

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: November 16, 2020

Members in attendance: President William LaForge (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: Dr. Vernell Bennett-Fairs

Guest: Ms. Robin Douglas, COVID-19 Response Coordinator
Ms. Lisa Giger, Director, Human Resources

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom video conference on November 16, 2020. The meeting convened at 2:00 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Dr. Westfall and seconded by Mr. Rutledge, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on November 9, 2020.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the last week. The Office of Admissions hosted a virtual Spotlight Day last week and had a great turnout of students and parents/guests. University Advancement hosted a virtual reception for the Kyle Educational Trust Board members and their scholarship recipients. Cleveland Music Foundation Board met last week, and GRAMMY Museum® Mississippi's Red Carpet Guild hosted the "Down in Mississippi" virtual gala honoring Bobby Rush. The Alumni Association Board of Directors met, and their President-Elect, Mr. John Fletcher, assumed his new role as President. Mr. Munroe shared that the Alumni Association Board was very engaged and eager to lend their support. Mr. Munroe stated the Alumni Affairs staff were pleased overall with the virtual 2020 Homecoming activities.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. National Letter of Intent Signing Week began last Wednesday, and the week continues until this Wednesday, November 18. All sports are included in Signing Week except football. Delta State Athletics signed 24 new student-athletes as of today. Both basketball teams and the swimming and diving teams will practice this week for their upcoming competitions. The Coaches Club Radio Show airs tonight at 6:00 p.m. on 107.5 FM.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project is in full force, and some impromptu changes were made in order to avoid pipes. The project continues to progress quickly, and it may be complete before Christmas. The Mayers Aquatics Center project continues to be ahead of schedule, and it should be finished in

January. Mr. Rutledge has meetings about the President’s home this week to help finalize the project. Mr. Rutledge and the Bureau of Buildings held a pre-bid conference for the elevator project last Thursday, and six vendors attended with intention to bid. Another pre-bid conference was held on Thursday for the campus-wide roofing project, and 14 vendors attended with intention to bid. Facilities Management staff members will be on campus during the work from home schedule.

- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge participated in the COVID-19 update conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and the other Institutional Executive Officers (IEO) this morning. The university hosted a press conference this morning to highlight alumnus Malik Sinegal who was recently recognized as being the youngest African American to be certified as a Boeing 777 pilot. The Gulf South Conference Board of Directors met this afternoon, and they unanimously passed the basketball package and schedule. Basketball competition will begin on December 9 and will use a mirror format with one team playing at home and one playing away. Student-athletes will be tested prior to each series. In lieu of an annual conference, the Mississippi Association of Colleges and Universities will host their Annual Business Meeting this afternoon at 4:00 p.m. The Institutional Executive Officers and the IHL Board of Trustees will meet on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively.

CABINET TOPIC

COVID-19 Response Update and Plans President LaForge

President LaForge led Cabinet members in a discussion of the university’s COVID-19 plans for Fall 2020. As mentioned earlier, President LaForge participated in a conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and all IEOs this morning to discuss COVID-19 related issues. He shared with Cabinet members the update on current cases at all eight universities. 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 is one student in Hill Apartments, and no students are in the off-campus location. The university has no current hotspots. Ms. Douglas shared the videos promoting social distancing and mask wearing for students are complete and will be added to social media soon. Dr. Steven Clark continues to work with the Healthcare Specialists to ensure they can provide excellent care to the Delta State community, and they will be able to provide additional provisions soon. Ms. Douglas is trying to identify a vendor for medical supplies for the Student Health Center. The Student Health Center is testing for COVID-19, and they are working on testing independently for Spring 2021. Ms. Douglas shared with Cabinet members the COVID-19 Employee and Student Dashboard. The Dashboard provides an overview of: two-week trend of cases; quarantine and isolation numbers; active cases; and, positive COVID-19 test clusters on campus. The revised COVID-19 Protocols for Employees and Students were uploaded to the COVID-19 webpage on the Delta State website and sent to faculty and staff. Ms. Douglas contacted Communications and Marketing to update the “COVID-19 What To Do If” graphics with the revised protocols, and she updated the quarantine letters she sends to employees and students. Ms. Douglas shared with Cabinet members the point-of-entry screener schedule and locations for November 25 – December 23. The schedule accommodates all needs of the campus, which have been provided to her by building managers. Ms. Douglas will meet with staff from South Delta Planning and Development on Wednesday to discuss the point-of-entry screeners and to see if they are able to provide funds for our point-of-entry screeners for Spring 2021. Ms. Douglas, along with the Executive Committee, created the COVID-19 Event Protocol document for any organization wanting to host an event on campus and for any campus organization wanting to host an event off campus. This document will act as a guide for planning a fully compliant event with regards to federal, state, and local orders and guidelines. At this time, only on-campus organizations are allowed to host events on campus. 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. This week’s selection is Housing and Residence Life staff members. Mr. Kinnison stated the Athletics Department continues their surveillance testing, but there have not been any positive tests in the last two weeks. Mr. Rutledge provided Cabinet members with an update on CARES Act funds. Two weeks remain for all CARES Act funds provide by the State to be obligated and the purchases made with those funds to be received. Mr. Rutledge reassigned several line items due to those items not being available before November 30. The funds obligated to those line items were put to other needs. The university has not yet received its reimbursement from the State for our CARES Act purchases.

