

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: March 15, 2021

Members in attendance: President William LaForge (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: Chief Jeffrey Johns

Guests: Dr. Vicki Bingham, Incoming Representative, Academic Council
Ms. Robin Douglas, COVID-19 Response Coordinator
Ms. Nakikke Wallace, Chair-Elect, Administrative Staff Council
Dr. Andrew Wegmann, President-Elect, Faculty Senate

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom video conference on March 15, 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 Mr. Word, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on March 8, 2021.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge stated today marks the one-year point of the first communication the university released to the campus regarding COVID-19.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. President LaForge and Mr. Munroe spoke with Senator Rita Parks, Chair of the Universities and Colleges Committee, to discuss Delta State's appropriations and bonds. As part of his internal relations initiative, President LaForge made phone calls to new employees and had a departmental visit, via virtual format, with the Office of Admissions. Ms. Briana Henderson, Delta State student, met with President LaForge last week to request his participation in a thank you video for Mr. and Mrs. Fred Pittman. President LaForge filmed congratulatory remarks for the School of Nursing Scholarship and Recognition Achievement video, and also filmed a segment of his Statesmen Insider with Coach Rodney Batts and Mr. Hayden Smith about the baseball season. President LaForge provided updates to Mayor Billy Nowell and Mr. Will Hooker about Delta State's plans for the Children's Advocacy Center. The memorial service for Delta State alumna and former Delta State employee Betsy Bobo Elliott was held on Saturday, and was a wonderful celebration of her life.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. There are 15 members of Delta State's swimming and diving team who will compete this week at the NCAA DII Swimming and Diving Championship in Birmingham.

The football team begins their third week of Spring practice this week, and they will have an inter-squad scrimmage on Saturday. The golf team competes against Valdosta State University today and tomorrow. The men’s tennis team competed and won over the weekend against Mississippi College. The women’s tennis team competed against and lost to Mississippi College, and they competed and won against Ouachita Baptist University. They compete today at Henderson State University. Both tennis teams host Christian Brothers University this weekend. The baseball team lost their series against Lee University over the weekend, and they compete tomorrow against University of Arkansas-Monticello at home. The softball team won two games of their series with Lee University, and they compete tomorrow against Henderson State University in a double-header at home. The baseball and softball teams host Union University this weekend. The men’s soccer team lost to Christian Brothers University last week, and the women’s soccer team lost to Mississippi College this week. Both teams will compete in the Gulf South Conference Tournament this week.

- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. Mr. Rutledge will participate in a walk-through next Tuesday for the Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project. The HVAC systems project in the Mayers Aquatics Center will be complete by the end of the month. The notice to proceed for the campus-wide elevator project was received last week, and the project will begin in April. Three projects were bid out last week: residence halls roofing project and two residence halls repair and renovation projects. If the legislature passes the bonds bill, the university will receive \$10.8 million for the School of Nursing addition and expansion and additional residence halls renovations and repairs. The university will continue its lighting project with grants from Entergy in a several more buildings around campus. Mr. Rutledge was made aware of another grant program Entergy has with HVAC systems, and he plans to research more into this program.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. Mr. James Forte, Director of Alumni Affairs, met with President LaForge this morning to discuss the upcoming Alumni Board meeting. The Foundation Task Force will meet on Tuesday to discuss Robert M. Hearin Foundation pre-proposals. The Gulf South Conference Board of Directors will meet on Tuesday, and President LaForge will record welcome remarks for the Winning the Race Conference’s Veterans of Mississippi Civil Rights Movement event. The Institutional Executive Officers meet on Wednesday, and the IHL Board of Trustees meet on Thursday. The Annual Juried Student Exhibition opening is Thursday, and the Emerald Awards of Excellence event will take place on Thursday evening. A celebration of life service for Amanda (AJ) Baker will be held on Sunday.

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 two students in Hill Apartments, and there are no students in the off-campus location. The university had no hotspots last week. The Bolivar County drive-through COVID-19 vaccine distribution site provided vaccines to 316 people last week. Ms. Douglas established a vaccine hotline team to: place reminder calls on Mondays and Thursdays; do data entry on Tuesdays and Fridays; assist citizens in making first dose appointments; and, assist in marketing projects to promote the vaccine site. Ms. Douglas plans to increase the Bolivar County vaccine distribution site marketing to ensure all vaccine-eligible citizens know about the site. Ms. Douglas informed Cabinet members a few COVID-19 Protocol violations were made at the Statesmen Kickback event on March 6. The violators will be issued a warning letter by Student Life, and President LaForge will send an email to all students to remind them of

the need to continue following COVID-19 protocols. 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. Chief Jeffrey Johns and Delta State Police Department will be the “COVID-19 Hero of the Week” for March 15-19. Mr. Kinnison announced the Athletics Department COVID-19 testing on student-athletes has not produced any positive tests recently. Also, the Athletics Department will follow State and local ordinances and university COVID-19 protocols with regards to fan attendance at outdoor sporting events the remainder of the seasons. Dr. Keppler informed Cabinet members approximately 1,200 applications have been submitted by students for the federal Coronavirus Responses and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act. The application remains accessible through today, and Dr. Keppler believes funds will begin being allocated later tomorrow. Mr. Rutledge did not have any updates on how the Higher Education Emergency Relief grant funds will be spent; however, the date by which funds must be spent was extended to January 2022. Mr. Rutledge continues to stay abreast of any new regulations on spending the funds, as well.

