

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: August 2, 2021

Members in attendance: President William LaForge, Mr. Mike Kinnison, Dr. Andy Novobilski, Dr. Eddie Lovin, Mr. Rick Munroe, Mr. Jamie Rutledge, Dr. Michelle Roberts, Mr. William Young, Dr. Vicki Bingham, Dr. Andrew Wegmann, Ms. Nakikke Wallace (recorder – Ms. Cristie Washington)

Members not in attendance: None

Guests: None

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on August 2, 2021. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Dr. Lovin and seconded by Dr. Bingham, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on July 12, 2021.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. President LaForge attended the Cleveland-Bolivar Chamber of Commerce's Speaker Series featuring MSU President Mark Keenum and then hosted Dr. Keenum at the President's home for lunch. The Wayne Blansett Staff Development Day took place on July 15. Ms. Wallace reported that Dr. and Mrs. Blansett were able to attend the event, and that there was good participation from staff. President LaForge attended the Commercial Aviation Department's Air Force Jr. Reserve Officer Training Graduation at "The Lyric" at West End District. Delta State's Tri Delta Alumni hosted a reunion over the weekend, and President LaForge invited them to a reception at his home. The Foundation hosted a very successful Green and White Gala. President LaForge met with Baptist Student Union (BSU) Director Zach Hardy, BSU Student President Aaron Darby and DSU Associate Director Josh Warren regarding the BSU's plans for the year. He also attended the Jackson Alumni Meeting. Mr. Munroe stated that the Jackson Alumni group gave three \$1,000 scholarships to prospective students at the event, and he estimated attendance to be 125. President LaForge thanked Dr. Novobilski for representing Delta State at the Writer's Trail Marker Installation ceremony honoring former Delta State Professor Dorothy Shawhan. Dr. Novobilski said the event was well attended. The final Summer Orientation Session was held recently. Dr. Lovin stated it was a good event, and that Student Development staff are evaluating the program and making plans for next year. President LaForge attended the visitation service for Mr. Peter Woods' mother, Ms. Ruthie Woods, and said Mr. Woods was appreciative of Delta State's support.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. Mr. Rutledge completed a partial walk through of the campus wide elevator project and several buildings are completed. The elevator in

Broom Hall is complete, the one in Roberts-LaForge Library is 95% complete, and they are currently working on the Union. Mr. Rutledge completed a walk-through on Friday, July 29, with a punch list for the renovations of Cain-Tatum Hall, Fugler-Hammett Hall, and Brumby-Castle Hall. The overall project is about 95% complete with Fugler-Hammett and Brumby-Castle being 100% complete, and Cain-Tatum being about 95% complete. Cain-Tatum has a little bit of ceiling work to be done due to a roof leak. They will start work on the new roof on August 15 or 16. Lawler-Harkins Hall will have the first walkthrough on August 3 and then again on Thursday, August 5, and they are supposed to turn this project over to us on Friday morning. The architect for Foundation Hall, Mr. Stan Wagnon, is taking a look at our needs for the project and will give us a recommendation on what he believes we should do to renovate it. Mr. Rutledge will then meet with Dr. Lovin and Housing staff to finalize the plans. For the Nursing building project, funds were moved last week to continue with construction documents.

- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. Athletics Staff use the month of July and the first few weeks of August as the time to increase revenue by engaging corporate sponsors, pushing ticket sales, and gaining Statesmen Club Memberships. He held a staff meeting today with all of his departmental staff regarding plans for the semester. There was a lot of positive discussion, but concerns were raised regarding where we are with COVID-19 policies. The Football team reports on Tuesday, camp will start on August 4, and the first practice is scheduled for August 6.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. IHL will resume the weekly conference calls with Dr. Al Rankins and the Institutional Executive Officers to discuss COVID-19 related issues. President LaForge will meet with Mr. Young on Tuesday for a recap on the SGA Retreat. The Chamber of Commerce’s monthly Board meeting will take place on Tuesday. Also on Tuesday, CommMark will resume the filming of the Statesmen Insider videos with the first topic being the “new academic year” with guest Mr. Will Young. The Delta Legislators Day will be held on Wednesday, and the BPAC annual membership reception will take place this Thursday at Bar Fontaine. Panhellenic’s new member recruitment begins this weekend. President LaForge reminded Cabinet members that the summer work schedule ends this week, and normal hours will resume on Monday, August 9.

