

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: September 21, 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 September 21, 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 14, 2020.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge reported that he received on behalf of the university \$72,000 in grant funds from the Robert M. Hearin Foundation for scholarships and COVID-19 response support. Delta State is very appreciative of the Hearin Foundation's support.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the last week. In an effort to continue his external and donor relations, President LaForge called Dr. Percy Malone and Dr. and Mrs. Fred Pittman last week to provide them with a campus update. President LaForge continued his internal relations efforts with departmental visits, via virtual format, with Archives and Museum, Music Department, and Interdisciplinary Studies. He also called several new employees to extend greetings and welcome them to campus. The IHL Board of Trustees held their monthly Board meeting during the annual IHL Board Retreat last week. The Board of Trustees approved our facility needs requests for the 2021 Legislative Session and the university's mission statement. All Institutional Executive Officers provided the Board of Trustees with an overall COVID-19 update, including 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. The Madison Center sponsored a Constitution Day lecture last week with a keynote speaker from the University of Central Florida. President LaForge participated by giving introductory remarks. The International Service and International Education staff in the Student Success Center are working to promote Delta State's offerings to international audiences. One audience in particular is the Korean International Christian School in Korea where we have an established relationship through one of our Music Department professors who is leading that charge.

President LaForge filmed greetings from Delta State for an international recruiting event with them.

- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The Gulf South Conference Athletic Directors continue to have their weekly calls, and they are finalizing dates for their upcoming athletic seasons. The cross-country team competed at the University of Alabama-Huntsville last week and placed tenth overall. The cross-country team will compete again on Friday at the University of North Alabama.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The MDOT sidewalk project received the notice to proceed and construction will begin on October 1. 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. Mr. Rutledge stated Delta State will apply for another MDOT grant to continue the sidewalk project throughout the campus. To redo all sidewalks on campus, it will take two additional MDOT grants and approximately three years. The Mayers Aquatics Center HVAC project is on schedule. The new boiler in Walter Sillers Coliseum has not caused any more condensation problems. The roofing project for the residence halls will be advertised in December for a start date in April or May. The elevator project has not been advertised by the Bureau of Buildings yet, and Mr. Rutledge has a meeting with their staff tomorrow to discuss the project.
- 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. Campus Counseling will host another session of “Coping with COVID” this afternoon. Dr. Bennett-Fairs informed Cabinet members students are utilizing Zoom and telephone appointments with Campus Counseling due to COVID-19, and Campus Counseling saw the need to offer an additional outlet for students to voice their concerns about COVID-19. The GSC Board of Directors meets tomorrow. The Office of Student Affairs, the Office of Student Life, and the Quality Enhancement Plan will host a free drive-in screening of the film *John Lewis: Good Trouble*. Prior to the film screening, a panel discussion with President LaForge, Executive Director of Mississippi Votes Arieka Bennett, The Rosedale Company CEO Jack Coleman, Representative Abe Hudson, and Mr. Word will occur. The panel discussion begins at 7:30 p.m., and the film will begin afterwards. President LaForge continues his internal relations this week with virtual departmental visits to the Child Development Center and the Tennis program. On Thursday, President LaForge has a meeting with Dr. Temika Simmons regarding closing out the Local Government Leadership Institute program.

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. 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 units in Hill Apartments are occupied, and no students are in the off-campus location. Also, the university hasn’t observed any new hotspots on campus. Ms. Douglas terminated four point-of-entry screeners last week; however, the positions were filled and training begins tomorrow afternoon. Following Dr. Deborah Birx’s suggestion on surveillance testing, Ms. Douglas is going to talk with the Executive Committee regarding Delta State’s plan for testing. Students continue to visit the Healthcare Specialists at the Student Health Center. This service is meeting a great need. The COVID-19 database can send notification emails to students in quarantine or isolation with their quarantine dates, date to follow-up with Student Life, and date to return to class. Ms. Douglas sent