BUSINESS

Action

Commencement Plan for Spring 2021Dr. McAdams

On the recommendation and approval of Academic Council, Dr. McAdams shared with Cabinet members the plans for the Spring 2021 Commencement. Due to the Governor’s recent Executive Order, which increases the limit for university arenas to 50% , along with the continued decrease in COVID-19 cases in Mississippi, Academic Council voted to hold Spring 2021 Commencement in person on Friday, April 30 in the Sillers Coliseum. The Spring Commencement ceremony will be significantly altered to achieve a single purpose: provide recognition and celebration of graduates. However, several strict guidelines will be put in place to accomplish this purpose while maintaining COVID-19 related university protocols. All students and guests will be required to follow the COVID-19 protocols of wearing a mask, social distancing, and adhering to point-of-entry screening. Facilities Management will sanitize Walter Sillers Coliseum between each ceremony. As Commencement will be on a Friday, university staff will be excused from their regular duties to assist with the event. Dr. McAdams stated the event will need a significant number of volunteers and security. President LaForge announced graduates from Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 will not be able to walk during the Spring 2021 ceremonies due to the capacity restrictions; however, an opportunity will be made for their participation at a later date.

Dr. McAdams asked Cabinet members to approve three major objectives of the 2021 Spring Commencement plan: Spring 2021 Commencement to be held in person; Spring 2021 Commencement will take place over three ceremonies; and, students will receive four tickets.

Motion: Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the Spring 2021 Commencement objectives and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

Discussion

Campus Forums – Spring 2021 Dr. Roberts

Dr. Roberts announced the proposed date for the Faculty and Staff Forum (to be held via Zoom) is Wednesday, April 14 at 3:00 p.m. Suggested topics for the campus forums include: the COVID-19 Campus Plan for Returning to Normal Operations; Spring 2021 Commencement; academic plans for Fall 2021; 2021 legislative session; FY2021 budget status; FY2022 budget plans; summer four-day work week; campus

projects; and, new initiatives. Questions can be submitted to constituency group leaders prior to the forum or asked during the event. **Dr. Keppler and Mr. Word will discuss the need for a student forum.**

2021 Student Hall of Fame selection Dr. Keppler

Dr. Keppler shared with Cabinet members that the Student Hall of Fame ceremony will take place on Thursday, April 29 in the Bologna Performing Arts Center. This event will recognize students inducted into the 2021 class, as well as the 2020 class that wasn't celebrated due to COVID-19. A total of 16 students will be inducted into the Student Hall of Fame, and six students will receive various other awards. The university's COVID-19 protocols will be followed, and each award recipient will be allowed two guests. The event will be livestreamed for family and friends who are unable to attend. The selection process for the 2021 Student Hall of Fame class will be different than previous years. Dr. Keppler will appoint a nine-member selection committee. The selection committee will submit their nominations for the 2021 Student Hall of Fame class. The nominations will be scored by a small, five-person committee based on leadership, volunteerism, campus involvement, community service, and GPA. Nominees will be interviewed, as well.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget and shared with Cabinet members the Cash Flow projections for February 2021. This report compares the current cash flows to the cash flows from February 2020. The university's bank receipts from February 2020 to February 2021 have increased. The university has not received payment from IHL for January and February Education Enhancement funds; however, Mr. Rutledge was assured by IHL staff that payment would be received in the next five days. Vendor and student disbursements decreased, as well as university travel, decreased due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. The February 2021 ending cash balance was \$8,226,008, 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.

FY22 Budget Plans Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge announced Phase I and Phase II priorities are still under consideration by the Executive Committee. He needs additional information in order to finish the proposed FY22 budget; however, Mr. Rutledge stated the university's workman's compensation will decrease for FY22 by \$109,000.

Legislative Update Mr. Munroe

Mr. Munroe provided Cabinet members with an update on the 2021 Legislative session. Tomorrow is the deadline on original floor action on appropriation and revenue bills originating in the opposite chamber. He stated there are delays on approval for the income tax bills.

Additional information

- Mr. Kinnison reminded Cabinet members the "Hey Coach" radio show broadcasts on 107.5 FM from Lost Pizza tonight at 6:00 p.m.
- Mr. Slagell, on behalf of the Roberts-LaForge Library, granted to Mr. Word (because of his love for history) the opportunity to receive from the Library any history book of his choosing.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Emerald Awards of Excellence, March 18, 6:30 p.m., BPAC
- State of the Student Union Address, March 23, 7:00 p.m., BPAC
- Winning the Race Conference, March 29-30, Virtual

- Research Showcase, April 14, 6:00 p.m., Virtual
- Student Hall of Fame Ceremony, April 29, BPAC

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, March 22 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – COVID-19 Response Update and Plans (President LaForge)
Winning the Race Conference schedule (President LaForge)

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 2:52