CABINET TOPIC

COVID-19 Protocols for Employees and Students (revised)Dr. Lovin

President LaForge led Cabinet members in a discussion of the university’s COVID-19 protocols draft document that was put together by Dr. Lovin and incorporates the draft recommendations for higher education received from MSDH State Health Officer Dr. Thomas Dobbs. On Friday, President LaForge participated in a conference call with the IEOs and Dr. Dobbs regarding the current situation with COVID-19. Things have changed substantially. The July 4th holiday brought forth the first surge from the delta variant, and it continues to get worse. The CDC is supposed to release new recommendations for higher education, in addition to the ones that have been released for K-12. Dr. Dobbs stated that the delta variant is more than three times more contagious than the former strain, especially among the unvaccinated. He estimates that three quarters of the students who return to campus this fall will be unvaccinated, and therefore we should expect a surge in COVID-19 cases on our campuses. He strongly suggested that the IEOs encourage faculty, staff, and students to get vaccinated. Dr. Dobbs recommended masks be used indoors at all times for all groups — vaccinated or not — and for universities to avoid indoor social engagements. Face shields cannot be used in place of a face mask. Vaccinated people can still carry the new strain, and can be highly contagious, yet asymptomatic. This is all the more reason for everyone to mask up. Dr. Dobbs believes we will not need to do a year-long mask mandate. Dr. Dobbs stated that it is okay to proceed with events planned with opening school as long as everyone is wearing a mask and social distancing. He did advise to avoid social “mixing and mingling events” that involve masks

not being worn when eating and drinking. All eight university presidents agreed to require masks be worn indoors by all groups. IHL will support this requirement. None of the universities plan to resume “work from home” arrangements for employees. President LaForge asked Dr. Roberts to send to Cabinet members the mask protocols from the other universities. The Executive Committee called an emergency meeting on Friday to discuss the needed changes. The Convocation luncheon will be postponed. President LaForge spoke with Ms. Lara Bowman at the Chamber of Commerce regarding their Back to School Reception for faculty and staff, and it will be postponed. The IEOs did not discuss Athletics, and so this will be left to the campuses. Signage on campus needs to be updated to reflect the revised protocols. Regarding campus events, Cabinet members agreed to allow campus events to continue as long as Dr. Dobbs’ recommendations are followed: everyone must wear a mask for indoor events, and we should avoid social “mixing and mingling events” that involve masks not being worn when eating and drinking. Dr. Lovin made mention of concerns with COVID-19 related ADA requests from students, and asked Cabinet members for suggestions on how to handle these. Cabinet members agreed to deal with the requests on an individual basis, and to consult legal counsel if there are still questions. Dr. Novobilski will talk with Ms. Kashanta Jackson and the Deans regarding our ability to accommodate students who need to take classes online for ADA/COVID-19 reasons, and will report the findings to Cabinet. Dr. Novobilski will work with faculty to implement needed spacing and distancing of desks in the classroom Dr. Lovin brought up concerns that had been previously discussed regarding distancing in the classroom, as well as allowing the outside public back in the dining hall for food services. President LaForge advised that we should put guidelines in place for what we will do for our students first, then faculty/staff, and then the general public. Mr. Rutledge mentioned that there will be a price increase from \$4 to \$8 to the meals and this could cause some of the public not to come back. Dr. Lovin suggested that we still allow the public to use the Food Court in the Union, but not the cafeteria at this time. Cabinet members agreed to revisit this issue at a later date, once we see if there is a surge of COVID-19 cases on campus. Cabinet members agreed to allow the community to utilize the Fitness Center and other campus services, and to rent campus spaces; however, they will have to follow protocols and wear masks indoors. President LaForge advised all Cabinet members to read the revised Protocol draft thoroughly, and provide feedback to Dr. Lovin by close of business today. Mr. Young mentioned concerns around students pretending to have COVID-19 and using it as an excuse to miss class. He asked if they should be required to provide proof of all test results. Dr. Bingham asked if there will be enough staffing and follow-up systems in place for those students that turn in a positive test, as well as a system in place to ensure the students return to class at the appointed time. Dr. Lovin advised that this will be handled by Health Services this year. President LaForge asked Dr. Lovin and Mr. Rutledge to make sure our agreement with the local hotel for quarantine/isolation rooms is in place in case we need more than the five Hill apartments we have set aside. Dr. Wegmann mentioned concerns with the communication to the faculty concerning students being out due to COVID-19. Dr. Lovin suggested having incentives for students and employees to get vaccinated. He and Mr. Young will work together to develop and implement incentives to offer students who receive the COVID-19 vaccine, and Ms. Wallace and Dr. Wegmann will work with Staff Council and Faculty Senate to develop a campaign, including setting a percentage goal, for encouraging employees to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Mr. Munroe will work with CommMark staff to complete the collaterals for the new COVID-19 protocols, as well as the vaccine challenge.

