Faculty Tenure policy – revised (first reading) .....Dr. McAdams**

On the recommendation and approval of Academic Council, Dr. McAdams brought to Cabinet the revised Faculty Tenure policy for a first reading. In observance of the new standards for submitting agenda items to IHL, all submission deadlines for the Portfolio Review and Appeal portions of the tenure process were pushed back two weeks.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the revised Faculty Tenure policy for a first reading and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

**Faculty Tenure – Library Services policy – revised (first reading).....Dr. McAdams**

On the recommendation and approval of Academic Council, Dr. McAdams brought to Cabinet the revised Faculty Tenure – Library Services policy for a first reading. In observance of the new standards for submitting agenda items to IHL, all submission deadlines for the Portfolio Review portion of the tenure process were pushed back two weeks.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the revised Faculty Tenure – Library Services policy for a first reading and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

**Search and Hire approvals ..... Cabinet Members**

There were no requests for search and hire approvals brought to the Cabinet.

**Discussion**

**Campus Response to COVID-19..... President LaForge**

President LaForge shared with Cabinet members recent updates to Delta State’s COVID-19 Action Plan. He informed Cabinet members this is an ever-changing document, and it will be updated as new information is released by IHL and the State. All eight public universities are trying to be consistent with their action plans, but each university has the authority to respond to unique requests and concerns. Delta State’s

COVID-19 Action Plan was most recently updated after the Governor’s Safer at Home orders were issued April 24. This Safer at Home order extends through May 11. Mayor Billy Nowell has relaxed his local ordinance, which now allows retail businesses to open with restrictions.

President LaForge announced Commissioner Al Rankins established a Safe Start Task Force for the university system. The task force will craft a system-level plan for starting and completing the fall 2020 semester in the safest and most effective way, so that students and universities can achieve the best possible outcomes, regardless of the challenging circumstances. Key leaders from each of the eight universities will serve on the task force and provide valuable input through their involvement. Delta State’s representatives are Dr. McAdams and Dr. Roberts.

President LaForge will participate in a conference with Commissioner Rankins and other IHL representatives following the Cabinet meeting to discuss guidance on distributing CARES Act student grant funds. An application posted to students’ Canvas accounts will be used to determine student need for CARES funds. Dr. Megan Smith, Director of Financial Assistance, will be the one reviewing the applications. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the policy on student refunds needs additional tweaking to be complete. He set up a meeting tomorrow to finalize remaining figures. Upon the completion of the meeting and the Executive Committee’s meeting on Thursday, refunds will be ready for distribution. Mr. Rutledge plans to speak to the Executive Committee on reimbursements for meal plans as his first suggestion limits revenue for the next fiscal year. Mr. Rutledge hopes the second installment of Delta State’s CARES grant can be used for student refunds and arrives in time to do so. The plan is provide issue refunds/credits to students by May 15.

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

Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members an update on the FY20 budget. As of today, the university has approximately \$6 million in cash. Additional revenue for the university — BPAC ticket sales, Child Development Center, summer camps, etc. — stalled due to the COVID-19 virus and the university will have approximately \$300,000 less in this other revenue. The State’s collection of revenue has declined, as well, and the university will have \$300,000 to \$400,000 less in our enhancement funds by the end of the year. The loss of both types of revenues causes the university to be around \$700,000 off of our revenue projections for the year. The university’s expenditures have decreased, but Mr. Rutledge believes they should decrease more. He will discuss with the Executive Committee at their next meeting additional ways to cut expenditures for the remainder of FY20. Mr. Rutledge spoke with IHL Chief Financial Officer, Mr. John Pearce, today regarding potential CARES Act funding from the State to help with expenses paid by the university to combat the COVID-19 crisis, especially administrative leave.

**Legislative Update ..... Mr. Munroe**

Mr. Munroe informed Cabinet Members that the Mississippi Legislature plans to resume their session on May 18.

**Make an IMPACT! Project ..... Dr. McAdams**

Dr. McAdams announced Delta State’s Student Success Center has a new program called Make an IMPACT! Project funded by the Woodward Hines Education Foundation. This program aims to continue Delta State’s commitment to meeting the needs of its historically underserved, underrepresented students who are first generation, of color, enrolled less than half-time, in their first-year or transfer, and/or from rural areas. These students face several challenges to persist including: lack of financial resources, being first generation college students, lack of preparedness for college-level courses, low ACT scores, inability to write effectively, and, high D/F/W rates in general education courses. Through this project, the Student

Success Center hopes to achieve the goal of 66% of underrepresented students served persisting from fall-to-fall and 38% of underrepresented students served graduating within six years. The core components of the program are: enhanced/expanded tutoring/supplemental instructors in high-risk gateway courses, increased availability of tutors for writing enhanced courses, and, additional resources and training offered to faculty, tutors, and project staff to help them identify writing issues and provide writing support for students in writing intensive courses. The Woodward Hines Education Foundation has pledged \$400,000 over a four-year period to fund this program, which begins on July 1, 2020. Through the funds, the Student Success Center plans to partner with a vendor that provides 24/7 tutoring, which is needed for our student population.

**Plans for recognizing graduating seniors .....Dr. McAdams**

Dr. McAdams will share information at the next Cabinet meeting due to a delay in responses.

**Additional information**

- Dr. Roberts informed Cabinet members Delta Council’s Annual Meeting will be postponed until the fall due to COVID-19. This postponement will be the third time in eight decades the meeting has been altered — the first was during World War II, the second was during the Flood of 2011, and now the Coronavirus in 2020.
- Dr. Bennett-Fairs and Ms. Swindle shared with Cabinet members the inaugural Statesmen Countdown to Campus video. A new video will be released each Friday.
- Dr. Moon informed Cabinet members \$100,000 worth of equipment from the Fusion Gymnastics gym was donated to various departments across campus.
- President LaForge announced The Bolivar Commercial will close this week after operating for 104 years. Coopwood Publishing will be offering a local newspaper called The Bolivar Bullet.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- Spring Exams, May 4-7
- Summer Session I, June 1
- New Student Orientation I, June 8

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, May 4 at 1:30 p.m. via Zoom
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 3:32 p.m.