

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: January 25, 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), 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: Dr. Michelle Roberts

Guests: Mr. Merritt Dain, Director, Admissions
Mr. Kelvin Davis, Director, Student Business Services
Ms. Robin Douglas, COVID-19 Response Coordinator
Dr. Beverly Moon, Dean, Graduate and Continuing Studies and Research
Dr. Christy Riddle, Director, Student Success Center
Dr. Megan Smith, Director, Student Financial Assistance

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom video conference on January 25, 2021. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Mr. Rutledge and seconded by Chief Johns, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on January 19, 2021.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge welcomed Mr. Merritt Dain, Mr. Kelvin Davis, Dr. Beverly Moon, Dr. Christy Riddle, and Dr. Megan Smith to the weekly Cabinet meeting. President LaForge and Cabinet members thanked the guests for their dedication and creative efforts in enrollment and retention; their unending outreach to current and potential students during the COVID-19 pandemic; and, their collaboration with other departments on campus to fulfill their collective goals. Also, President LaForge thanked Mr. Kinnison and his staff and coaches for their collective effort in recruitment and retention of Delta State's student-athletes.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. The Martin Luther King "Remembering the Light" candlelight ceremony took place last week. The Institutional Executive Officers and IHL Board of Trustees met last week. The Institutional Executive Officers discussed a myriad of legislative issues during their meeting including: anti-hazing, incentives for nurses and teachers, dual enrollment, weapons, and a deficit appropriation for financial aid. Also, concern was expressed over leave time for employees with COVID-19. Beginning on January 1, employees were not able to use administrative leave under the Family Medical Leave Act. Under President Biden's new

COVID-19 relief plans, leave time through the Family Medical Leave Act will be extended to cover COVID-19 again.

- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The women’s basketball team competed and won two games against Christian Brothers University over the weekend, and the men’s team won one game and lost one game against Christian Brothers University. The women’s basketball team will compete at home on Sunday and Monday against the University of Alabama-Huntsville. The University of Alabama-Huntsville postponed the men’s basketball games due to their team being on quarantine. The men and women’s swimming and diving teams competed and won against Rhodes College over the weekend, and they will host Rhodes College again on Saturday. Hey Coach Radio Show continues tonight at 6:00 p.m., and it has relocated to Lost Pizza Co.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. All concrete for the Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project has been poured, and the remaining portion of the project will be brick laying, dirt work, and landscaping. The HVAC project at the Mayers Aquatics Center continues. A change order has been requested to replace the door in the Mayers Aquatics Center as the HVAC unit is larger than the previous one. A larger door and entrance will allow Facilities Management full access to all parts of the HVAC unit. The elevator project and residence hall roofing projects bids were accepted on Friday. Mr. Rutledge has not heard from the Bureau of Buildings yet to know what contractors won the bids. Bids for the residence hall renovations will be released the second week of February. Mr. Rutledge stated the President’s home is almost complete, and President and Mrs. LaForge should be able to move in soon.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. The NCAA Convention continued this week with an educational session on financial contingency planning and future considerations. President LaForge and Mr. Munroe have calls with three State senators this week to discuss Delta State’s appropriations budget and bond issues. The three senators are: Finance Committee Chairman Josh Harkins; Appropriations Committee Vice-Chairman John Polk; and, Appropriations Committee Chairman Briggs Hopson.
- Dr. McAdams announced he plans to retire as Vice President for Academic Affairs at the end of the fiscal year. On behalf of Cabinet members, President LaForge thanked Dr. McAdams for his marvelous service to Delta State as our Provost, and said he will be missed terribly.

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 are three students in Hill Apartments, and there are no students in the off-campus location. The university had one hotspot last week. Ms. Douglas worked with the Office of OIT on the COVID-19 Canvas Module for Spring 2021. Currently, 2,257 students enrolled in the module have signed the attestation form stating they have reviewed and understand the COVID-19 Protocols. We have 53 international students who have completed the re-entry process and were released to return to campus. Two international students are waiting on their arrival documentation. Ms. Douglas has worked with Human Resources to hire an additional point-of-entry screeners for the Spring semester to be funded by the \$153,000 in CARES Act funds. On January 21, six point-of-entry screeners were added to the schedule. On January 22, 15 point-of-entry screeners will complete orientation with Human Resources and COVID-19 training prior to being added to the point-of-entry screener schedule. Ms. Douglas will provide a new point-of-entry building schedule to campus today. The new schedule includes point-of-entry

