

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY
PRESIDENT'S CABINET
Minutes

Meeting date: July 6, 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), Mr. Rick Munroe (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: None

Guests: Dr. Beverly Moon, Dean, Graduate and Continuing Education

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom conference call on July 6, 2020. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Chief Jeffrey Johns and seconded by Mr. Rutledge, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on June 8, 2020.

On motion by Mr. Rutledge and seconded by Dr. Roberts, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Advance held on June 23-25, 2020.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- Cabinet members discussed the Retirement and Service Awards Recognition Luncheon to be held tomorrow, July 7, at noon. President LaForge asked Mr. Rutledge to make sure all health and safety protocols are followed by attendees and the staff of the Office of Human Resources. President LaForge and Dr. McAdams will attend the luncheon virtually via Zoom.
- Dr. Bennett-Fairs shared with Cabinet members an overview of the first three Virtual New Student Orientations. The amount of registrations for the Virtual New Student Orientations are greater than registrations for last year's New Student Orientation season. A few issues seen thus far are getting students to participate after registering and being registered for their Fall semester classes prior to the orientation. The final two Virtual New Student Orientations are on July 13 and July 27, with registrations at 139 and 79, respectively. Recruiters from the Office of Admissions are calling all students who registered for the Virtual New Student Orientation, but did not participate or who have not registered for Fall semester courses. All IHL universities are expecting a decrease in Fall enrollment due to the uncertainty of COVID-19 protocols. Virtual New Student Orientation statistics are as follows:

- Virtual New Student Orientation I: 250 registrations, 136 participants; 116 freshmen registrations, of which 68 are registered for Fall semester courses; 115 transfer registrations, of which 61 are registered Fall semester courses.
- Virtual New Student Orientation II: 197 registrations, 89 participants; 75 freshmen registrations of which 37 are registered for Fall semester courses; 92 transfer registrations, of which 48 are registered for Fall semester courses
- Virtual New Student Orientation III: 116 registrations, 50 participants; 53 freshmen registrations, of which 25 are registered for Fall semester courses; 57 transfer registrations; of which 15 are registered for Fall semester courses.
- Virtual New Student Orientation IV: 134 registrations
- Virtual New Student Orientation V: 79 registrations
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the last few weeks. Delta State's Diversity Committee, Quality Enhancement Program, and Winning the Race Conference Committee held a campus-wide moment of silence in unity and solidarity for the recent events surrounding the death of Mr. George Floyd. President LaForge and Mr. Munroe participated in two fundraising meetings via Zoom, and both donors were very receptive to the information presented. President LaForge participated in the IEO and IHL Board meetings virtually. Topics covered during the IEO meeting were: the University Press of Mississippi budget and a potential 3% decrease; the cancellation of the Mississippi Association of Colleges and Universities Conference for the fall; academic calendar revisions for all eight universities including the end of semester being moved to prior to Thanksgiving; and the need to revamp housing agreements for residence halls due to COVID-19. During the IHL Board meeting, the Board of Trustees approved Delta State's professional services agreement continuation with Barnes and Noble College Booksellers, LLC; Mr. Munroe to serve as the university's legislative liaison for 2021; and, approved the university to rehire retirees for the FY21 fiscal year. Also, the Board of Trustees approved the following: COVID-19 related waivers for course requirements; the revised academic calendar; the FY21 funding allocation; no general salary increases for FY21; and, FY21 operating budgets. In lieu of in-person department visits, President LaForge has made several telephone calls over the past few weeks to continue his campus relations. President LaForge filmed a video segment to present the S.E. Kossman Outstanding Teacher Award to Dr. Shelley Collins and the H.L. Nowell Outstanding Support Staff Award to Ms. Julie Jackson.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members the Mississippi legislators passed the removal of the State flag in favor of a new design.
- Dr. Beverly Moon provided Cabinet members with an update on summer school enrollment. Graduate student enrollment has an increase of 28%, and undergraduate enrollment was only down four students, or less than 1%. With graduate and undergraduate enrollment combined, enrollment for Summer Session I was up 12.3% from last summer. Graduate enrollment for Summer Session II shows a 47.9% increase, and undergraduate enrollment shows an increase of 21%. Graduate and undergraduate enrollment combined for Summer Session II increased 33.6% from last year. Dr. Moon believes the postponing of the purge to a later date has helped with being able to keep students enrolled at Delta State as they are able to procure their financial aid before being purged. Also, 22 out of 29 active graduate programs have an automatic admissions process, which speeds up tremendously the process of admitting students to their program and helps retain students. Mr. Rutledge shared the tuition increase for Summer Session I and II is approximately \$889,000. President LaForge thanked Dr. Moon and her staff for their excellent work and going the extra mile.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The first light pole for McCool Stadium was erected today. The poles were damaged during storms at the beginning of the Spring semester. The second pole will go up this week, as well. Mr. Zach Zediker earned NCAA Division II Golf's highest honor when he was named the Jack Nicklaus Award winner by the Jack Nicklaus Foundation. Through this honor, Mr.

