

# DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S CABINET

### *Minutes*

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**Meeting date: February 14, 2022**

**Members in attendance:** President William LaForge, Dr. Vicki Bingham, 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:** None

**Guests:** Mr. Kelvin Davis, Director of Financial Reporting  
Ms. Aja Rodriguez, Director of Engagement and Student Services  
Mr. James Sorey, Manager, Jimmy R. Williams Bookstore

**Call to Order:** A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on February 14, 2022. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

#### **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

On motion by Dr. Novobilski and seconded by Mr. Rutledge, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on January 31, 2022.

#### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- Dr. Lovin introduced Ms. Aja Rodriguez to Cabinet members. She is the new Director of Engagement and Student Services, and the main focus of her position is Title IX, Orientation, and finding ways for Student Affairs to advocate for all students.
- Cabinet members held a moment of silence for Dr. Hines Cronin, retired Director of Field Experiences, and Mr. Dave Heflin, Assistant Professor Emeritus of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation — both of whom passed away recently.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the last few weeks. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors held their monthly meeting. President LaForge visited with the men's and women's tennis teams, and he filmed a Statesmen Insider with Dr. Lovin and Ms. Bree Williams about the re-opening of The Statesmen Shelf. President LaForge had a phone call with the National Alumni Association Board of Directors President John Fletcher to discuss a dinner for past National Alumni Association Board of Directors presidents later in the semester. The university hosted family and friends of Dr. Lusia Harris-Stewart for her funeral services. President LaForge thanked Mr. Kinnison and his staff for organizing the logistics of the event. President LaForge attended the NCAA DII Implementation Committee meeting, and the GRAMMY Museum® Mississippi Board of Directors meeting. The Department of Music hosted the DSU Honor Choir weekend, and nine high schools were represented.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The campus-wide roofing project should be completed by the end of March; however, labor has been affected by the weather. The

campus-wide elevator project is almost complete, and it will be complete once Facilities Management replaces the flooring in the elevators. The university was approved for an additional grant from MDOT to finish the sidewalks on campus. Mr. Rutledge awaits confirmation on the amount of Repair and Renovation funds the university will receive for the next fiscal year. The American Recovery Act funds have not been distributed yet. The carpets in the Bologna Performing Arts Center were replaced and the restrooms were updated. The pre-conference meeting for the School of Nursing project was scheduled for today; however, the contractor and Bureau of Buildings needed to reschedule it. The meeting will occur next week.

- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The men’s and women’s basketball teams competed against Christian Brothers University over the weekend. Both teams host Auburn University-Montgomery and University of Montevallo on Thursday and Saturday, respectively. Senior recognition will occur on Saturday, and the 1972 men’s basketball team will be recognized. The 1972 men’s basketball team was the first team to compete for the Gulf South Conference. The women’s tennis team competed in Arkadelphia, AR over the weekend, and they won one of three matches. The men’s tennis team competes this weekend at the prestigious ITA DII Men’s National Indoor Tournament. The softball team competed in the University of Alabama-Huntsville Charger Chillout tournament, and they won three of six games. The baseball team was in Florida over the weekend, and they won two of three games. The baseball and softball teams travel to Shorter University this weekend. The swimming and diving teams are hosting the NSISC Championships Wednesday through Saturday.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge has the opportunity to meet with a prospective student from Columbus, MS tomorrow, and he will also meet with the Aviation Alumni Director Scott Alexander. The grand opening for the Student Game Room will be held on Tuesday, followed by an International Coffee Hour at Zoe Coffee hosted by International Student Services. The British Invasion performance will take place at the BPAC Tuesday evening. On Wednesday, President LaForge will film a segment of his Statesmen Insider with members of the softball team. The IHL Board of Trustees meeting will take place on Thursday. In honor of Black History month, IHL will present the IHL Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Awards during the meeting. Delta State’s nominee for the award was Dr. Todd Davis, and he was chosen as the overall Diversity Educator of the Year. The ceremony will be held virtually, and Cabinet members are invited to attend the ceremony, which will take place in the President’s Conference Room. On Friday, the Department of Social Work is hosting the annual Margaret Tullos Field Symposium, and President LaForge will provide the welcome.