screening beginning at 7:00 a.m. in Ewing Hall and Bailey Hall to screen all employees arriving to those buildings at an earlier time. Ms. Douglas reported there is a new database for COVID-19 reporting for students. The Office of Student Life hired Ms. RiKiyia Short to keep the new database up to date. The Student Health Center purchased antibody tests in order to test any employee or student that has previously tested positive and was exposed to COVID-19 again. Anyone with the COVID-19 antibodies can return to work and will not have to quarantine. Cabinet members discussed the Daily Symptom Checker, and Ms. Douglas informed Cabinet members the Daily Symptom Checker should be filled out by all employees any time they are scheduled to be on campus. Additionally, the Daily Symptom Checker should be filled out by employees who are off campus on official university business. President LaForge requested Ms. Douglas, Dr. Westfall, Mr. Munroe, and Ms. Lisa Giger to meet outside of Cabinet to discuss how best to handle those employees who work remotely during the week and the need to fill out the symptom checker daily. He asked them to bring a report to Cabinet when ready. 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. Mr. Brent Powell will be the "COVID-19 Hero of the Week" for January 25-29. President LaForge shared with Cabinet members several actions were taken over the last few days to secure Bolivar County as a vaccine site, with Delta State serving as the physical site. The vaccine site will be in the west parking lot at McCool Stadium, and it should be operational by mid-February. The State Department of Health has to give final approval to Bolivar County's application to be a vaccine site. The State Department of Health has tentatively approved Bolivar County as a vaccine site holder, and we are waiting on final approval. Once Bolivar County is given final approval, community members can sign up to receive a vaccine. The university will provide the refrigeration units to store the vaccine. The Office of Information Technology will provide the site with laptops, printers, and paper. The Robert E. Smith School of Nursing staff and students will help administer the vaccines. At this time, the vaccine will be offered two to three days a week. President LaForge stated the university would not be burdened with the expenses for this site, minus servicing our own faculty, staff, and students. Any expenses incurred would be split between Bolivar County and the City of Cleveland. President LaForge expressed his gratitude to Dr. Steven Clark, CEO of Bolivar Medical Center Rob Marshall, Mayor Billy Nowell, and County Administrator Will Hooker for their efforts in securing this service for Bolivar County. He extended a special thank to Dr. Roberts for her extensive research and outreach to help move this project forward in a timely fashion. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members a spreadsheet showcasing all grants the university has received to offset the budgetary woes COVID-19 caused. The grants include: \$1,289,000 in CARES Act grant funds and \$124,800 in CARES Act Minority Service funds for a total of \$1.4 million; \$1,900,000 in CARES Act grand funds from the State; \$49,000 Robert M. Hearin Foundation grant; and, a \$4,272,712 Higher Education Emergency Relief fund from the Department of Education. Mr. Rutledge will provide Cabinet an update on how the \$4,272,712 of newly allocated grant funds will be spent.

BUSINESS

Action

None

Discussion

Vice President for Student Affairs Search Process..... President LaForge
President LaForge provided Cabinet members with an update on the search process for the Vice President for Student Affairs. He met with Human Resources Director Lisa Giger this morning to kick start the search process. Mr. Kinnison will serve as the chair of the search committee, and the committee will begin

meeting soon. President LaForge shared the names of the search committee: Dr. Westfall, Mr. Word; Chief Johns, Ms. Rochelle Owsley, Mr. Merritt Dain, Dr. Ellen Green, Ms. Dana George, Ms. Michelle Johansen, Mr. Patrick Davis, and Ms. Lisa Giger. Mr. Word recommended two additional students for the search committee: Ms. Hannah Malatesta and Mr. Haitham Touma. Any inquiries about the position should be directed to the search committee or Human Resources.

Admissions Events for Spring 2021..... Dr. Keppler

Dr. Keppler shared with Cabinet members upcoming Office of Admissions events for Spring 2021. Spring Preview Day will be March 6, and the event will be held in person and will adhere to all COVID-19 protocols. Several of Delta State’s sister institutions are holding similar in-person events this Spring, and the Office of Admissions believes Delta State would be behind the curve without hosting a Spring Preview Day in person. All Academic Insight Days will be held virtually in February.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget The December 2020 ending cash balance was \$4,413,486.13, which is more than this time last year. The university continues to increase its cash balance. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members an additional \$3.1 million in cash has not been added to our cash flow report from the increase in December; however, he is going to update his cash flow reports to show the effects of the \$3.1 million to share with Cabinet members. Mr. Rutledge sent the vice presidents and Mr. Kinnison Phase I and Phase II of the FY22 Budget Process for them to disseminate to their direct reports. In planning for the FY21 budget, Cabinet members planned for a flat enrollment; however, there was a decrease in enrollment. Due to the contingencies Cabinet members put into the budget planning, the decrease in enrollment was able to be absorbed. For the FY22 budget, Mr. Rutledge proposes to budget for a flat enrollment based on FY21 enrollment figures. By using the FY21 enrollment figures, budget cuts will need to be made. If enrollment increases in FY22, adjustments can be made at a later time.

Legislative Update Mr. Munroe

Mr. Munroe provided Cabinet members with an update on the 2021 Legislative session. Legislators have not indicated a desire to provide an appropriations increase for higher education during this legislative session. IHL’s request to legislators during this legislative session is an 8.3% increase for salaries. Mr. Munroe has scheduled three calls with legislators for President LaForge to discuss Delta State’s needs for appropriations and bond funds.

Proposed Anti-Hazing Legislation Dr. Keppler

Dr. Keppler shared with Cabinet members House Bill No. 5 and House Bill No. 6. Both bills are proposed anti-hazing legislation. The bills outline potential anti-hazing policies and potential sanctions of hazing. Mr. Munroe will keep Cabinet members apprised of any changes to this legislation as the legislative session proceeds.

Additional information

- President LaForge reported to Cabinet members that we have 506 students living in the residence halls this semester. President LaForge asked Dr. Keppler to research ways to increase residential living on campus and bring it to a future Cabinet meeting for a discussion.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Annual Margaret Tullos Field Symposium, February 26, 8:30 a.m., Virtual
- Winning the Race Conference, March 29-30, Virtual

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, February 1 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – COVID-19 Response Update and Plans

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:53 p.m.