

# DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S CABINET

### *Minutes*

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**Meeting date: October 30, 2017**

**Members in attendance:** President William LaForge, Dr. George Beals, Dr. Vernell Bennett, Dr. Dave Breaux, Ms. Ashley Griffin, Mr. Patrick Hundley, Mr. Ronnie Mayers, Dr. Charles McAdams, Dr. Michelle Roberts, Mr. Jamie Rutledge, and Ms. Caitlyn Thompson (Ms. Claire Cole – recorder)

**Members not in attendance:** None

**Guests:** Mr. Kelvin Davis, Director, Student Business Services  
Ms. Shelia Williams, Perkins Loan Coordinator, Student Business Services

**Call to Order:** A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on October 30, 2017. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

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

On motion by Dr. Beals, seconded by Mr. Rutledge, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on October 16, 2017.

#### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- Mr. Rutledge welcomed Mr. Kelvin Davis and Ms. Shelia Williams to Cabinet. He stated Mr. Davis, employed in 2015, made a large impact on Student Business Services upon his arrival. He rearranged office staff for better quality and productivity, and he put in place several policies for collections. Due to his diligence, Delta State's receivables have been reduced by 30%. Ms. Williams has increased the amount of Perkins Loans Delta State receives. Mr. Rutledge expressed his gratitude to both of them for a wonderful job.
- President LaForge extended congratulations to Ms. Griffin for her selection as first runner-up in the Miss Black Mississippi pageant. Dr. Bennett attended the event, and she said that Ms. Griffin represented Delta State extremely well, and we should be very proud of her.
- President LaForge and faculty members from the College of Education and Human Sciences attended the Mississippi Association of Partners in Education's (MAPE) Winter-Reed partnership luncheon honoring Dr. Robert Khayat. President LaForge stated it was a great event, and he had a chance to visit with Governor William Winter and Dr. Khayat.
- President LaForge visited Brandon High School for a recruiting visit. He stated it was a great group of students.
- The Laws-Elliott Pre-Professional Prep Laboratory Dedication was held two weeks ago. President LaForge had the pleasure of speaking at the dedication. Dr. Breaux stated it was an excellent program; however, the work begins now as we provide students with the resources to prepare them for professional school.
- President LaForge attended the BPAC performance of Brothers Osborne with special guest, Ashley

McBryde. He said the event was well-attended.

- President LaForge had the pleasure of inducting Mr. and Mrs. Jack Busby into the Golden Circle during their visit to campus a few weeks ago. Mr. and Mrs. Busby had not been back to campus since 1964. Mr. Busby, a charter member of the Zeta Beta chapter of Pi Kappa Alpha, met the newest members of the fraternity while on campus.
- President LaForge attended the NCAA President’s Council meeting last week, and he stated it went very well.
- The Second Annual Chinese Heritage Reunion took place on campus over the weekend. President LaForge welcomed the group on Friday evening. He stated the reunion was outstanding and there were more than 200 guests on campus.
- Mr. Mayers gave an update on Athletics. The men’s and women’s soccer teams concluded their seasons last week. The football team lost to the University of North Alabama, and they will travel to North Greenville University this weekend. The swimming and diving team competed well against Georgia Tech. Several of our swimmers hold statewide and nationwide times. The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee’s Trunk or Treat event is tomorrow in the baseball parking lot.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities for next week. He travels to Grenada and Water Valley on Tuesday for recruiting visits at Grenada High School and Water Valley High School. He will hold the last meeting of his Leadership Class on Tuesday. President LaForge will give a welcome on behalf of the university to the Atmos Energy Leadership Retreat on Wednesday. He will continue his department visits on Wednesday with Teacher Education, Leadership, and Research. President LaForge will welcome students from Tupelo High School involved in the Dual Credit program on Thursday while they are here for Experience DSU Day. The International Faculty Association Executive Committee will meet with President LaForge on Thursday to discuss their mission and objectives. The BPAC performance of Ailey II is on Thursday. On Friday morning, President LaForge will host a thank you breakfast for Enrollment Management, Student Success Center, and Graduate and Continuing Studies.

