

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: September 14, 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 conference call on September 14, 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 8, 2020.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- Five years ago, Delta State experienced a terrible tragedy on campus that took the life of a beloved professor, Dr. Ethan Schmidt. Cabinet members held a moment of silence in his memory.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the last week. President LaForge held a virtual meeting with staff from Undergraduate, Graduate, and International Admissions to thank them for their recruiting efforts this past year in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. President LaForge will continue his internal relations efforts this Fall via telephone calls or Zoom meetings. In lieu of his faculty and staff luncheons for new faculty and staff, he began calling new employees to extend greetings and welcome them to campus. Also, he called President Emeritus Kent Wyatt and former Delta State President Aubrey Lucas to give them a campus update. For his external relations efforts, President LaForge made routine calls to Mayor Billy Nowell and Executive Director of the Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce Judson Thigpen to discuss their continued efforts with COVID-19 and to share with them a campus update. The Office of Student Life hosted last week their annual Student Leadership Conference for the presidents and vice presidents of registered student organizations. Dr. Bennett-Fairs reported that the conference was well-attended and the students spoke about ways to collaborate and get to know other students in different organizations.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The cross-country team has their first meet a week from Saturday at the University of North Alabama. The baseball and softball teams begin their 20-hour a week fall practice schedules this weekend. The Gulf South Conference continues to iron out details on their impending sports schedules; however, their schedules cannot be finalized until the NCAA makes

some final decisions. The “Hey Coach” weekly radio show begins tonight at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Kinnison said the radio show provides an advertising venue for DSU Athletics’ sponsors and advertising partners, and it’s a vessel to keep Statesmen supporters involved in DSU Athletics.

- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The pre-construction meeting for the sidewalk project was this morning, and the removal of the sidewalks on the southside of campus will begin the first of October. As part of this project, the entrance to the H.L. Nowell Student Union will be renovated, and construction will begin once students leave for Thanksgiving Break. If weather permits, the entire project should be complete in February. The sidewalk project is a match grant project with MDOT. The university matches 20% and MDOT provides 80%. The university will submit in another application to MDOT for the sidewalks on the north side of campus. The Mayers Aquatics Center HVAC demolition continues. Also, the university chose Memphis Pool to repair the leaks in the pool in the Mayers Aquatics Center. A meeting with the contractors, engineers, and manufacturers for the Walter Sillers HVAC project occurs this week. All involved with the project believe the condensation on the gym floor stemmed from the boiler. The boiler had some faulty parts, which were replaced, and some additional changes may need to be made to the computer programming. Part of the problem lies in the fact the boiler purchased is too large for the current size of Walter Sillers Coliseum. The plan was to purchase a boiler that could accommodate an expanded Sillers Coliseum as well as Kent Wyatt Hall, but Mr. Rutledge was told the boiler can be programmed to work for our space. Sod was laid at the President’s home this week, and the moving process can begin in two to three weeks. The elevator project was to be advertised last week, but it wasn’t. Mr. Rutledge will reach out to the Bureau of Buildings for an advertisement date.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. Delta State’s 95th birthday is tomorrow, and Dr. Bennett-Fairs’ birthday is Wednesday. President LaForge participated in the weekly COVID-19 update conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and the other Institutional Executive Officers (IEO). All IEOs will participate virtually in the annual IHL Board Retreat on Thursday to provide the Board of Trustees with an overall COVID-19 update. The update will include a review of COVID-19 cases for employees and students since the beginning of school, hotspots on campus, the impact on campus finances, and challenges going forward. President LaForge will continue his internal relations efforts this week with virtual departmental visits. He will visit with Archives and Museum, the Music Department, and Interdisciplinary Studies. President LaForge reminded Cabinet members there will not be a program for Delta State’s 95th Anniversary tomorrow, but the Archives will be open with available memorabilia and exhibits to view.

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 active cases at all eight universities, as well as the number of employees and students in quarantine and isolation. Dr. Deborah Birx, Coronavirus Response Coordinator for the White House Coronavirus Task Force, visited the Ole Miss campus over the weekend during her tour of Southeastern Conference schools. She urged the Ole Miss campus, as well as the IHL system, to consider four items: 1) do not shut down the university due to an increased number of positive COVID-19 cases because sending students home could worsen the spread of the virus; 2) provide surveillance testing of at least 10% of students each week (25% preferred) to help combat a potential surge as we enter the traditional flu season; 3) collect data on quarantine students; and, 4) educate students on the importance of reporting their symptoms.

