

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: October 5, 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 – Dr. Michelle Roberts)

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 October 5, 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 Mr. Rutledge, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on September 28, 2020.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- Over the weekend, Delta State lost a great friend and supporter, Mr. Noel Funchess. Cabinet members held a moment of silence in his memory.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the last week. Campus Counseling held the last "Coping with COVID" virtual event for students. President LaForge continued his internal relations efforts with departmental visits, via virtual format, with Family and Consumer Sciences. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce hosted a retirement reception for Mr. Judson Thigpen. President LaForge stated that Mr. Thigpen is a great alumnus of Delta State and will be missed as the Executive Director of the Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce. President LaForge visited with two students last week, Mr. Davontre Henderson and Mr. Word. The NCAA sponsors a mentorship program called the Pathway Program that prepares administrators to take on greater responsibilities or roles within athletics. It is an intensive one-year program, and President LaForge agreed to be a mentor. He had his first meeting last week with his mentee, Ms. Jackie Nicholson from Albany State University..
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The cross-country team will compete in their third and final meet on October 17 prior to their conference championship at the end of the month. The golf team begins competition next Monday with the Derrall Foreman Invitational hosted by Delta State at the Cleveland Country Club. The baseball and softball teams are continuing their fall practices, and basketball teams' practices begin in November. The football team will begin practices next week. The competition start date for basketball is being reevaluated. The current start date is January 1, but it

may be moved to December 10.

- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The Mayers Aquatics Center HVAC project will receive the Dectron unit for installation the first of December. After installation, the second Dectron unit will be removed for repairs. The elevator project, with a budget of \$1.5 million, will be advertised this week. This budget will allow all elevators on campus to be replaced, repaired, or brought to ADA standards. The roofing project for the dorms will be advertised before November 1, and the project will begin in January. There is \$2.8 million remaining from the 2020 bond issue for renovation of our residence halls, and Mr. Rutledge will add these funds to the \$3 million we received from the 2021 bond issue for residence hall and HVAC renovations. The project will go out for bid in January. They will start on Blansett Hall and Brumby-Castle Hall since these residence halls will be empty in the Spring. The contractors for the new President's home are completing the punch list, and the move in process will occur the end of November.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge participated in the weekly COVID-19 update conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and the other Institutional Executive Officers (IEO) this morning. President LaForge will provide welcome remarks tonight for a virtual program hosted by the College of Education and Human Science where Mr. Dustin Stensland will detail his journey paddling the entire 2,320 miles of the Mississippi River in a birch bark canoe. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors meets tomorrow, and President LaForge will provide a campus update to the Cleveland Board of Aldermen tomorrow evening.
- President LaForge visited with Mayor and Mrs. Billy Nowell last week, and they were very complimentary of the university grounds. President LaForge asked Mr. Rutledge to pass along their compliment to Mr. Cecil Barnett in Facilities Management.

CABINET TOPIC

COVID-19 Plans for Fall 2020 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. Commissioner Rankins informed the IEOs this morning of the inordinate amount of complaints IHL staff have received regarding online instruction this Fall. The concern is over the quality of instruction and the struggles students are experiencing. There was also discussion regarding the need for campuses to have a plan in place for the process that will be used in getting employees/students back to campus if they test positive for COVID-19 while traveling on university business, especially as it related to sports teams. 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 had one hot spot last week, but steps were taken to prevent an increase in spread. Ms. Douglas completed training for the backup point-of-entry screeners. If any additional employees want to be backup point-of-entry screeners, Ms. Douglas will train them, as needed. The university lacks one point-of-entry screener, and two point-of-entry screeners are out on quarantine due to close contact. Ms. Douglas would like to begin a new campaign through emails and social media to reiterate the need to uphold all safety protocols including socially distancing and wearing a mask. The revised COVID-19 Protocols for Students, approved by Cabinet members last week, was sent out to faculty, staff, and students and uploaded to the COVID-19 webpage. The Student Health Center may alter their hours of operation and close on Saturdays due to a lack of visits. The Healthcare