**CABINET TOPIC**

**Writing Skills Initiative.....Dr. McAdams**

Dr. McAdams stated writing skills are an important element in the education of our students. He visited with academic departments this fall to introduce a new Writing Skills Initiative. Delta State faculty are dissatisfied with the proficiency level at which students write. The Registrar’s office informed Dr. McAdams that only five students have been unable to graduate due to failing to meet their writing proficiency requirement. The current initiative focuses on the lowest common denominator of writing skills, with the strategy of having a single test score or course as a barrier to graduation. The new initiative focuses on enhancing academic writing experiences and expectations in writing in the discipline. The development and enhancement of writing skills will be a shared responsibility of the two required composition courses in the General Education program as well as enhanced writing courses in the major. The writing-enhanced courses are designed to expand the written communication skills of the student within the context of the student’s chosen major. Courses will be identified in the Course Catalog with a “W” next to the course name, and the course narrative will include a description of the writing enhanced course. This new initiative, approved by Academic Council, will begin in Fall 2018. A Writing Skills Initiative Task Force was created to determine the level of professional development and resources needed for faculty who teach the writing-enhanced courses and students. Dr. Beals feels faculty members are on board with the initiative since they have learned that they won’t be teaching writing. He stated there is concern about how faculty members will add this writing portion to their semester and still teach the same amount of information. President LaForge is pleased and proud that this initiative is taking shape, and he believe this is a positive move for Delta State as he hears from employers that they have a need for good writers.

**BUSINESS**

**Action**

**University Apartments Manual Revision ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge brought to Cabinet for approval the revised University Apartments Manual. During Cabinet Advance, a suggestion was made to shorten the maximum length of stay from five years to three years. Mr. Rutledge took the suggestion under advisement and has made the change. Mr. Rutledge will remove the statement regarding extensions being considered on a case-by-case basis. This statement will be included in the corresponding policy. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet Members the waiting list is currently six people, and anyone with a current contract will be grandfathered in regarding the term limits.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the revision in the University Apartments Manual and seconded by Mr. Mayers. **The motion was approved.**

**Termination/Dismissal Policy (first reading)..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge brought to Cabinet the Termination/Dismissal Policy for a first reading. Mr. Rutledge stated IHL policy dictates at-will employees are not eligible to file for an appeal or request a hearing for termination as they can be released without reason as long as the reason is legal. Dr. McAdams suggested adding a definition for at-will employees. Dr. Roberts said that she sent an email containing additional changes to Mr. Rutledge. Mr. Rutledge felt this document had not been updated to the level it needed to be, and therefore decided to table this item.

**Work Performance and Code of Conduct Policy (first reading)..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge brought to Cabinet the Work Performance and Code of Conduct policy for a first reading. This policy was updated to include information on at-will employees. Mr. Rutledge felt this document had not been updated to the level it needed to be, and therefore decided to table this item.

**Honorary Degree ..... Dr. Roberts**

Dr. Roberts brought to Cabinet a recommendation from the Honorary Degree committee. The candidate is a champion for business, public education, and economic growth. Upon Cabinet approval, President LaForge will contact the candidate to see if they accept the offer. If the candidate accepts, their name will be submitted to IHL for approval at their November Board meeting. Dr. Roberts reminded Cabinet Members that they had previously approved the honorary degree candidate for May 2018. This candidate will also be submitted to IHL for approval at their November Board meeting.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. Roberts to approve the awarding of an honorary degree and seconded by Mr. Hundley. **The motion was approved.**

