

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: March 22, 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. Natasha Barnes, Co-Chair, Winning the Race Committee
Dr. Vicki Bingham, Incoming Representative, Academic Council
Ms. Robin Douglas, COVID-19 Response Coordinator
Dr. Temika Simmons, Chair, Winning the Race Committee
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 22, 2021. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Chief Johns and seconded by Dr. Westfall, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on March 15, 2021.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. The Large Foundations Task Force met last week to discuss pre-proposals for the Robert M. Hearin Foundation. The university will submit two pre-proposals for consideration: one for TFA and one for the Student Success Center. The Institutional Executive Officers met last week, and they discussed the 2021 legislative session and the concluded discussions on the sabbatical issue. President LaForge invited Dr. Jana Donahoe to present a program at the Rotary Club on the Social Work Department's Virtual Dementia program. The IHL Board of Trustees met, and the Annual Juried Student Exhibition opened last Thursday. Faculty, staff, and students were recognized at the Emerald Awards of Excellence event, and President LaForge attended a celebration of life service for Mrs. Amanda (AJ) Baker.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The swimming and diving teams finished in sixth place overall at the NCAA DII Swimming and Diving Championships. Four members of the swimming and diving teams achieved national champion status. The men's tennis team won against Christian Brothers University over the weekend, and they will host the University of West Florida this weekend. The women's tennis team lost to Henderson State University and won against Christian Brothers University

last week, and they will host the University of West Florida and University of West Georgia this weekend. The men’s soccer team won against Shorter University in the first round of the Gulf South Conference tournament, but lost to Mississippi College in the second round. The women’s soccer team won against University of Montevallo in the first round of the Gulf South Conference tournament, and they will compete against Lee University in the second round this weekend. The softball team won their series against Henderson State University and won two games in their series with Union University last week. They begin a series with Harding University today and play Christian Brothers University this weekend. The baseball team won against University of Arkansas-Monticello and won their series against Union University last week. They play this weekend against Christian Brothers University. Mr. Kinnison shared with Cabinet members the fan attendance policies other universities are adhering to during the COVID-19 pandemic. The “Hey Coach Radio Show” broadcasts tonight from Lost Pizza on 107.5 FM.

- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. Mr. Rutledge will participate in a walk-through next Monday for the Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project. Facilities Management will begin landscaping around the 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 a pre-construction meeting will occur soon. The residence halls roofing project and two residence halls repair and renovation projects were awarded, and Mr. Rutledge hopes to have the notice to proceed for the three projects prior to April 4. The HVAC project for Lawler-Harkins will be complete once the compressor is received.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. The BPAC announced their Spring/Summer Series this morning. This morning, President LaForge recorded welcome remarks for the Winning the Race Conference’s Veterans of Mississippi Civil Rights Movement event, and he will film another segment of his Statesmen Insider this week on the Finance Lab in the College of Business and Aviation. The Student Government Association will host the State of the Student Union Address on Tuesday. The annual F. E. Woodall Conference will be held on Friday, and President LaForge will provide welcome remarks. The Alumni Association Board meets this Friday.

CABINET TOPIC

Winning the Race Conference schedule..... President LaForge

Delta State’s award-winning race relations conference, Winning the Race, returns to campus for a seventh year, March 28-30, 2021. The 2021 virtual conference, “Winning the Race: Make the Invisible, Visible”, will highlight systems and cultural norms that insulate stereotypes and inequalities and challenge the way things have always been done. Dr. Temika Simmons, Chair of the Winning the Race Committee, and Dr. Natasha Barnes, Co-Chair, shared with Cabinet members details about the conference schedule. This year’s event will be highlighted by Mr. Lawrence Ross, best-selling author of “Blackballed: The Black and White Politics of Race on Americas Campuses.” The 2021 virtual conference will also highlight participants in Delta State University’s 1969 Sit-ins as a featured discussion for the President’s Roundtable. The 2021 Winning the Race virtual conference will further recognize local civil rights leaders during the Amzie Moore House recognition ceremony and feature a faculty/student poster contest; signature events hosted by each academic college; panel discussion with university and community law enforcement; its first-ever high school poetry slam; and, a post-conference kickback session for students to decompress.

