

# DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S CABINET

### *Minutes*

---

**Meeting date: November 2, 2020**

**Members in attendance:** President William LaForge (via Zoom), Dr. Vernell Bennett-Fairs (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:** None

**Guest:** Ms. Robin Douglas, COVID-19 Response Coordinator

**Call to Order:** A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom video conference on November 2, 2020. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

#### **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

On motion by Mr. Word and seconded by Dr. Westfall, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on October 26, 2020.

#### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the last week. The Colloquia Lecture Series for the fall semester occurred last week with Deputy Administrator of NASA Jim Morhard as the speaker. President LaForge extended a special thank you to Dr. Edwin Craft and his staff in the Office of Information Technology for their excellent provision in ensuring a successful event. President LaForge filmed a special thank you message to veterans for Veterans Day. The 2020 American Association for State Colleges and Universities Annual Meeting occurred last week, and President LaForge provided the welcome for the Association of College and University Educators session. The campus forums took place last week. Attendance at the Student Forum was minimal, and Dr. Bennett-Fairs would like to utilize the Office of Student Life and their marketing protocols for the next student forum to produce better attendance. The Faculty and Staff Forum had wonderful attendance. Dr. Westfall suggested allowing faculty and staff to engage more during the forum by asking them open-ended questions. Extra Table's fundraiser "Empty Bowls" benefitting food pantries and soup kitchens in the Delta took place last week at Delta Arts Alliance. Delta State's Congressional Fellow was selected last week—Ms. Synethia Mathews. She will intern in Senator Roger Wicker's office while living in Washington, D.C. this spring semester.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The golf team competed in their final tournament for the season last week at the University of North Georgia, and they finished in ninth place. The cross-country team competed in the Gulf South Conference Championship meet at the University of Alabama-Huntsville over the weekend, and they finished in tenth place. The men's swimming and diving team

fell to Missouri S&T over the weekend. The football team will complete their fall practices on Thursday, November 11, and they will host a Green and White Scrimmage this weekend. 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 new Dectron unit for the Mayers Aquatics Center was delivered last week and will be installed this week. Upon installation, the old Dectron unit will be removed. The elevator and roofing projects were released for advertisement, and the university will take bids at the end of this month. Both projects are set to begin in January. The architect's plans for the residence hall renovation projects are awaiting approval from IHL and the university. Mr. Rutledge has a meeting this week to finalize the President's home project.
- 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. Commissioner Rankins shared with the IEOs the draft press release that IHL will issue about enrollment for Fall 2020. Dr. Roberts will share the press release with Cabinet members. President LaForge provided a university update to the Bolivar County Board of Supervisors this morning. The Delta State chapter of Omicron Delta Kappa will initiate new members tonight. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors will meet on Tuesday, and the Gulf South Conference Board of Directors will meet Tuesday afternoon. President LaForge will host a virtual reception for graduating international students on Wednesday. Mr. and Miss DSU will be announced at half-time during the football scrimmage on Saturday. COVID-19 protocols will be followed. Delta State's virtual homecoming will begin on Sunday. Alumni can participate in a Virtual 5K Challenge, social media trivia, and virtual campus tours throughout the week. On Monday, November 9, Mr. Chris Smith, James Beard Award-winning author of *The Whole Okra: A Seed to Stem Celebration*, will lead a discussion about okra. Bolivar County Alumni can attend DSU Trivia at Hey Joe's on Wednesday, November 11. The Alumni Awards Gala and Golden Circle Celebration will be pre-recorded and released on all Delta State Alumni social media platforms on Friday, November 13. SGA will host several events for Homecoming next week including: custom street signs, Tron laser tag, O<sub>2</sub> bar, virtual games, a drive-in movie, and Think Fast. All COVID-19 protocols and guidelines will be followed.

## **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 two students are in Hill Apartments, and no students are in the off-campus location. The university has no current hotspots. With Delta State's new Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) number, the Healthcare Specialists will be allowed to test for COVID-19, flu, strep, and drugs at the Student Health Center under the supervision of Delta State physician Dr. Steven Clark. The next step will be for Dr. Clark to meet with the Healthcare Specialists to set up the supervision of these provisions. The Student Health Center will continue to work on establishing COVID-19 testing on site. The Student Health Center received the testing supplies for 50 COVID-19 tests last week, but the actual tests have not been received. The Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) has funded a portion of the point-of-entry screeners for Delta State this Fall. Ms. Douglas has not received final confirmation on MDES providing additional funds for point-of-entry screeners for

Spring 2021. Out of the 30 point-of-entry screeners, 14 employed by Delta State and 13 employed by MDES will continue to work at the university once the work-from-home order begins on November 30 and will continue to work until December 23. Events sponsored by a Delta State organization must follow all Delta State COVID-19 protocols and guidelines. The Executive Committee will consider on a case-by-case basis any request from outside organizations to host events on campus for the Spring semester. Ms. Douglas shared with Cabinet members that some international students have experienced issues in locating a place to get a free COVID-19 test prior to returning home for the holidays. As Delta State does not require international students to get tested, the CARES Act funds would not pay for the tests; and, the international students' insurance won't cover the cost of the COVID-19 test. Ms. Douglas reported the Bolivar County Health Department website lists locations providing free COVID-19 testing, and the international students can find the testing sites on the website. 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 Dr. Christy Riddle. Mr. Kinnison announced the Athletics Department had a good week overall last week with one positive surveillance test to report. Mr. Rutledge provided Cabinet members with an update on CARES Act funds. Mr. Rutledge stated all CARES Act funds provided by the State will be obligated by the deadline of November 30.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Action**

#### **Request for archive of Campus Listservs ..... Dr. Westfall**

Dr. Westfall brought to Cabinet the request to establish an archive of all communication sent via the campus listservs. Constituents receive targeted, non-confidential announcements via email. However, in several cases, access to the archive of other constituency groups would be useful to avoid confusion, avoid repetition, and serve the needs of those who have multiple positions on campus, in addition to aiding those who may have deleted the original email. This would especially be helpful for student communications, which often are passed by word-of-mouth, such that by the time a faculty or staff member is asked a question, the student might not have the correct details provided in the original email. The archive of campus listservs would aid in transparency and communication throughout all campus constituencies. Dr. McAdams suggested only those with a Delta State email address be able to access an archive. Mr. Rutledge spoke with Chief Information Officer Edwin Craft, and he stated there would be a cost to creating the archive.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. Westfall to create an archive of all communication sent via the campus listservs and seconded by Chief Jeffrey Johns.

The motion was tabled for further refinement. Dr. Westfall will provide information on costs associated with creating an archive; how faculty, staff, and students will be able to access the archives; and, the creation of a firewall for only internal constituency groups to view the archive.

### **Discussion**

#### **FY21 Budget Update ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget. The university continues to monitor its spending, and revenue projections are on target. Vendor disbursements and salary expenses are less than they were this time last year. Mr. Rutledge hopes to provide an update on the university's cash flow statement by the next meeting.

**Additional information**

- Chief Johns informed Cabinet members the Administrative Staff Council’s Annual Feed-A-Family for Thanksgiving and Holiday Toy Drive began today and will continue until November 18. Donations can be dropped off in the Janice Wyatt Conference Room.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- Virtual Homecoming Week activities, November 8-14
- 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 begins November 30 and ends January 8
- Winter Holidays for Staff, December 23-January 1

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, November 9 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – COVID-19 Response Update and Plans

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.