Zediker has an opportunity to compete in a PGA qualifying event. Mr. Kinnison informed Cabinet members a second wave of student-athletes returned today for voluntary, supervised workouts. Approximately 80 student-athletes are participating in the voluntary, supervised workouts now, and all groups are limited to 17 student-athletes with three strength and conditioning staff working with them. The football season has decreased to nine games with only four home games. The football season added a home-and-home football series with Angelo State University, which will be Delta State's opening game on September 3. Mr. Kinnison discussed the upcoming day camps for this weekend and next week. Due to the increase in COVID-19 cases, he expressed his concern in continuing the camps for the safety of his staff and the camp attendees. In his opinion, it would be best to cancel all camps through the end of the month. All Cabinet members agreed.

- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. Contractors for the President's home will be finished by August 1, and the President and Mrs. LaForge should be able to move in by the third week in August. Irrigation and landscaping for the President's home will begin this week. The contractors for the roofing project on Sillers Coliseum, Fielding Wright Art Building/Holcombe-Norwood Hall, and the Facilities Management building have only the punch list remaining to be complete. The notice to proceed was sent out on the HVAC project for the Mayers Aquatics Center. The storm damage repairs are on schedule. Mr. Rutledge and the Director of Facilities Management will begin discussing building needs with the building managers this week to prepare for the return of students in August. The roofing project for the residence halls was rejected due to high bids, and will be rebid in January.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. The Retirement and Service Awards Recognition Luncheon occurs tomorrow at noon, and President LaForge will meet with Dr. Temika Simmons on Wednesday to discuss the Winning the Race Conference and the Delta Proud Initiative.

CABINET TOPIC

Cabinet Advance: COVID-19 Action Plan for Fall 2020 recap President LaForge

President LaForge provided Cabinet members with a brief recap of the Cabinet Advance held on June 23-25. He asked Cabinet members to review their individual sections of the COVID-19 Action Plan for Fall 2020, and to provide final edits to Ms. Cole by Wednesday at noon. The final COVID-19 Action Plan for Fall 2020 will be reviewed by Cabinet members at the next Cabinet meeting. Once Cabinet members have vetted the final COVID-19 Action Plan for Fall 2020, Communications and Marketing will create the documents that will be disseminated to the various constituency groups.

President LaForge spoke with Mayor Billy Nowell this morning, and he will speak with the County Administrator later today about aligning the health and safety protocols and standards of the city, county, and Delta State. By aligning our protocols and standards, it will keep Delta State students safer upon their return to Cleveland and the Delta State campus.

President LaForge continues to have conference calls with IHL Commissioner Al Rankins and the other IEOs to discuss COVID-19 protocols and each university's preparedness for students returning in August. Commissioner Rankins scheduled a conference call with the IEOs and Mississippi State Health Officer Dr. Thomas Dobbs next week to discuss each university's planning efforts.

Dr. Roberts shared she will have the protocols document ready for the Executive Committee to review on Thursday and with Cabinet members next Monday. Mr. Rutledge stated that Sodexo has changed their plans for the Fall semester, and he will provide those to Cabinet members once they are received.

Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members additional funds are available to continue screening employees during the Fall semester; however, he believes it is necessary to provide additional training for screeners.

Mr. Rutledge shared the university received \$1,900,000 in CARES Act grand funds from the State. The funds can be used for training, professional development, measures to decrease the spread of COVID-19, cleaning supplies, technology, medical supplies, and PPE for employees and students. Mr. Rutledge will inquire about the date by which the funds must be spent.

Dr. McAdams shared with Cabinet members the current list of safety measures the university will submit to the Robert M. Hearin Foundation for consideration. The current list includes: student masks, hand sanitizer, COVID-19 testing and processing, flu shots, and technology improvements. The total amount for the projected safety measures is \$290,000. He will work with Mr. Rutledge and Ms. Heather Miller to finalize the list.

Cabinet members discussed the possibility of all classes going all online for the Fall semester and how our budget would be affected. Mr. Rutledge stated a lengthy conversation would need to occur about ways to offset the lack of revenue, including the possibility of furloughs and layoffs.

