

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: February 1, 2021

Members in attendance: President William LaForge (via Zoom), Chief Jeffrey Johns (via Zoom), Dr. Kurt Keppler (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

Guests: 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 February 1, 2021. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Mr. Word and seconded by Dr. Westfall, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on January 25, 2021.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge shared with Cabinet Members that alumnus Dr. Robert Elliott passed away yesterday.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. President LaForge filmed another segment of his Statesmen Insider last week focusing on the Department of Social Work. The Administrative Staff Council's Incentive and Recognitions Committee hosted the Employee of the Month Annual Celebration in conjunction with Dr. James Robinson's birthday. The celebration was held via a drive-through luncheon at Papa Rocs. President LaForge and Mr. Munroe spoke with Senator Briggs Hopson this week about Delta State's appropriations budget and bond issues. President LaForge participated in a call regarding a strategic plan for Bolivar County. President LaForge was interviewed by Delta State student Mr. Tanner Hunter to discuss running legend Mr. Steve Prefontaine, who helped to inspire the 1970s running boom.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The women's basketball team competed against University of Alabama-Huntsville over the weekend winning one of two games. They will compete at Christian Brothers University this weekend. The men's basketball team will compete at home this weekend against Christian Brothers University. The swimming and diving teams competed and won against Millsaps College over the weekend. The men's tennis team began their season over the weekend, and they won three matches in the Ouachita Baptist University Invitational. The soccer teams begin their seasons this weekend on the road. The baseball team begins their season this weekend with a series at Shorter University. The softball team competed last weekend against Henderson State University and

Southern Arkansas University, and they compete this weekend at the University of Alabama-Huntsville.

- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The brick laying portion of the Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project is almost complete, and the remaining portion of the project will be dirt work and landscaping. The HVAC project at the Mayers Aquatics Center continues. A change order has been requested to replace the door in the Mayers Aquatics Center as the HVAC unit is larger than the previous one. A larger door and entrance will allow Facilities Management full access to all parts of the HVAC unit. The elevator project bid was approved, and the project will begin mid-March. The residence hall roofing project has been postponed, and the bids will open two weeks from today. Bids for the two dorm renovation projects will be open in two weeks, as well.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge participated in the bi-weekly COVID-19 update conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and the other Institutional Executive Officers (IEO) this morning. During their conference call, Commissioner Rankins and the IEOs also discussed issues surrounding sabbatical leave. President LaForge will participate in another conference call on Wednesday to discuss the issue further. President LaForge and Mr. Munroe have calls with three State legislators this week to discuss Delta State’s appropriations budget and bond issues. The legislators are: Senate Finance Committee Chairman Josh Harkins; Senate Appropriations Committee Vice-Chairman John Polk; and, House of Representatives Universities and Colleges Chairman Mac Huddleston. President LaForge made several calls this morning to community constituents to discuss Bolivar County’s vaccine site, which will be located at Delta State.

CABINET TOPIC

COVID-19 Response Update and Plans President LaForge

President LaForge led Cabinet members in a discussion of the university’s COVID-19 response and plans. As mentioned earlier, President LaForge participated in a conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and all Institutional Executive Officers (IEO) 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. 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 there is one student in Hill Apartments, and there are no students in the off-campus location. The university had one hotspot last week. At the last Cabinet meeting, President LaForge requested Ms. Douglas, Dr. Westfall, Mr. Munroe, and Ms. Lisa Giger discuss the requirements of the Daily Symptom Checker including who is to complete it and when. The committee’s recommendation is that all employees (part-time and full-time) are to complete the Daily Symptom Checker every scheduled workday, whether they are working on- or off-campus, as well as any non-scheduled workday when an employee visits campus. As mentioned in the last Cabinet meeting, Bolivar County will be a secondary vaccine site, with Delta State serving as the physical site. Ms. Douglas does not have the date by which the site will be active yet. Her next meeting with the Vaccine Site Team is Tuesday. In an effort to recognize employees for going above and beyond the call of duty with regards to COVID-19, Ms. Douglas created the “COVID-19 Response Team Hero of the Week” recognition. Ms. Charlotte Litton will be the “COVID-19 Hero of the Week” for February 1-5. Dr. Keppler has worked with Dr. Megan Smith in the Office of Student Financial Assistance on a plan to distribute the remaining CARES Act grant funds to students in a three-tiered approach. The overall goal is to provide support to as many CARES eligible students as possible while recognizing some students have a higher need for support. Last Spring, 1,300 students were CARES eligible, and 900 students received financial