BUSINESS

Action

COVID-19 Protocols for Employees and Students (revised)Dr. Lovin
President LaForge suggested that Cabinet Members provide Dr. Lovin with the authority to make the

technical, editorial changes for the COVID-19 Protocols, which were suggested at today's meeting, as well as the changes that will be submitted by Cabinet members by the end of day.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Rutledge to adopt the revised COVID-19 protocols (including the technical, editorial changes that Dr. Lovin will make later today) and seconded by Dr. Roberts. All members present and participating voted unanimously to approve.

Office Name Codification(s) Dr. Lovin

Dr. Lovin presented to Cabinet members the proposed office name codification(s). The messaging across campus and in printed materials seems to call each office something different. There is no consistency for any of these offices. These changes will solidify their names and provide an opportunity to clearly state what each office does. An additional request is to change the names in the budget book.

- Office of Undergraduate Admissions (currently interchangeable with Enrollment Management and Admissions)
- Office of Financial Aid (currently interchangeable with Student Financial Assistance and Financial Services)
- Office of Career Services (currently includes Placement)
- Office of Student Life (currently includes Student Development)
- Office of Health and Counseling Services (currently includes Student Health Center)

Motion: Moved by Dr. Lovin to approve the codification of office names and seconded by Dr. Novobilski. All members present and participating voted unanimously to approve.

Revised Scholarship Guidelines for FY22 Dr. Roberts

Dr. Roberts presented to Cabinet the following recommended scholarship changes for FY22 and FY23.

- Effective with Fall 2021 enrollees
 1. Return to GPA requirement of 3.25 to receive and maintain a university scholarship (reduced to 3.0 maintenance GPA in FY21 due to COVID-19)
 2. Scholarship Eligibility/Maintenance – change from 15 credit hours to 12 credit hours (full-time) per semester for university and foundation scholarships (unless Foundation scholarships states otherwise)
- Effective with Fall 2022 enrollees
 1. Change from recommending FAFSA completion to requiring FAFSA completion to receive a university and foundation scholarship
 2. Delete requirement for students to submit essays, resumes, or video requirements for PTK and Academic Excellence.
 3. Change amounts and length of time for leadership scholarships:
 - a. Boys/Girls State Delegate, Boys/Girls Governor or Nation, Eagle Scout, Gold Award, Governor's School Delegate from \$2,000 for 2 years to \$1,000 a year for 4 years
 4. Order of Aid:
 - a. Federal
 - b. State
 - c. External
 - d. Foundation
 - e. University
 - f. Personal Loans
 5. Determine "need-based" scholarship eligibility using amount of what student brings to Delta

- State (family contribution) (i.e. before aid is added).
- 6. Approve use of ACT Superscore for scholarships.
- 7. Use of “Legal Sex,” “Gender Designation”, and “Personal Pronoun” for application and scholarships
- 8. Use of Banner fields for Student Activities

- Assistance Needed from Departments

- 1. Advisors update Banner with Majors, Minors, Concentrations in a timely manner
- 2. Reduce significantly the amount of time for completing the articulation process for transfer students (including dual credit)

Mr. Young requested information on the number of students receiving a scholarship who maintained a 3.25 or higher GPA, as well as the number of students who had a 3.00 – 3.25 GPA and lost their scholarship as a result. Also, Cabinet members discussed the effect a change in resuming the 3.25 maintenance GPA might have on retention of students. Dr. Roberts will collect the information and provide a report to Cabinet members.