Specialist on duty this Saturday will determine the need to remain open or close on Saturdays. The Student Health Center in conjunction with Bolivar Medical Center will offer flu shots, by appointment only next week, to employees and students. Employee flu shots are scheduled for Monday, October 12, and student flu shots are scheduled for Tuesday, October 13. The university purchased flu shots with funds from the Robert M. Hearin Foundation in order to provide students with a free shot. Employee flu shots are covered by insurance, Ms. Douglas sent Delta State’s draft outbreak plan to Dr. Steven Clark and Dr. Thomas Dobbs for review. In an effort to recognize employees going above and beyond the call of duty with regards to COVID-19, Ms. Douglas created the “COVID-19 Hero of the Week” recognition. This week’s selection is Ms. Julie Jackson. Delta State and Bolivar Medical Center held a conference call last week to discuss operations for the university’s Student Health Center. As part of a new contract, Dr. Steven Clark will be the university physician, and the Healthcare Specialist will work under the supervision of Dr. Clark. Also, Bolivar Medical Center will order COVID-19 tests for the Student Health Center—400 tests will be ordered each week, and the university will pay for the tests with CARES Act funds as they arrive. Student Health Center staff will undergo training in order to administer and read the COVID-19 tests. Dr. Bennett-Fairs informed Cabinet members one Greek organization within the National Panhellenic Council and Interfraternity Council on campus is in good standing. Two chapters are under a cease and desist order pending investigation over off campus events. Two chapters are violating protocols through the lack of social distancing and wearing masks, as shown with pictures posted on social media. Dr. Bennett-Fairs scheduled a Zoom conference call with chapter members, advisors of each chapter, Director of Student Development Rochelle Owsley, and Ms. Douglas to explain the cease and desist orders. If a student organization receives three cease and desist orders, the organization will be suspended. Dr. Bennett-Fairs will urge chapter advisors to hold their chapter members accountable to the COVID-19 protocols. Mr. Kinnison provided an update on Athletics with regards to COVID-19. The Athletics Department continues to conduct surveillance testing of 25% of their student-athletes every two weeks. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members the first day for increasing to 100 the number of patrons for “in-person” dining was today. Mr. Rutledge observed the lunch hour today at Young-Mauldin Cafeteria, and he stated all ran smoothly. Sodexo staff stated they are seeing an increase in university employees and students eating “in-person.” Mr. Rutledge provided Cabinet members with an update on CARES Act funds. Mr. Rutledge provided recommendations to Cabinet members on how best to spend the remaining State CARES Act fund including: video editing software, additional sanitizing supplies and personal protective equipment, TRACSYSTEM print software, temporary janitorial staff, additional Police Office staff, distance education technology support and training, additional meals for student-athletes, additional space for quarantine and isolation, and student-athlete testing. Mr. Rutledge will bring additional recommendations to the Executive Committee on Friday and a report to Cabinet next week. Mr. Rutledge put in a request to the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration for \$1.1 million for our COVID-19 expenditures. Prior to receiving the funds, the university must justify how each purchase is COVID-19 related. Dr. Roberts received an article from a member of the IHL Safe Start Task Force about updated Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and protocols. The article references disagreements among professionals on whether or not the CDC is strict enough with their guidelines. Dr. Roberts will send the article to Cabinet members for review for future discussions.

BUSINESS

Action

Post-Fall Commencement work plans/schedule for staff Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge brought to Cabinet a post-Fall Commencement work plan/schedule for staff to help limit the spread of COVID-19 and save the university money. Mr. Rutledge discussed two options: 1) implement a

four-day work week schedule until the Winter holidays begin, or 2) all employees work remotely from home from November 30, 2020 until January 8, 2021. By implementing a four-day work week, the university would save \$5,000 to \$8,000 in utilities. With all employees working remotely from home, the university would save approximately \$20,000 in utilities. The only employees to work on campus during this time period would be Facilities Management, Police Department, the Child Development Center, the Post Office, and Athletics, as needed. Mr. Kinnison informed Cabinet members both basketball teams and both swimming and diving teams will be on campus after the Thanksgiving holiday until the Christmas holiday for practice and competition. His staff will be on campus with the student-athletes during that time. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members the dining hall and food court will be closed during that time. Ms. Douglas will make sure point-of-entry screeners are assigned to the appropriate buildings during this time.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve one of the post-Fall commencement work plans/schedule for staff and seconded by Chief Johns.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve all employees working remotely from home from November 30, 2020 to January 8, 2021 and seconded by Chief Johns. The motion was approved.