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. During the Institutional Executive Officers (IEOs) meeting last week, President LaForge asked the other IEOs if their respective universities are relaxing COVID-19 protocols. He informed Cabinet members most

universities are maintaining their foundational protocols to a certain extent throughout the remaining Spring semester while students are on campus. In moving forward towards normalcy in operations and programming, President LaForge is appointing a task force to consider all aspects of the university's COVID-19 protocols and bring forth a recommendation to Cabinet on how best to return to normal operations and when to do so. Dr. Keppler has agreed to chair the task force. President LaForge announced the Bolivar Medical Center Foundation graciously awarded the Bolivar County Vaccine site \$151,256.87 to cover expenses related to the distribution site. Also, President LaForge requested Ms. Douglas work with Dr. Keppler and Mr. Munroe on a promotional campaign geared towards Delta State students getting vaccinated prior to the end of the semester. An initial email or touch should occur this week. 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 six students in Hill Apartments, and there are no students in the off-campus location. Currently, Ms. Douglas is researching two potential hotspots. Ms. Douglas informed Cabinet members students are not completing the daily symptom checker, and she requested assistance from the faculty to encourage students to complete this step daily. The Bolivar County drive-through COVID-19 vaccine distribution site provided vaccines to 254 people last week. The distribution site will increase the number of vaccines to 500 doses each day, beginning tomorrow. All first doses, beginning tomorrow, will be the Pfizer vaccine. Moderna vaccine second doses will also be available at the distribution site. The vaccine hotline team is operational, and the hotline is open Monday through Friday. Ms. Douglas plans to increase the Bolivar County vaccine distribution site marketing through Facebook, mailouts, press releases, and notices on bills. 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. Elizabeth Swindle will be the "COVID-19 Hero of the Week" for March 22-26. Mr. Kinnison announced the Athletics Department COVID-19 testing on student-athletes has produced five positive tests in the last two weeks. Due to positive tests within the football team, the scrimmage against Ouachita Baptist University scheduled for Saturday was cancelled. Dr. Keppler informed Cabinet members approximately 1,300 to 1,400 applications have been submitted by students for the federal Coronavirus Responses and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act. The application deadline for students was extended to April 1. The funds allocation began last week. Any funds remaining after the April 1 deadline will be made available to students in the Fall. Mr. Rutledge provided an update on how the Higher Education Emergency Relief grant funds will be spent. The \$100,000 for the Bolivar County COVID-19 vaccine site was removed due to the Bolivar Medical Center Foundation providing funding; and, the Executive Committee approved the addition of \$5,000 for miscellaneous personal protective equipment. If Mr. Rutledge does not receive any more requests, his recommendation will be to fund additional FY22 Phase II priorities with the \$95,000 unobligated funds.

BUSINESS

Action

Staff Emeritus..... Chief Johns

Chief Jeffrey Johns shared with Cabinet members the name of one staff member who has been recommended for Emeritus status by the Administrative Staff Council. The staff member was unanimously approved for Staff Emeritus status by the Administrative Staff Council Executive Committee and has been approved by the person's supervisor.

Motion: Moved by Chief Johns to approve the staff member recommended for Emeritus status and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

Discussion

New Student Orientation – Summer 2021..... Dr. Keppler

Following the announcement of in-person Spring 2021 Commencement ceremonies, Dr. Keppler received several requests from the 2021 Orientation Leaders to conduct in-person New Student Orientation sessions. The 2020 Orientation Leaders discovered engaging students virtually was difficult, and the sessions proved to be unsuccessful. Dr. Keppler requested help from Cabinet members to create a steering committee to plan in-person orientation sessions that follow COVID-19 protocols and better engage incoming students. Dr. Keppler will include deans and department/division chairs in the planning.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget. The university received payment from IHL last week for December, January, and February Education Enhancement funds. Also, the \$3.1 million Higher Education Emergency Relief funds were received. Within the next week or two, Mr. Rutledge will share with the Executive Committee and Cabinet the year end spending memo. Also, he will share the budget-to-actual report to the Executive Committee this week for review.

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 insurance will decrease for FY22 by \$65,000.

Legislative Update Mr. Munroe

Mr. Munroe provided Cabinet members with an update on the 2021 Legislative session. An amendment to the bond bill includes State income tax, and both chambers are reviewing it.

Additional information

- None

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- State of the Student Union Address, March 23, 7:00 p.m., BPAC
- Winning the Race Conference, March 29-30, Virtual
- Faculty and Staff Forum, April 14, 3:00 p.m., 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 29 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – COVID-19 Response Update and Plans (President LaForge)

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 2:52