BUSINESS

Action

MDOT Sidewalk Project vendor Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the university received bids from five vendors for the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) sidewalk project (Project # STP-0090-00(009) LPA/108019-701000.) With a bid of \$538,585.00, the recommended vendor is Wildstone Construction Company. Prior to the start of the project, MDOT requires Cabinet members to approve President LaForge signing off on the evaluation of bids stating the recommended vendor is Wildstone Construction Company.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve President LaForge signing the evaluation of bids form stating Wildstone Construction Company is the recommended vendor and seconded by Dr. McAdams. The motion was approved.

Search and Hire approvals Cabinet Members

In response to the Cabinet's decision that all requests to search for and fill vacant positions will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Cabinet, Dr. Roberts brought to Cabinet positions previously approved by the Executive Committee for ratification. The positions presented do not impact the salary savings identified previously to address the budget shortfall for this fiscal year.

Motion: Moved by Dr. Roberts to ratify and affirm the following actions taken via e-mail by the Executive Committee members, on behalf of the Cabinet, since the last Cabinet meeting on June 8, 2020 and seconded by Mr. Word. The motion was approved.

- June 18, 2020 – Request from Dr. McAdams for approval to search for and hire an Assistant Professor of Nursing for the Robert E. Smith School of Nursing
- June 18, 2020 – Request from Dr. McAdams for approval to search for and hire an Associate Professor of Nursing and Chair of Nursing for the Robert E. Smith School of Nursing
- June 22, 2020 – Request from Mr. Munroe to search for and hire a Director of Communications and Marketing for the Office of Communications and Marketing

- June 23, 2020 – Request from Dr. McAdams to search for and hire a Teacher for the Child Development Center

Discussion

Tree Removal Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet Members that two trees need to be removed from campus. The first tree, an oak tree on the north side of Young-Mauldin Cafeteria, needs to be removed due to rotting. The second tree, a pecan tree in front of the President’s new home, needs to be removed due to rotting. The policy on tree removal states Mr. Rutledge has to inform Cabinet Members of the intention to remove the trees prior to their removal. Mr. Munroe will work with Communications and Marketing to get a press release out on the removal.

FY20 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided Cabinet members with an update on the FY21 budget. The university planned for a 5% decrease or \$837,000 in State appropriations. The university’s projected decrease, according to Mississippi Legislative Budget Office, will be a 2.8% decrease or \$386,000 in State appropriations. Mr. Rutledge recommends leaving the 5% decrease in our budget as is for two reasons: 1) to help offset any enrollment decline, and 2) the decrease is a projection and could change if the State doesn’t receive the expected revenue. Delta State was approved for \$3 million in bond funds. The bonds will be sold in October and November, and the university should receive the funds in December or January. Delta State’s four earmarks or line items — Aviation, the Delta Center, E-Learning, and the Delta Music Institute — received a 2.7% decrease in appropriations. The 2.8% decrease in State appropriations does not include capital improvement funds which will not be given this year. Any capital improvements made to the university this year will be paid for with E&G funds.

President LaForge thanked Mr. Rutledge, his staff, and Cabinet members for their collective discipline exercised over the last three quarters of the year. The university has done a remarkable job in monitoring their expenses. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members the university had \$6.8 million in cash on June 30. Delta State exceeded its target of \$6.1 million by \$700,000 during the COVID-19 pandemic that caused a negative impact over \$7 million on Delta State’s budget. Mr. Rutledge commended his staff for their extraordinary help during this time, and he stated the university needs to keep up the good work to continue progressing towards 90 days of cash. The next cash target set by IHL of \$500,000 was built into the FY21 budget. Mr. Charles Lindsay of Matthews, Cutrer, and Lindsay P.A and Mr. John Pearce at IHL are aware of our accomplishment. Mr. Lindsay is preparing his report and verifying our numbers for IHL this week.

Legislative Update Mr. Munroe

Mr. Munroe shared with Cabinet members the legislative session was a productive session overall, even in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill addressing liability protection for businesses and governmental entities including universities was passed by both houses and awaits signature by the Governor. The legislators are taking a break; however, the legislative session did not adjourn in case any COVID-19 emergencies arise.

Additional information

- Mr. Munroe announced Mr. Charles Lindsey of Matthews, Cutrer, and Lindsay P.A. was hired to create internal controls for the Delta State University Foundation. New policies and procedures should be in place within the next few months.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Retirement and Service Awards Luncheon, July 7, 12:00 p.m., Multipurpose Room, Young-Mauldin Cafeteria
- Virtual New Student Orientation V, July 27

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, July 13 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.