

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: May 11, 2020

Members in attendance: President William LaForge (via Zoom), Dr. Vernell Bennett-Fairs (via Zoom), Dr. Tricia Killebrew (via Zoom), Mr. Mike Kinnison (via Zoom), Dr. Charles McAdams (via Zoom), Mr. Rick Munroe (via Zoom), Mr. Cetin Oguz (via Zoom), Dr. Michelle Roberts (via Zoom), Mr. Jamie Rutledge (via Zoom), and Ms. Elizabeth Swindle (via Zoom) (recorder – Ms. Claire Cole)

Members not in attendance: Dr. Beverly Moon

Guests: Chief Jeffrey Johns, Chair-Elect, Administrative Staff Council (via Zoom)
Mr. Jeff Slagell, Representative, Academic Council (via Zoom)
Dr. Jonathan Westfall, President-Elect, Faculty Senate (via Zoom)
Mr. Richard Word, President-Elect, Student Government Association (via Zoom)

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom conference call on May 11, 2020. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Mr. Rutledge and seconded by Dr. Bennett-Fairs, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on May 4, 2020.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge recognized outgoing and incoming Cabinet Members: Academic Council representative, Dr. Beverly Moon (outgoing) and Mr. Jeff Slagell (incoming); Faculty Senate President, Mr. Cetin Oguz (outgoing) and Dr. Jonathan Westfall (incoming); Staff Council Chair, Dr. Tricia Killebrew (outgoing) and Chief Jeffrey Johns (incoming); and, SGA President, Ms. Elizabeth Swindle (outgoing) and Mr. Richard Word (incoming). President LaForge expressed his gratitude to the outgoing members for the service they provided, and he welcomed the incoming members.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors met via Zoom, and their members discussed the reopening of their respective businesses. President LaForge participated in several end-of-year virtual honor celebrations and classes including the Athletics Department 52nd Annual Green and White Awards, the Music Department Honors Convocation, and the DMI Beatles Class. President LaForge commended the university's departments and divisions for their efforts in celebrating our graduating seniors.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The 52nd Annual Green and White Awards was held in a virtual format, and it went very well. It was a great way to honor our student-athletes especially those

unable to finish their seasons. All GSC athletic directors continue to have a weekly conference call to discuss the effects of COVID-19 on their respective campuses and the overall picture of athletics.

- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The Mayers Aquatics Center HVAC project Notice to Proceed goes out to the contractor, Upchurch Plumbing, Inc., this week. Bids for the Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project begin this week, and Mr. Rutledge is hopeful to begin this project by the second week in June. Bids for the campus-wide elevator project go out in two weeks. The roofing projects for Walter Sillers Coliseum, Holcombe-Norwood Hall, and the Smith Facilities Management Building are to be finished by May 17. The roofing project for the residence halls came in over bid due to state-wide storm damages and COVID-19, so Mr. Rutledge was advised to reject the bids and rebid in January.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. The Cleveland Music Foundation Board of Directors meets via Zoom on Thursday.

CABINET TOPIC

Questions to Consider for the Fall semesterDr. McAdams

Dr. McAdams shared with Cabinet members a list of questions that the university must seriously consider over the next two to three months in order to plan for a variety of scenarios to ensure continuity of instruction and business operations during the Fall semester. The questions were gleaned and tweaked from numerous recent articles in the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#), [Inside Higher Education](#), Education Advisory Board, and initial discussions in the IHL Safe Start Task Force. The questions Dr. McAdams compiled fell into the following categories: status of the pandemic; economic impact; enrollment impact; academic impact; student concerns; and, campus impact. He stated higher education has never before faced as many external threats that are beyond our control or scope of influence.

BUSINESS

Action

Staff Emeritus policy – revised (first reading) Chief Johns

Chief Johns withdrew the Staff Emeritus policy for consideration in order to modify the policy to more closely resemble the Faculty Emeritus policy. The revised policy will be reconsidered at a later Cabinet meeting.