notification emails to all students within the database, dating back to August 17 (the first day of classes). The COVID-19 Case Dashboard on the COVID-19 webpage has an archived dashboard data link now, which allows one to view previous dashboard totals. Another new feature on the COVID-19 webpage is a link to all COVID-19 updates. Ms. Douglas shared with Cabinet members she has an issue with an employee that has avoided completing the daily symptom checker. Ms. Douglas requested Cabinet members encourage their constituencies to do the daily symptom checker every day. The symptom checker is an additional layer of protection from COVID-19 as it helps deter employees and students from coming to campus/leaving their dorm rooms if symptomatic. Dr. Bennett-Fairs announced a Greek organization was suspended due to hosting a social gathering off campus. Also, three students were suspended due to breaking isolation and attending the social gathering. President LaForge requested Dr. Bennett-Fairs, Chief Johns, and Ms. Douglas provide a report to Cabinet about how best to secure all points of entry in the H.L. Nowell Student Union to ensure all entering are properly screened for COVID-19. To be consistent with the other IHL universities, the Academic Council will vote on a recommendation to alter the Spring 2021 Academic Calendar, which would include eliminating Spring Break and ending the semester a week earlier. By eliminating Spring Break, the university hopes to prevent a situation of students and employees being exposed and bringing COVID-19 back to the Delta State community. If approved in Academic Council, a recommendation will be brought to Cabinet next week. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members Phase II of re-opening the Young-Mauldin Cafeteria began today with “in-person” dining for up to 75 patrons. Mr. Rutledge will meet with Mr. Kelvin Davis (Student Business Services Director) and Mr. Gerald Frye (Sodexo General Manager) later today about the opening, and he will bring a report to Cabinet next week. Mr. Rutledge provided Cabinet members with an update on CARES Act funds. He was notified by IHL that the Legislative Budget Office might alter the date by which the State CARES Act funds must be spent to November 30. Mr. Rutledge will provide recommendations to the Executive Committee on how best to spend the remaining State CARES Act funds. Once reviewed, the Executive Committee will report to Cabinet members their recommendations on how best to spend the remaining State CARES Act funds.

BUSINESS

Action

Resolution for MDOT Transportation Alternatives Program Project..... Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge presented to Cabinet members for approval a resolution for a MDOT Transportation Alternatives Program Project. The resolution states it is the intent of Delta State to apply for a MDOT Transportation Alternatives Program project, and the project will consist of installing decorative sidewalk, ADA accessible ramps, and associated infrastructures throughout portions of the campus. Delta State must comply with all federal and state guidelines and certify that no known foreseeable legal impediments exist that would prohibit the completion of the project.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the resolution for a MDOT Transportation Alternatives Program Project and seconded by Dr. McAdams. The motion was approved.

Discussion

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget. Last week, he provided Cabinet members with a tuition comparative analysis from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020. Delta State’s tuition and fees revenue in Fall 2019 was \$11,302,903.59. That amount, plus the 6% increase in tuition approved for FY21, totals \$11,929,526.59, which is the amount of tuition revenue the university should have received had

enrollment remained flat for Fall 2020. However, we have received \$10,579,291 in tuition revenue, which is a 12% decrease. Also, the university budgeted for \$2,206,994.54 in housing revenue, but thus far we have received \$1,647,591.73, for a decrease of 25%. Mr. Rutledge provided Cabinet members with tuition and fees revenue projections for Spring 2021. The university budgeted for \$10,704,162.71 in tuition and fees revenue for Spring 2021. It is projected the university will receive only \$9,868,698.59 for tuition and fees revenue for the Spring—a decrease of \$835,464. The university budgeted for \$1,964,225.00 in housing revenue for Spring 2021, but it is projected the university will receive \$1,404,822.19. When considering projections for the entire year, Delta State may be short \$2,185,699.59 in tuition and fees revenue and \$1,118,806.00 in housing revenue for FY21. The university does have contingencies to help cover the loss in tuition revenue and fees including: \$500,000 contingency fund; delay of \$620,000 of capital asset purchases; \$452,000 balance of 5% budgeted decrease in State appropriations; \$500,000 cash contingency fund; and, \$113,700 savings in utilities, contract negotiations, and salaries from the months of July 2020 and August 2020. To maintain our days of cash on hand, Mr. Rutledge is going to add all contingencies to our budget to make up for the lost revenue and to keep our budget balanced. Due to our enrollment decreasing by more than 350 students, we need to include our \$500,000 cash contingency to help offset the revenue the decrease. Mr. Rutledge stated that according to IHL's CFO, the Board of Trustees would not expect the university to increase its days of cash in a year with a large decline in enrollment. Instead, the Board's wish would be for Delta State to maintain its days of cash. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the university has realized savings in several areas across campus, which can help offset our deficit and help with our cash balance at the end of the fiscal year. In an effort to save and increase our cash balance, Mr. Rutledge asked Cabinet members to spread caution to their constituencies about the importance of limiting spending, when possible. Departments should not transfer unused funds to other accounts to purchase non-essential items.

Additional information

- Mr. Word informed Cabinet members Student Senate interviews will take place this week. SGA Vice President Will Young hopes to have 20 student senators this year.
- Mr. Kinnison stated 55 student-athletes from four sports worked a drive-by Relay For Life event over the weekend. He is very proud of the group that volunteered.
- Mr. Munroe hired a new Director of Media Relations, Ms. Brittany Davis-Green, and she will begin work at Delta State on October 5. Mr. Munroe will offer the position for Academic Affairs Development Officer today or tomorrow. The Director of Development resigned, and he will begin a search soon for that position.

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, September 28 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.