

# DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S CABINET

### *Minutes*

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**Meeting date: August 30, 2021**

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

**Members not in attendance:** Dr. Vicki Bingham

**Guests:** None

**Call to Order:** A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on August 30, 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 Mr. Rutledge, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on August 23, 2021.

#### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. The Executive Committee, with the help of Police Chief Jeff Johns, monitored Hurricane Ida closely, and they decided not to close the university today. If employees or students were traveling to campus from a county within the storm's warning region, they were advised to be very careful, and travel only if they felt it was safe to do so. President LaForge announced Representative Abe Hudson resigned effective today. President LaForge participated in the weekly conference call with Dr. Al Rankins and the Institutional Executive Officers to discuss COVID-19 related issues. President LaForge began teaching his Leadership Seminar class last week. The Foundation's Vision event hosted by Mr. Joe Baker and Ms. Margaret Ferriss White in Madison went very well. Two attendees asked to host their own Vision event. The IHL Board of Trustees had a special meeting to discuss the COVID-19 vaccine, and voted against mandating students and employees to show proof of vaccination as a condition of enrollment or employment. However, the Board of Trustees strongly recommends all eligible students and employees get vaccinated. Dr. Temika Simmons provided President LaForge with a closeout report on the Local Government Leadership Institute.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. Renovations in Cain-Tatum Hall, Fugler-Hammett Hall, and Lawler-Harkins Hall are 95% complete. The remainder of the renovations cannot be completed until the roofing project is complete. Cain-Tatum Hall has some issues with the air conditioning, but the issues should be resolved today. The elevator project should be complete in the next month and a half. The campus-wide roofing project is set to begin next week. Mr. Rutledge plans to provide the Executive Committee the scope of the renovations for Foundation Hall this week. The renovations suggested by the architect are within budget. Mr. Rutledge met with the architect for

the Robert E. Smith School of Nursing renovation and addition project, and the architect stated the full project would take 36 months to complete. The Bureau of Buildings informed Mr. Rutledge an agency received external funding for a project, and so they released their bond funds. This will allow Delta State to have an additional \$1.3 million in bond funds for projects next year, for a total of \$7.6 million.

- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The football season begins on Thursday at 6:00 p.m. The women’s soccer team travels to University of Missouri – St. Louis on Friday and competes at Drury University on Sunday. The men’s soccer team travels to Central Baptist College on Friday and competes at Cumberland University on Monday. The cross country team competes at Mississippi College on Friday. Mr. Kinnison announced we lost two coaches last week: Mr. Easton Key, Head coach of the golf team; and, Mr. Bo Petro, Head Coach of the men’s and women’s tennis teams, has resigned.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge participated in a conference call today with GSC officials and Commissioner of the Northeast-10 and member of the NCAA Constitution Review Committee Julie Ruppert to provide feedback on the current structure of the NCAA to assist them with drafting a new NCAA constitution. President LaForge will participate in a conference call on Tuesday with Dr. Al Rankins and the IEOs to discuss COVID-19 related issues. The next segment of President LaForge’s Statesmen Insider is with Mr. James Forte to discuss Pig Pickin’. The second session of President LaForge’s Leadership class meets on Tuesday with Dr. Novobilski as his guest lecturer. President LaForge is hosting a small group of community leaders at his home on Thursday for lunch. The next Cabinet meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 7 due to the Labor Day holiday on Monday.

**CABINET TOPIC**

None

**BUSINESS**

**Action**

**Academic Calendar revision ..... Dr. Novobilski**

On the recommendation of Academic Council, Dr. Novobilski brought the revised 2021-22 Academic Calendar to Cabinet for approval. The current 2021-22 Academic Calendar states that Summer Graduation is July 29; however, the university awarded summer degrees on July 30, 2021. The Academic Council recommends revising the 2021-22 Academic Calendar to reflect Summer Graduation as July 30. Also, the Summer Graduation date for 2022 will be changed to August 1 from July 29. The modification to the Academic Calendar, if approved, must be submitted to SACSCOC by our SACS liaison. Dr. Lovin inquired about the possibility of removing the dates for the opening of the residence halls since those can vary. Dr. Novobilski and Dr. Lovin will discuss this matter, and bring a recommendation to Cabinet at a later date.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. Novobilski to approve the revised 2021-22 Academic Calendar and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