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 students in quarantine and isolation. Ms. Douglas reported five units in Hill Apartments are occupied, and no students are in the off-campus location. The university had several hotspot areas, but it has dropped to one area as a result of several students completing their quarantine or isolation period. Currently, Ms. Douglas is working to get the notification emails to students to be delivered through the database. Once this step is complete, each student placed in quarantine or isolation will receive email documentation with quarantine dates, date to follow-up with Student Life, and date to return to class. After the Office of Student Life follows up with a student, they will send the student an email granting their permission to return to classes. Ms. Douglas hopes this new process will help students in providing their professors with needed documentation on quarantine/isolation dates and return to class dates. Ms. Douglas has also looked into our Student Health Center providing COVID-19 rapid tests administered by our Healthcare Specialists. She stated the Student Health Center is already a licensed site to administer the rapid tests. She will bring a report to the Executive Committee once all information is received. Ms. Douglas and Dr. Edwin Craft continue to work on the daily symptom checker to modify the system to allow for two or more symptoms (instead of just one) as a “red flag” indicator. Ms. Douglas spoke with the Robert E. Smith School of Nursing, and they expressed a concern over the change in protocols with regards to close contact with or without a mask. This presents a challenge to our nursing students when in their clinical facilities. She discussed the possibility of adding an additional condition on the symptom checker about being six feet away with or without personal protective equipment. In a conversation with Dr. Steven Clark, President LaForge learned the Cleveland Medical Clinic will receive flu shots next week. As advised by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), flu shots should be administered at the end of September or first of October. President LaForge reported to Cabinet members that a few of our sister institutions are planning to remove Spring Break from their Spring academic calendars. Dr. McAdams announced Spring Break is on the Deans Council agenda for tomorrow, and he will also discuss Spring Break during IHL’s Chief Academic Officers meeting on Wednesday to get a feel for what our IHL colleagues are doing. He will bring this information to the Academic Council and then bring their recommendation to Cabinet for consideration. Mr. Rutledge provided Cabinet members with an update on CARES Act funds. Currently, \$253,000 of the State CARES Act funds are unobligated, and the funds have to be spent by December 30.

Ms. Douglas has a call scheduled this afternoon with Dr. Dobbs to discuss some questions about State Department of Health guidelines as they relate to our protocols. She will ask for guidance on individuals who previously contacted COVID-19 and came into close contact with the virus again. Ms. Douglas was advised an individual who previously tested positive for COVID-19 and comes into contact with the virus again does not have to quarantine for three months after their initial 14-day quarantine/isolation period. Ms. Douglas will also seek Dr. Dobbs’ advice on how best to handle our nursing students coming in close contact or being exposed to COVID-19 in their clinical settings.

Ms. Douglas recommended Cabinet members revise the COVID-19 Protocols for Employees and Students to reflect current CDC guidelines and State Department of Health guidelines. The major revisions are below.

Employees

- Travel restrictions have been lifted for domestic travel, effective September 1, 2020.
- International Travel is still restricted and will not be approved at this time.
- Neck gaiters are approved face coverings.

- Masks with exhalation valves or vents are prohibited.
- Face shields cannot be used as a substitute for masks.
 - Instructors may wear a face shield during classroom/lab times to ensure students hear content being provided.
- A person may be at risk for COVID-19 if they have been in close contact or “exposed to” an individual diagnosed with COVID-19
- Close contact definition revised to include:
 - Being less than six feet from someone who has COVID-19, with or without a mask for more than 15 minutes (this does not have to be consecutive).
- The infectious period is two days (48 hours) prior to a symptom onset (or test positivity if no symptoms at the time of diagnosis) and then another 12 days from symptom onset or test positivity (14 days total).

Students

Some edits are referenced in several areas of the document.

- Close contact definition revised to include:
 - Being less than six feet from someone who has COVID-19, with or without a mask for more than 15 minutes (this does not have to be consecutive).
- The infectious period is two days (48 hours) prior to a symptom onset (or test positivity if no symptoms at the time of diagnosis) and then another 12 days from symptom onset or test positivity (14 days total).
- The Office of Student Life will no longer contact the COVID-19 Response Coordinator or the Counseling Center about a possible exposure. The COVID-19 Response Coordinator and Counseling Center have immediate access to the information in the database.
- Students may be told to quarantine by the Office of Student Life or the Healthcare Specialist.
- Residence Hall staff who transport students must follow CDC guidelines for transporting possible COVID-19 cases.
- Students in quarantine:
 - If the student lives on campus, Student Life will notify his/her hall manager of his/her exposure. The hall manager will notify the Director of Housing and Residence Life, who will begin to execute the Housing quarantine/isolation protocol by overseeing the student’s relocation to designated quarantine/isolation space.
 - Commuters should quarantine at their residence. If the commuter cannot quarantine safely in his/her off campus residence, he/she will be relocated to the designated quarantine space immediately.
- The COVID-19 Response Coordinator will send documentation to the student with potential quarantine dates, follow-up date with Student Life, and possible return to class date.
- Roommates and suitemates of residence hall students and roommates of commuters who have been exposed to or tested positive for COVID-19 must quarantine/isolate and undergo the COVID-19 protocols as well.
- Neck gaiters are approved face coverings.
- Masks with exhalation valves or vents are prohibited.
- Face shields cannot be used as a substitute for masks.