**Discussion**

**Data/Information Needs.....Dr. McAdams**

Dr. McAdams reminded Cabinet Members of the discussion at Cabinet Advance about data/information needs. The list compiled by Cabinet Members was given to Ms. Emily Dabney to see what was readily available and to see what information could be obtained. Dr. McAdams stated the use of data could be separated into three areas: 1) make decisions, 2) monitor/evaluate progress on specific initiatives, and 3) accreditation, federal or state mandated data reports. If we use data to make decisions, we want to use data that is relevant to that decision. Dr. McAdams urged Cabinet Members to resist the call for more data unless it is actionable; however, one should make sure that additional data requested is not already

available. A challenge of data collection is the multiple variables that determine a data point. Dr. McAdams provided a list of resources with readily available data: IHL resources, IPEDS, EAC, and a DSU Mini Fact Book that will be available in summer 2018. Cabinet Members will receive an Excel spreadsheet with information needs. Dr. Roberts stated the presentation emphasizes the need for a dashboard to have all information in one space, readily available. Dr. McAdams stated the next step will be for the Office of Institutional Research and Planning to create a mini Factbook that will house the basic information already available. Once the Factbook has been created, we can adjust it if additional information is needed.

**Beverage Services RFP ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet Members the university has a Beverage Service Agreement, called a License Agreement, with Nehi Bottling Company. The agreement was established ten years ago. In order to follow state law and IHL rules and regulations, the university created a Request for Proposals (RFP) to look for a new beverage service. The RFP, finalized last week, is in today's newspaper and was delivered to two interested vendors. Once all proposals are received, the Executive Committee will discuss the options. Any new License Agreement will have a five-year contract, with a possible extension. One request of the university in the RFP is for vending machines in all dormitories to have the capability to accept Okra Cards. Mr. Rutledge plans to accept bids on November 21.

**Golf Course Repurposing Committee ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge created an advisory committee to look into repurposing the golf course. Mr. Rutledge stated he will Chair the committee and members include Dr. Bennett, Dr. Roberts, Ms. Griffin, Dr. Chris Jurgenson, Ms. Rebekah Arant, Dr. Edwin Craft, Mr. Jeff Barkman, and Mr. Ned Mitchell. The first meeting will take place this week, and President LaForge will issue the charge to the committee. Mr. Rutledge hopes to bring recommendations to President LaForge before Thanksgiving.

**Statesmen Boulevard..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet Members the funds needed to develop Statesmen Boulevard into what we want are not available. Mr. Barkman has some ideas for Statesmen Boulevard, as well. He would like to erect stone signage celebrating our national championships. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet Members the signs would be eight feet high. Mr. Rutledge will speak to Mr. Hundley about fundraising opportunities as he is currently working on a campaign for trees for the boulevard. President LaForge stated it sounded like a great idea, and he asked that Athletics be included in discussions about the project.

**Christmas Tree on the Quad .....Dr. Bennett**

Dr. Bennett stated Cleveland is gearing up for its "50 Nights of Lights" program, and Mrs. Becky Nowell shared the designer information with her in case Delta State wants to participate. Dr. Bennett would like to put a Christmas tree on the Quad, but she wanted to make sure it would be viewed as a positive activity. Cabinet Members felt the tree would be a positive addition to the campus. She stated the cost for the Christmas tree is \$900 - \$1,000. Mr. Rutledge stated he would work with Facilities Management on identifying a place for storing the tree at the end of the holiday season.

**Additional Information**

- Dr. Bennett informed Cabinet Members she is still accepting applications for participation in the Homecoming parade. Student Affairs is promoting the Statesmen Stroll for people to participate in during Homecoming weekend. If someone visits each stop on the stroll, they will be entered to win a gift.
- Dr. McAdams provided to Cabinet members a compendium of capstone course experiences from every program/area. Dr. McAdams stated most majors already had a capstone experience. President LaForge

would like to make a campus wide announcement about the new initiatives. Mr. Hundley will ask the Communications and Marketing staff to work on this.

- Mr. Hundley informed Cabinet Members that the Foundation Board meeting and Alumni Association meeting are next Friday, November 10.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- Ailey II, November 2, 7:30 pm, BPAC.
- Kent Wyatt Lecture Series, November 6, 12:00 noon, Ewing Hall, Jacob Conference Center.
- Homecoming, November 10-11
- Delta State vs. Florida Tech, November 11, 2:00 p.m. (wear green), Parker Field. President's Reception at 1:30 p.m., Dorgan Center
- Thanksgiving Holidays for staff, November 23-24

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, November 6
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – Diversity Committee: 2016-17 Accomplishments and 2017-18 Plans (President LaForge)

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 4:01 p.m.