

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: March 8, 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. 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 8, 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 Mr. Rutledge, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on March 1, 2021.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors held their monthly meeting last week. President LaForge continued his internal relations efforts with departmental visits, via virtual format, with Housing and Residence Life and the Registrar's Office. The Office of Admissions hosted Statesmen Kickback on Saturday. Dr. Keppler stated Mr. Merritt Dain and his staff did a wonderful job in planning, and a great crowd was in attendance.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The women's soccer team competed against Christian Brothers University last week, resulting in a tie. Also, they competed and won against Union University last week. The women's soccer team competes against University of West Alabama today and Mississippi College on Thursday. The men's soccer team lost to University of Montevallo over the weekend, and they will compete against Christian Brothers University on Saturday. The men and women's basketball teams fell to Valdosta State University in the first round of the Gulf South Conference Championship. The women's tennis team lost last week to Valdosta State University and Flagler College, and they will compete against Mississippi College on Saturday. The men's tennis team lost to Valdosta State University and won against Flagler College last week. They compete against Mississippi College on Saturday. The softball team won two games of their series with University of

West Alabama over the weekend. They travel to Lee University this weekend. The baseball team won one game of their series with University of West Alabama over the weekend, and they compete Tuesday against University of Arkansas-Monticello. They will travel to Lee University to compete this weekend. The golf team competed and placed second in the Mississippi College Invitational last week. The football team begins their second week of Spring practice this week, and they will scrimmage against Ouachita Baptist University soon. The Hey Coach Radio Show will broadcast from Lost Pizza tonight at 7:00 p.m.

- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The HVAC systems project in the Mayers Aquatics Center will be finished by the end of March. The contractor for the project will be on campus this week to fix damage caused to sidewalks near the Mayers Aquatics Center. Also, Facilities Management staff will be trained on the HVAC systems next week. The Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project is almost complete; however, there is some dirt work remaining. The contractor will be on campus this week to fix a caulking issue in front of the H. L. Nowell Student Union, and there will be a walk through of the project next week. The campus-wide elevator project should begin in the next forty days. The residence halls roofing project and residence hall renovations project bids were accepted, and Mr. Rutledge hopes construction will begin in May for a completion in August. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members the university received notice from the City of Cleveland that the house on 316 Shumate Avenue needs to be renovated or condemned. Mr. Rutledge stated it would cost \$85,000 to renovate the home. The Executive Committee decided to raze and remove the home for \$4,900. Mr. Rutledge and Dr. Keppler are working together to resolve some issues with the air-conditioning system in Lawler-Harkins Hall.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge and Mr. Munroe are scheduled to speak with Senator Rita Parks, Chair of the Universities and Colleges Committee, to discuss Delta State’s appropriations and bonds. On Thursday, President LaForge will film another segment of his Statesmen Insider with Coach Rodney Batts about the baseball season. President LaForge will continue his internal relations this week with departmental visits, via virtual format, with Office of Admissions and the Delta Center for Culture and Learning. The memorial service for Delta State alumna and former Delta State employee Betsy Bobo Elliott will be Saturday at 1:00 p.m. in Walter Sillers Coliseum.

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 four students in Hill Apartments, and there are no students in the off-campus location. The university had no hotspots last week. The Bolivar County vaccine distribution site provided vaccines to 308 people last week. Ms. Douglas informed Cabinet members she had several no shows both days last week, and she is looking into this matter as not to waste any vaccines. Ms. Douglas plans to increase the Bolivar County vaccine distribution site marketing to ensure all vaccine-eligible citizens know about the site. Beginning the week of March 22, the Bolivar County vaccine distribution site will increase the number of doses provided each day. Ms. Douglas and Dr. Roberts are working with the Bolivar Medical Center Foundation on a grant for the vaccination site. 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. Jerry Frye and Sodexo staff will be the “COVID-19 Hero of the Week” for March 8-12. Mr. Kinnison announced the first outdoor athletic events for the year