BUSINESS

Action

COVID-19 Protocols for Employees and Students – update..... President LaForge

Ms. Douglas provided an overview of the recommended revisions to the COVID-19 Protocols for Employees and Students. Cabinet members provided editorial edits. Once Ms. Douglas finishes her edits, she will post the updates to the COVID-19 webpage on the Delta State website, and the revised protocols will be sent to faculty and staff. Prior to sending the revised protocols to students, Ms. Douglas will work with Communications and Marketing on updating the FAQs graphics to reflect the revised protocols.

Motion: Moved by Dr. Westfall to approve the recommended revisions to the COVID-19 Protocols for Employees and Students and seconded by Dr. Bennett-Fairs. The motion was approved.

Discussion

FY21 Budget Update..... Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget. After reviewing our cash flow statements for this fiscal year, Mr. Rutledge stated the university’s cash flow position is exactly where it needs to be. Mr. Rutledge will compute a few financial ratios this week, and he expects those to be better and increase in a positive way from this time last year. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the Cash Flow Projection report for August 2020. This report compares the current cash flows to the cash flows from August 2019. A few areas show a decrease from 2019 to 2020 including our General Fund and Education Enhancement fund, which are both provided by the State of Mississippi. The Student Financial Aid account has decreased reflecting our decrease in enrollment. Another significant decrease is in the Sales and Services account which is a big concern for Mr. Rutledge. This account reflects revenues received from athletic events, BPAC ticket sales, commissions from Sodexo, Pepsi, and Teach For America, and facility rental fees. Due to a decrease in campus events, postponed sporting events, and an enrollment decrease, Mr. Rutledge expects this decrease in revenue to continue throughout the fiscal year. Our contract with Sodexo needs to be re-negotiated as it guarantees 800 meal plans this year. Currently, 600 meal plans have been purchased. Mr. Rutledge hopes to re-negotiate the contract for a fee-based service. Delta State is not the only university experiencing this decline. Universities across the country are dealing with the same issues. The bank receipts for August 2020 are \$4 million below August 2019’s bank receipts, which helped our cash position for the month. Employee Net Payroll, Student Net Payroll, and Vendor Disbursements each decreased from 2019 to 2020. In August 2019, our insurance payments were billed and paid to IHL; however, it will be paid in September of 2020. This allowed Vendor Disbursements to increase. Also, the university saved \$187,500 in Entergy payments. The “Other Disbursements” area increased, as well, due to the university not having to pay for TFA expenditures and Food Service summer payments. The university’s cash increased more than \$3 million from August 2019 to August 2020. Even though the cash increase is a tremendous feat, Mr. Rutledge advised Cabinet members to remember the decrease in sales and services will increase and become a larger issue later in the fiscal year. If revenues aren’t being received, purchases don’t need to be made unless absolutely necessary. Mr. Rutledge is urging budget managers to pull together to get through this difficult time and come out on top with an increase to our cash balance. The next area Mr. Rutledge reported to Cabinet members was tuition revenue. He shared with Cabinet members a tuition analysis from September 2019 to September 2020. Delta State’s tuition and fees revenue in September 2019 was \$11,302,903.59. That amount, plus the 6% increase in tuition, totals \$11,929,526.59. This \$11.9 million amount is what the university should have received in tuition revenue had enrollment stayed the same as in 2019. However, we have currently received \$10,579,291, which is a

12% decrease in tuition revenue. The university budgeted for an 11% decrease in enrollment, so Mr. Rutledge wants to keep watch on tuition revenue to ensure it doesn't decline further. The university does have a pool of money in the current budget to help offset the E&G budget decreases including: \$500,000 contingency fund, delay of \$620,000 of capital asset purchases, and \$452,000 that was set aside for a potential 5% decrease in State appropriations. The larger concern is the 25% decrease in the university's housing auxiliary fund. Legally, an auxiliary fund cannot show a deficit. Mr. Rutledge and the Executive Committee members will review a report on housing occupancy in each dormitory and the housing budget this week in their weekly meeting. The Executive Committee will bring a final report to Cabinet on adjustments to be made to the help alleviate the deficit in the housing auxiliary fund.

Additional information

- Mr. Rutledge is going to survey the campus to see if the closed water fountains has caused a hardship on campus. If so, he is going to use CARES Act funds to purchase cases of water for academic buildings.
- Mr. Munroe stated the Alumni Association Board's President-Elect, Mr. John Fletcher, began his transition, and he will take over as President in November.
- Mr. Munroe will make an offer today for the Director of Media Relations position.
- The Academic Development Officer for the Foundation has resigned.
- Mr. Rutledge requested help from Mr. Word on educating students to dispose of their screening stickers properly.
- Mr. Munroe announced Alumni Relations will host a virtual Homecoming this year. He will provide the schedule to Cabinet members.
- Mr. Westfall reported 14 applications for the faculty and staff CARES Act funds microgrants have been received.
- President LaForge stated Cabinet members need to begin discussing initial plans for our centennial celebration.
- Dr. Bennett-Fairs and Dr. Megan Smith propose splitting the remaining CARES Act funds for students between those who qualified last Spring and are still enrolled this fall. A larger percentage of funds will go to full-time students. This will be completed in December.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Delta State University's 95th Anniversary, September 15

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, September 21 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:16 p.m.