support. Dr. Smith is reviewing the remaining students, and Dr. Keppler hopes the remaining funds will be distributed by the end of the week. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members an update on how the \$3,010,494 of newly allocated Higher Education Emergency Relief grant funds will be spent. Four items to be funded by the grant funds were discussed and approved by the Executive Committee last week. Those four items are: \$1,505,247 for lost revenue recovery; \$360,850 for the continuation of COVID-19 related positions to December 31, 2021; \$200,229 for the replacement of old file servers; and, \$80,000 for additional desktop computers for computer labs. The Executive Committee will discuss four additional items for funding this week: \$50,000 to complete the master camera plan; \$25,000 to cover the Student Health Center expenses through June 30; \$100,000 to cover any expenses related to the vaccine site; and, \$489,168 for an Academic Affairs request. Additionally, Mr. Rutledge recommends the university use some of the Higher Education Emergency Relief grant funds to cover advanced budget items from the FY21 budget. Those items are: \$150,000 for six university vehicles and \$50,000 for marketing.

BUSINESS

Action

Appendix 8: New Program Proposal: Ed.S. in Higher EducationDr. McAdams

On the recommendation and approval of Academic Council, Dr. McAdams brought to Cabinet for approval “Appendix 8: New Program Proposal: Ed.S. in Higher Education.” The Educational Specialist in Higher Education is one of three new, 30-hour degree programs requested by the Division of Teacher Education, Leadership, and Research in the College of Education and Human Sciences. This degree program attracts students with a master’s degree who seek to advance their careers in higher education institutions, particularly community colleges. Enrollment demand is based on previous inquiries and a survey of recent graduates, and the College of Education and Human Sciences anticipates eight students will enroll in Fall 2021. This degree program does not require an undergraduate or master’s degree in education, and no new courses will be added to the curriculum. No new full-time faculty will be required, but an adjunct faculty member will be needed.

Motion: Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve Appendix 8: New Program Proposal: Ed.S. in Higher Education and seconded by Mr. Word. The motion was approved.

Appendix 8: New Program Proposal: Ed.S. in Teacher LeadershipDr. McAdams

On the recommendation and approval of Academic Council, Dr. McAdams brought to Cabinet for approval “Appendix 8: New Program Proposal: Ed.S. in Teacher Leadership.” The Educational Specialist in Teacher Leadership is one of three new, 30-hour degree programs requested by the Division of Teacher Education, Leadership, and Research in the College of Education and Human Sciences. This degree program attracts current K-12 teachers looking for a position outside of the classroom, while remaining in K-12 environment. Enrollment demand is based on previous inquiries and a survey of recent graduates, and the College of Education and Human Sciences anticipates eight students will enroll in Fall 2021. This degree program requires the creation of one new course. No new full-time faculty will be required, but an adjunct faculty member will be needed.

Motion: Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve Appendix 8: New Program Proposal: Ed.S. in Teacher Leadership and seconded by Mr. Word. The motion was approved.

Appendix 8: New Program Proposal: Ed.S. in Curriculum and Instruction.....Dr. McAdams

On the recommendation and approval of Academic Council, Dr. McAdams brought to Cabinet for approval

“Appendix 8: New Program Proposal: Ed.S. in Curriculum and Instruction.” The Educational Specialist in Curriculum and Instruction is one of three new, 30-hour degree programs requested by the Division of Teacher Education, Leadership, and Research in the College of Education and Human Sciences. This degree program attracts current K-12 teachers looking for a position in or out of the classroom in the K-12 environment. Enrollment demand is based on previous inquiries and a survey of recent graduates, and the College of Education and Human Sciences anticipates eight students will enroll in Fall 2021. This degree program requires the creation of two new courses. No new full-time faculty will be required, but an adjunct faculty member will be needed.