Motion: Moved by Dr. Roberts to approve the recommended changes and seconded by Dr. Lovin. Dr. Lovin requested a friendly amendment to adjust item #4F to state “Personal/Federal loans”. Dr. Novobilski requested a friendly amendment to extend the 3.0 GPA maintenance requirement listed in the first item #1 listed to one more year due to students adjusting to returning to a normal year, following COVID-19 challenges. Dr. Roberts accepted both Dr. Novobilski’s and Dr. Lovin’s friendly amendment requests with the understanding that the GPA requirement will be revisited in one year. All members present and participating voted unanimously to approve.

GA Housing Request for Hill Apartments..... Mr. Kinnison

Mr. Kinnison presented to Cabinet members a request to allow a former Graduate Assistant student, who graduated this summer and has been hired by the Athletics Department as an hourly, part-time employee, to live in Hill Apartments for a semester or two. This part-time employee will move in with a current Graduate Assistant who lives there. The housing policy for Hill Apartments states that “A full time university employee may be eligible after review of application and availability, and approval by the President’s Cabinet.” Dr. Roberts raised concerns about allowing a university employee to live with a Delta State student in campus housing.

Motion: Moved by Mr. Kinnison to allow the requested part-time employee to live in Hill Apartments on a temporary basis and seconded by Dr. Novobilski. The motion was approved with a vote of 6 yays, 1 nay, and 1 abstaining vote.

Discussion

Cabinet Advance..... Dr. Roberts

Dr. Roberts provided Cabinet members with the notes from the Cabinet Advance, and thanked Ms. Claire Cole for her hard work in compiling the notes. She asked Cabinet members to review the notes to ensure there was nothing missed and that everything is worded correctly.

IT Services Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge announced that Delta State will be transferring its Information Technology Services from being managed by Ellucian to being an in-house operation, effective October 1, 2021. Delta State has utilized Ellucian’s services since approximately 2004. Delta State issued an RFP for services; however,

based on the proposals submitted, the Mississippi ITS Board issued a no bid finding. As a result, Delta State began the process of moving the services in-house. There was a non-compete clause in our contract with Ellucian; however, Ellucian agreed to allow us to approach their employees. Mr. Rutledge and Dr. Edwin Craft have worked closely with Delta State's attorney and Mississippi's ITS staff to develop a plan to hire 19 employees to fulfill the services. As of this past Friday, we have filled six of the positions with people who were already in those positions. We have 60 days to get the new system in place. Mr. Rutledge said they are working closely with Ellucian in order to ensure a successful transition. The only things we will have to purchase due to the transition are two pieces of software that will cost approximately \$30,000 (\$10,000 for one item and \$20,000 for the other item). This transition could save us approximately \$280,000 a year, totaling more than \$1 million in savings over five years.

Additional information

- President LaForge announced that two Delta State alumni were recently inducted into the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame: Ms. Debbie Brock (basketball) and Mr. Jerry Boatner (baseball).
- Mr. Munroe announced that Delta State received a \$50,000 unrestricted gift from the Casey Foundation.
- Dr. Novobilski announced that Delta State received a \$400,000 check as part of the MDNHA grant from the Parks Service. The total grant is more than \$3 million.
- Mr. Young announced that the pool tables arrived today for the new student game room in the Union.
- Mr. Rutledge announced that Delta State has provided Dr. Steven Clark with 800 COVID-19 tests from the Athletics Department supply, but that Dr. Clark will replenish our supplies.
- Mr. Rutledge announced that the email regarding purchasing parking permits will be distributed to the campus this week.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Delta Legislative Tour, August 4
- Summer Work Schedule ends, August 6
- BPAC Annual Membership Reception and Season Reveal, August 5, 6:00 p.m., Bar Fontaine
- New Student Weekend, August 12-15
- ~~Pre Convocation Gathering for Cabinet members, August 12, 2:30 p.m., BPAC Green Room~~
- Convocation and State of the University Address, August 12, 3:00 p.m., BPAC
- ~~Chamber Welcome Back Reception for Faculty, Staff, and Retirees, August 12, 5:30 p.m., The Warehouse~~ **POSTPONED**
- ~~Convocation Luncheon, August 13, 11:30 a.m., President's Home~~ **POSTPONED**
- Move-In Day (returning students), August 15, 1:00 p.m.
- Classes begin, August 16 (night) and August 17 (day)
- ~~Popsicles with the President, August 17, 3:00 p.m., President's Home~~ **POSTPONED**

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, August 9, 2021 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – Purchasing Laws (Mr. Rutledge)

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.