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. Bennett-Fairs brought to Cabinet positions 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. Bennett-Fairs to ratify and affirm the following action taken by the Executive Committee members via e-mail since the last Cabinet meeting on May 4, 2020 and seconded by Dr. Roberts. The motion was approved.

- May 8, 2020 – Request from Dr. Bennett-Fairs for approval to search for and hire two Recruiters for the Office of Admissions.

Summer Camps for June Cabinet Members

Cabinet members discussed the possibility of the university’s June summer camps occurring. Several

Cabinet members expressed concern about the limited time to finalize plans for a June start and the need to provide personal protective equipment for camp attendees.

Motion: Moved by Chief Johns to cancel all June summer camps and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

Discussion

Campus Response to COVID-19..... President LaForge

President LaForge shared with Cabinet members recent updates to Delta State’s COVID-19 Action Plan. He informed Cabinet members this is an ever-changing document, and it will be updated as new information is released by IHL and the State. All eight public universities are trying to be consistent with their action plans, but each university has the authority to respond to unique requests and concerns. Delta State’s COVID-19 Action Plan was most recently updated after the Governor’s Safer at Home orders were issued April 24. This Safer at Home order extends through May 25.

Distribution of the CARES Act grant funds will be distributed in three phases. The first phase will be grants to students. Beginning today, students were notified of the grants via their Okramail accounts and their Canvas accounts. To receive funds, students must have been enrolled in Spring 2019 courses; completed their FAFSA; and, be able to document a disruption in their life caused by COVID-19. Dr. Megan Smith, Director of Financial Assistance, will be the one reviewing the applications. The second phase of funds will go to the universities to help reimburse themselves for refunds given to students for housing, meals, and parking fees. The university will have approximately \$300,000 left to help with other expenses incurred during the COVID-19 crisis. The final phase of CARES Act grant funds will be distributed by the State. The State Legislature and the Governor will decide how the money is distributed, and IHL believes there is a great advocacy for higher education.

Currently, Governor Reeves’ Safer at Home orders end at 8:00 a.m. on May 25. The university plans to open on May 26, dependent upon the Safer at Home order being lifted. Discussions are underway on protocols the university will execute to keep employees safe including: single entrance into every building; checking temperatures at entrances; and, providing two cloth masks to each employee. Also, the university will only open essential buildings—Kent Wyatt Hall, Roberts-LaForge Library, Chadwick-Dickson Athletic Building, and H.L. Nowell Union—with discussions about others. The Child Development Center has been in communication with their State agency on proper sanitizing measures for their reopening. The Wyatt Gym will not open until sometime in June. All additional plans for reopening the university will be shared with the Cabinet upon completion.

All travel and camps are cancelled for May, and Cabinet members voted to cancel all camps for June. A plan for opening this Fall remains contingent upon national and state guidelines. The IHL Safe Start Task force will guide all eight universities in their re-opening plans. The task force will make recommendations to Commissioner Rankins by the end of May.

President LaForge released a campus update last week to students, and it was shared with faculty and staff. He will release another campus update later this week. The update will include plans for re-opening campus on May 26, plans for summer camps/programs, and plans for the Fall semester.

FY20 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members that Delta State’s revenue projections for May and June won’t be met due to the COVID-19 crisis, but the university has met all projections for our expenses. The refunds being paid to students for housing, meals, and parking fees will be added to our expenses for May, and Phase II funds from the CARES Act grant related to reimbursing the university for student refunds will be added to our revenues. If the university continues to monitor closely its expenditures and to spend only what is necessary, our final goal for cash can still be met.

Legislative UpdateMr. Munroe

Mr. Munroe informed Cabinet Members the Mississippi Legislature resumed to pass a bill on plans to distribute the CARES Act funds, and they have been working on providing money to small businesses.

Additional information

- President LaForge announced the next Cabinet meeting will be on Tuesday, May 26.
- Mr. Rutledge announced the completion of the demolition project for the H.L. Nowell Union food court. Construction will begin next week.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Summer Session I, June 1
- New Student Orientation I, June 8

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Tuesday, May 26 at 1:30 p.m. via Zoom
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.