Motion: Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve Appendix 8: New Program Proposal: Ed.S. in Curriculum and Instruction and seconded by Mr. Word. The motion was approved.

Discussion

Housing Task Force Dr. Keppler

Dr. Keppler shared with Cabinet members that 517 students live in the Delta State residence halls this Spring. The university has had three times that amount in previous years. Dr. Keppler put together two groups to help uncover the reasons residential living has decreased on Delta State’s campus, and provide ideas on how best to increase residential living. The two groups looking into residential living are: 1) a task force of Student Affairs staff and 2) a focus group of student leaders. Dr. Keppler has charged the task force with reviewing the cost of residential living, the conditions of the residence halls on campus, and the community environment within the residence halls. The student leaders focus group will provide their ideas on the ideal residence hall. Some ideas provided by the student leaders include: upgrades to furniture and mattresses; outdoor recreation; and, streaming platform for individual residence halls. The task force will review incentives for living in the residence halls such as a reduced rate for a private room during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as, discussing sections of residence halls for specific majors. Another major aspect of residential living is food service, and Sodexo will be included in discussions. Dr. Keppler has asked Ms. Julie Jackson to compile data on the GPAs of students who live on campus versus those living off campus and the retention of students living on campus versus off campus. Depending on the results of this data, this could be a great marketing tool for the Office of Admissions.

New Mississippi State Flag Unveiling Ceremony Dr. Keppler

Dr. Keppler shared with Cabinet members that the ceremony for raising the new Mississippi State Flag will take place on Wednesday, February 10th at 12:00 p.m. or 1:00 p.m. The ceremony will consist of remarks from President LaForge, Mr. Word, and Ms. Michelle Johansen. Dr. Keppler requests assistance from Cabinet members to spread the word about the event. The Office of Communications and Marketing and University Archivist will be involved in this significant event for the university. Dr. Keppler will work with Mr. Munroe on inviting local legislators and community leaders.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget. He is finalizing the January “Budget to Actual report” and the January Cash Flow report. He hopes to bring these reports to the next Cabinet meeting. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members the additional \$3.1 million in CARES funds will be deposited this month and will be seen on the February Cash Flow report. The Executive Committee began an analysis on the average tuition and scholarships over the past five years to help with FY22 budget planning. During the FY22 budget planning process, Cabinet members will discuss budgeting for a flat enrollment (FY21 enrollment figures) and scholarships. Tuition and scholarships will be discussed at a future Cabinet meeting.

Legislative UpdateMr. Munroe

Mr. Munroe provided Cabinet members with an update on the 2021 Legislative session. The legislature is considering a bond bill, but there is no word on “Repair and Renovation” funds at this time. Mr. Munroe has scheduled calls with legislators for President LaForge to discuss Delta State’s needs for appropriations and bond funds. Their first call with Senator Briggs Hopson went very well.

Additional information

- The Student Government Association will meet tonight virtually and discuss the legislative agenda for the Student Senate for the month of February.
- Due to the closure of water fountains across campus, Mr. Rutledge requested bottles of water from PepsiCo to provide to employees. In the Fall, PepsiCo could not fulfill this request; however, Mr. Rutledge is pleased to announce PepsiCo will provide 350 cases of water to campus this Spring for distribution.
- Mr. Rutledge announced Mr. Kelvin Davis has accepted the position of Director of Financial Reporting. In his new position, Mr. Davis will oversee Student Business Services and continue to oversee food services and the bookstore.
- Mr. Munroe announced Delta State’s Alumni Association LinkedIn page was recognized at a meeting of the Mississippi Association of Career and Technical Education as an example of how best to connect and garner growth.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on the Vice President for Student Affairs search committee. He stated it is a great group who will find the best person for Delta State.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Annual Margaret Tullos Field Symposium, February 26, 8:30 a.m., Virtual
- Winning the Race Conference, March 29-30, Virtual

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, February 8 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – COVID-19 Response Update and Plans (President LaForge) and Marketing Plans (Mr. Munroe).

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.