Faculty and Staff Environment on Campus President LaForge

Mr. Rutledge invited Ms. Lisa Giger to Cabinet for her to provide a report on the current faculty and staff environment on campus, especially with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Giger informed Cabinet members the morale on campus was good prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the pandemic has taken a toll on employees both in the workplace and at home. Some employees have additional responsibilities during this time, and it wears them down. Employees appreciate the “work from home” schedule as it shows the university cares about their well-being and safety during a spike in cases and holiday travel. Ms. Giger has heard feedback from some employees who are not able to work remotely from home that the schedule has lowered their morale. Another area producing a change in employee morale is the pay parity between new employees and veteran employees. Some new employees are paid a higher salary than their veteran counterparts causing the veteran employee to feel underappreciated. President LaForge asked Ms. Giger and Mr. Rutledge to compile ways for the university to support and/or assist those employees unable to work remotely from home during the “work from home” schedule. Mr. Rutledge announced Facilities Management supervisors are working with their staff on a rotational, 10-hour day schedule to allow some time at home during the “work from home” schedule. Also, President LaForge would like Human Resources to conduct an internal review on salary parity and equity. Mr. Slagell worked on a plan in 2005 about the salary parity and equity on campus, and he will forward the information to Ms. Giger. President LaForge would like Ms. Giger and Mr. Rutledge to provide a report on the internal review in the new year.

BUSINESS

Action

Academic Calendar for 2021-22 Dr. McAdams

On the recommendation of Academic Council and the Academic Calendar Committee, Dr. McAdams presented to Cabinet members the 2021-22 Academic Calendar. The university is required to provide 750 minutes of instruction per credit for a total of 2,250 minutes of instruction per course, including exam time. Delta State’s academic calendar adheres to this definition for credit hours, and each credit hour allows for required amount of instruction. Fall 2021 has a few changes to the schedule including: Fall Break on a Monday and Tuesday; a three-day Thanksgiving break; and, final exams will be on a Thursday and Friday and resume on Monday and Tuesday of the next week.

Motion: Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the 2021-22 Academic Calendar and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

Discussion

Nursing Building Plans Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the building plans for the Robert E. Smith School of Nursing. In the 2019 legislative session, the university’s bond requests included a pre-plan for the Robert E. Smith School of Nursing for \$145,000. Architectural firm, Eley Guild Hardy, has worked with Dr. Vickie Bingham and her staff, Dr. Edwin Craft, and a committee on the plans. The re-design includes an additional 70-seat classroom, administrative suites, a skills lab with 10 beds, a simulation lab with five beds, a lounge for students, additional restrooms, courtyard, and a nurse practitioner area. Through the redesign, the entrance to the building will change to Fourth Avenue. The project also includes re-bricking the other wings of the facility, which do not match the Delta State brick. The total cost of the project will be \$7.2 million.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget and shared with Cabinet members the Cash Flow projections for October 2020. This report compares the current cash flows to the cash flows from October 2019. The university’s bank receipts from October 2019 to October 2020 have decreased, but Mr. Rutledge stated this was expected due to a decrease in sales and services. Salaries from October 2019 to October 2020 increased by \$7,000; however, Mr. Rutledge is pleased with the number as it could be higher. The university is employing more people this year due to COVID-19. Vendor disbursements increased from 2019 to October 2020, but Mr. Rutledge stated some of the difference will be reimbursed from State CARES Act funds for supplies. The October 2020 ending cash balance was \$8,459,505.00, which is more than this time last year. The university continues to increase its cash balance. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members the vendor for the golf course project plans to deposit funds for the feasibility study into the Delta State Foundation; but, as of today, the funds have not been received.

Additional information

- President LaForge wished all students good luck on their upcoming exams.
- Mr. Munroe announced the Delta State Foundation raised more than \$11,000 towards the \$10,000 matching gift from the Steel Magnolias Auxiliary of the American Legion. The gifts allow Delta State to provide scholarships to deserving veterans and students from military families who are pursuing a degree in Nursing.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Staff Council’s Feed-A-Family for Thanksgiving and Holiday Toy Drive, November 2-18
- Fall Commencement, November 24, 10:00 a.m., via Livestream
- Winter Holidays for Students, November 25 – January 11
- Thanksgiving Holidays, November 26-27
- “Work from Home” schedule, November 30 - January 8
- Winter Holidays for Staff, December 23-January 1

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, November 24 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – COVID-19 Response Update and Plans

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:23 p.m.