Discussion

C2C UpdateDr. McAdams

Due to a lack of external funding, IHL shut down their Compete 2 Complete (C2C) website and program application, effective October 1, 2020 and until additional funding for the program is secured. For students currently in C2C programs, they are unaffected. The largest impact will be on those adults wanting to get into a C2C program. Delta State has awarded 82 degrees through the C2C program with an additional 12 students enrolled this Fall and 10 expected to graduate this Fall.

Campus Forums..... Dr. Roberts

Dr. Roberts informed Cabinet members the President’s Office is in the initial stages of planning the Fall Campus Forums. The date of the forums has not been set, but the date will be during the last two weeks in October. Dr. Roberts shared the six dates in mind for the forums: October 20, October 21, October 22, October 27, October 28, and October 29. She asked Cabinet members to share with her any conflicts or any preferred days of the week. Dr. Westfall shared with Cabinet members most classes using the hybrid format meet in person on Mondays and Tuesdays, so a Wednesday or Thursday would be best for a forum. The Fall Campus Forums will be virtual via Zoom, and some of the topics to be covered are COVID-19, budget, enrollment, and campus events. At next week’s Cabinet meeting, Dr. Roberts will provide a draft agenda for the forums and the date.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget. As mentioned last week, Mr. Rutledge analyzed the scholarship budget and saw a decrease in scholarships awarded. He projects the scholarship savings to be \$750,000 for the year. Mr. Rutledge is planning for a 10% decrease in students from Fall 2020 to Spring 2021, and a 10% decrease in scholarships awarded for the Spring. Mr. Rutledge also reduced the tuition projections for Summer School 2021 by \$500,000. Mr. Rutledge hopes \$1.5 million in contingencies will be able to cover the university’s deficits in tuition and fees revenue so that he can put our cash contingency towards our days of cash balance at year’s end. As mentioned in a previous Cabinet meeting, the housing budget currently has a deficit due to a decrease in the number of students living on campus, and it's estimated that the decrease in housing revenue will be \$1.1 million for this fiscal year. Blansett Hall and Brumby Castle Hall will be closed for occupancy beginning on January 1, and their residents will be moved

to other residence halls. The university will save 70% on utilities and will furlough or relocate six custodial positions for those two residence halls. The savings on utilities and custodial positions will allow the housing budget to balance.

Additional information

- Dr. Roberts announced the President's Office will undergo restructuring. A new position was created, Scheduling and Events Specialist, to manage the President's calendar and all events for the President's Office. The new position will be posted today or tomorrow.
- Chief Johns shared with Cabinet members the creation of the Delta Deep Roots music project. This project is a joint venture between the City of Cleveland and Delta State alumna Tricia Walker's Big Front Porch Productions. Delta Deep Roots will offer a platform for musicians to share their music with the local community and with out of town visitors who come to Cleveland looking for live music.
- Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the sad news that Ms. Donna Fitzgerald's daughter passed away over the weekend. He asked for prayers for the family.
- Dr. Bennett-Fairs announced Homecoming elections for maids and knights occurs October 12-16 and will take place online. The maids and knights will be recognized virtually.
- Mr. Word announced the SGA is working on planning events for Homecoming week, which is scheduled for November 8-14.
- President LaForge announced the 2020 Alumni Service Award winners. The Outstanding Alumnus of the Year is Dr. Steven Clark. Commissioner Willie Simmons, Mr. Beau Garverick, Ms. Raenalda Palmer, Ms. Jane Moss, and Dr. Steven Clark will be inducted into the Hall of Fame. The Hugh Ellis Walker Alumni Service Award winners are Ms. Spring Heflin Nunnelee and Ms. Melanie Anderson. The Kent Wyatt "Young Alumnus" Service Award winner is Mr. Josh West, and the Henry Outlaw Retired Faculty/Staff Alumni Service Award winner is Dr. Rose Strahan.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Statesmen Emerald Awards of Excellence, October 21, 7:00 p.m., BPAC
- Okra Out Front, October 22, 6:00 p.m.
- Foundation Board of Directors meeting, October 23

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, October 12 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – COVID-19 Plans for Fall 2020

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.