occurred over the weekend, and most spectators in attendance followed COVID-19 protocols. Dr. Keppler informed Cabinet members 700 applications were submitted last week by students for the federal Coronavirus Responses and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act. The application remains accessible through March 15, and Dr. Keppler believes funds will begin being allocated later next week. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members an update on how the \$3,010,494 of newly allocated Higher Education Emergency Relief grant funds will be spent. The Executive Committee approved seven items from the FY22 Phase II priority list to be funded by the Higher Education Emergency Relief funds. Those items are: \$20,000 for classroom computers; \$20,000 for library resources; \$8,458 for National Pan-Hellenic Council meeting spaces; \$106,922 for a five-year contract with Degree Works, Banner's degree auditing software; \$177,860 for training and scribing assistance for entering degree requirements; \$50,000 for two travel vans; and, \$10,000 for computer upgrades in the Dorgan Center.

BUSINESS

Action

COVID-19 Protocols – revisedPresident LaForge

Ms. Douglas provided an overview of the recommended revisions to the COVID-19 Protocols for students. She recommends revising the COVID-19 Protocols for Students to reflect new practices for student organizations hosting off-campus events. All student organization off-campus events are to be approved by the Coordinator of Student Life and the COVID-19 Response Coordinator.

- Large student events are prohibited.
- Size limits will be enforced for student and academic events.
- For off campus approved events, capacity should be aligned with the venue and all applicable health and safety protocols, but no more than 150 attendees at any one time.
- Except for seated meals prepared by a state approved business, any food or beverages provided during an event must be individual grab-n-go options.

Motion: Moved by Chief Johns to approve the recommended revisions to the COVID-19 Protocols for Students and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

Ms. Douglas provided an overview of the recommended revisions to the COVID-19 Protocols for Employees and Students. She recommends revising the COVID-19 protocols for Employees and Students with additional information about the COVID-19 vaccination. A mandate has not been made for any group to receive the COVID-19 vaccination as a condition to return to the workplace by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the university, nor any federal, state, or local public health authority. Delta State employees are not required to be vaccinated; however, the university does encourage employees to be vaccinated.

After a vaccination:

- Employees and students are still required to follow all Delta State COVID-19 protocols.
- Employees and students required to participate in mandatory COVID-19 testing are eligible to receive an exemption two weeks after receiving their final dose of the COVID-19 Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, and four weeks after receiving the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.
- Only FDA approved, Emergency Use Authorization COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson) are accepted for testing exemptions.

Motion: Moved by Chief Johns to approve the recommended revisions to the COVID-19 Protocols for Employees and Students and seconded by Dr. Westfall. The motion was approved.

Non-Academic Issues Grievance policy (revised – final reading) Dr. Keppler

Dr. Keppler brought to Cabinet the revised Non-Academic Issues Grievance policy for a final reading. Most of the revisions to the policy are organizational and formatting issues, particularly in clarifying and numbering the steps and in providing information on archiving of materials. In addition to reformatting and editing the policy for clarity, a few other changes were made: 1) response times were changed to “within fifteen working days” for each step to be consistent with the graduate and undergraduate Grievance Policies – Academic; 2) the specific language describing how the reporting form is initiated was added to the first step of each of the three processes; 3) the archiving office for all the non-academic grievances will be the Office of Student Affairs; 4) the process for a sexual harassment complaint included an appeal to the Vice President for Academic Affairs if the student is not satisfied with the response of the previous recipient of the appeal. That step has been removed from the policy/process since this policy is for non-academic issues. The Non-Academic Issues Grievance policy will be included in the Undergraduate and Graduate catalogs.

Motion: Moved by Dr. Keppler to approve the revised Non-Academic Issues Grievance policy for a final reading and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

Blue Cross/Blue Shield Tobacco Grant Phase 2 Dr. Keppler

Dr. Keppler reminded Cabinet members that the Office of Student Life has a grant with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Mississippi to support and advocate on behalf of the Vapor and Tobacco Free Environment policy on campus. The grant is for three years, and the Cabinet must grant their approval and support of the intentions of the grant each year. The Office of Student Life will create marketing materials to campaign against tobacco and vapor use by our students. Dr. Keppler shared with Cabinet members a few areas of the implementation plan the Office of Student Life will use to help build as a sustainable campus culture of health and well-being.