**Life Insurance for Employees ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members several employees have approached him about the lack of options Delta State has for its employees for life insurance. Currently, 47% of Delta State employees are enrolled in the State of Mississippi Life Insurance Plan through Minnesota Life, and 15% of employees are enrolled in the additional life insurance plan through Hartford Life. Mr. Rutledge spoke with Delta State’s Cafeteria Plan consultant to see if the university had any options in providing its employees additional life

insurance coverage. The Cafeteria Plan consultant informed Mr. Rutledge that Delta State could purchase a \$10,000 life insurance plan for all of its 460 employees at a cost of \$5,207 a year. Mr. Rutledge said the source of the \$5,207/year payment would come from Cafeteria plan funds not used by employees during the previous year. These unused funds are returned to the university and placed into the Cafeteria Plan account. To pay for the life insurance plan for employees, Mr. Rutledge is going to create a designated fund of unused Cafeteria Plan funds. Mr. Rutledge hopes to have the life insurance policies in place by November, but no later than January 1, 2022.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the purchase of \$10,000 life insurance policies for all full-time employees using unused Cafeteria Plan funds and seconded by Dr. Lovin. The motion was approved.

**Discussion**

**Today @ DSU – Daily Newsletter for Students via Okra Bytes.....Dr. Lovin**

Dr. Lovin shared with Cabinet members his new concept for sharing information with students. He created Today @ DSU – Daily Newsletter for Students via Okra Bytes. The daily newsletter will be sent to students each day at 8:00 a.m. The newsletter will be a centralized location for student-centric information. Students, faculty, and staff can fill out a form on the Student Affairs webpage on the Delta State website to submit information for the newsletter.

**Enrollment Update .....Dr. Lovin and Dr. Novobilski**

Dr. Novobilski announced the university was down eight graduate students and 222 undergraduate students on the ninth full day of classes (August 27). The total decline in students is 337, which includes Dual Credit students. Dr. Lovin and Dr. Novobilski plan to meet with representatives from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, Office of Graduate Admissions, Student Success Center, International Services, Office of Financial Aid, Student Business Services, and the Registrar’s Office to discuss the enrollment funnel from application to a student’s first day of classes. Dr. Lovin and Dr. Novobilski hope to find and fix any holes or disconnects and to ensure all areas of enrollment work cohesively. From this meeting, strategic enrollment strategies will begin to form. The strategies will include all campus constituency groups. Mr. Kinnison asked Dr. Lovin and Dr. Novobilski to include Ms. Dana George as a representative for Athletics.

**Additional Information:**

- Dr. Wegmann announced the Constitution Week Lecture is scheduled for Thursday, September 16 at 4:00 p.m.
- Dr. Wegmann shared with Cabinet members he has several evacuees from Louisiana at his home. President LaForge offered university assistance with housing, as needed. Also, Mr. Rutledge offered coupons for the Young-Mauldin Cafeteria.
- President LaForge requested a Cabinet topic to discuss the plans for the upcoming 96<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. Ms. Cole will ask Ms. Emily Jones to attend next week’s Cabinet meeting to discuss plans for the anniversary.
- Mr. Young announced SGA purchased 200 Pig Pickin’ shirts to distribute to students upon their entrance to the football game on Saturday, September 11.
- Dr. Novobilski had lunch with Ms. Lara Bowman, CEO of the Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce today. They discussed additional partnerships for Delta State and the Chamber. Dr. Novobilski plans to schedule a meeting with Ms. Bowman and Dr. Billy Moore to discuss the Center of Community and Economic Development and to see if there are possible ways it can help increase economic development for the city and county.

- Mr. Kinnison announced Cabinet members would have tickets and parking passes for the Thursday night's football game. He will get the tickets and parking passes to them by Thursday morning.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- Delta State football vs. Bethel University, September 2, 6:00 p.m., Parker Field
- Labor Day Holiday, September 6
- Pig Pickin', September 10-11
- Undergraduate Admissions Preview Day, September 11
- Delta State football vs. McKendree University, September 11, 6:00 p.m., Parker Field
- Constitution Day, September 16, Time – TBD, Jobe Hall Auditorium, Speaker – Dr. Ben Wright

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Tuesday, September 7, 2021 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – Pig Pickin' Plans (Mr. Munroe)

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 2:29 p.m.