Motion: Moved by Dr. Keppler to approve the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Tobacco Grant Phase 2 and seconded by Chief Johns. The motion was approved.

Approval of Housing Room Rates for FY22 Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge presented to Cabinet members for approval the proposed housing room rates for FY22. The double occupancy, room rates will not change from FY21 to FY22. The single occupancy, room rate will decrease for FY22 by 33.3%, and will be the same rate as the double occupancy room.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the FY22 housing room rates and seconded by Dr. Keppler. The motion was approved.

Approval of Meal Plan Rates for FY22 Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge presented to Cabinet members for approval the propose meal plan rates for FY22. As part of the university’s contract with Sodexo, meal plan rates are required to increase 3% each year. The meal plan rates for FY22 adhere to the 3% increase.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the FY22 meal plan rates and seconded by Mr. Word. The motion was approved.

Discussion

Housing and Residence Life changes Dr. Keppler

Dr. Keppler shared with Cabinet members a few adjustments being made within the residence halls. The first adjustment will be the cancelling of the curfew for students. The curfew was implemented during COVID-19 preparations to ensure all students leaving and entering the residence halls had their temperatures checked. Dr. Keppler will keep all residence halls staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week to continue checking temperatures. Staff will be paid with CARES Act funds and Regular Student Employment funds. Also, minimal furnishings will be added back to lounge areas in the residence halls. The congregation of students and events still cannot occur due to COVID-19 protocols, but students will be able to use the lounge areas as long as they are socially distanced. Students will be allowed to have visitation, again; however, only one guest will be allowed at a time. Another positive change for students is the opportunity to have a single occupancy room for the double occupancy rate. Dr. Keppler plans to work with Mr. Rutledge on a few cosmetic changes to improve the quality of the residence halls.

Summer work schedule Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge announced that official summer office hours will be from 7:00 am – 5:30 pm, Monday – Thursday, with a 30-minute lunch. The summer work schedule will start on Monday, May 3 and end on Thursday, August 12. Kent Wyatt Hall will remain open on Fridays during the summer work schedule. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the savings the university has realized from summer work schedules, building closures, and work-from-home orders. At this time, the building closures for the summer work schedule are not finalized.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget, and he stated that all expenses and revenues are on target or above his original projections. Mr. Rutledge hopes to provide Cabinet members with a review of the February Cash Flow report at the next Cabinet meeting.

FY22 Budget Plans Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge announced he will present the Phase I and Phase II priority listings at the next Cabinet meeting. A portion of the unobligated Higher Education Emergency Relief funds will be used to cover one-time expenditures. Some of the priority items will be funded by bond funds. Additional priority items will be funded if the university receives “Repair and Renovation” funds from the State. Also, Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members health insurance, workman’s compensation, and liability and property insurance will increase for FY22.

Legislative Update Mr. Munroe

Mr. Munroe provided Cabinet members with an update on the 2021 Legislative session. The appropriations and bonds bills are in the opposite chambers for review. Mr. Munroe has scheduled a call for President LaForge with Senator Rita Parks for Tuesday.

Additional information

- President LaForge announced GRAMMY Museum® Mississippi will host its first in-person event for the year on April 18. The event will be Women in the Round with Ms. Tricia Walker and her colleagues from Nashville, TN.
- The Student Hall of Fame ceremony will be Thursday, April 29 in the BPAC.
- President LaForge reminded Cabinet members that the memorial service for Ms. Betsy Bobo Elliott will be held on Saturday at 1:00 p.m. in Walter Sillers Coliseum.

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

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, March 15 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – COVID-19 Response Update and Plans (President LaForge)

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.