**CABINET TOPIC**

None

**BUSINESS**

**Action**

**Curriculum Development and Revision policy (revised – first reading) ..... Dr. Novobilski**

On the recommendation of the Academic Council and Faculty Senate, Dr. Novobilski brought the revised Curriculum Development and Revision policy for a first reading. Revisions to the policy include the creation of a University Curriculum Committee. Developments and changes to courses, curricula, programs, degrees, or units will filter through curriculum committees within the department/division and colleges/school prior to reaching the University Curriculum Committee. The University Curriculum Committee will present all developments and changes to the Academic Council for approval prior to the

final approval of the Provost. The University Curriculum Committee will meet regularly to ensure expediency and timely resolution of all submitted changes. All changes will take effect the following academic year.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. Novobilski to approve the revised Curriculum Development and Revision policy for a first reading and seconded by Dr. Lovin. The motion was approved.

**COVID-19 Protocols – revised..... Dr. Lovin and Mr. Rutledge**

Dr. Lovin announced the university has continuously monitored and assessed the current conditions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and related response protocols, and has made adjustments that seem safe and reasonable. After the university’s recent assessment, and with guidance from IHL, the State Department of Health, and officials at other state universities, the following changes to the COVID-19 protocols are suggested for Cabinet approval:

1. The mandatory mask policy for indoor activities, including classes, is lifted, effective today, February 14, 2022, at 5:00 p.m. This change applies to all locations except for the O.W. Reily Health Center, where masks will still be required, until further notice, upon entry to the building.
2. Individuals on campus may elect to wear a mask or face covering if they so choose, and the University continues to recommend doing so as an extra precaution.
3. The lifting of the mask policy applies to all events and public use facilities, including the Bologna Performing Arts Center, Roberts-LaForge Library, all food and retail spaces on campus, all athletic facilities, and the Forest Earl Wyatt Gymnasium.

All other COVID-19 protocols remain in place with respect to testing, notification of test(s), quarantine, and isolation. Additionally, Delta State highly encourages all students and employees to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and to take a booster. The university will continue to monitor the pandemic situation, and make other changes as deemed necessary.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. Lovin to approve the suggested revisions to the COVID-19 Protocols and seconded by Dr. Novobilski. The motion passed with one member voting against the motion.

With the mandatory mask policy for indoor activities being lifted, Mr. Rutledge suggested to re-open the campus to all visitors, including the use of the cafeteria, library, and athletic facilities (for those with an activity card) — with only pre-pandemic restrictions continuing to be in place.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to re-open the campus to all visitors, including the use of the cafeteria, library, and athletic facilities (for those with an activity card) and second by Dr. Novobilski. The motion passed with one member voting against the motion.

**Approval of Tuition Rates for FY23..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the proposed tuition rates for FY23. Delta State is requesting a 3% increase in tuition to help cover increased costs, as well as to ensure a balanced budget. With the 3% increase, Delta State students will pay \$8,605 per year, and international students will pay \$9,636 per year.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the proposed tuition rates for FY23 and seconded by Dr. Lovin. The motion was approved.

**Approval of Meal Plan Rates for FY23 ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge presented to Cabinet members for approval the proposed meal plan rates for FY23. As part of the university’s contract with Sodexo, meal plan rates are required to increase 3% each year. The meal plan rates for FY23 adhere to the 3% increase. Questions were raised regarding the way a meal is counted via swiping a patron’s Okra Kard (i.e. can a person swipe their card more than once if they have guests with them?). Mr. Rutledge will get more information from Sodexo about this process and will provide an update to Cabinet.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the proposed meal plan rates for FY23 and seconded by Dr. Lovin. The motion was approved.

**Approval of Housing Rates for FY23 ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge presented to Cabinet members for approval the proposed housing rates for FY23. The single occupancy rate will not be the same as the double occupancy rate for FY23. Double occupancy and single occupancy rates for Blansett Hall and Brumby-Castle Hall will decrease for FY23. The remaining residence halls will have increased rates for FY23. The Executive Committee is exploring options for re-purposing Hill Apartments, and so the housing rates for Hill Apartments will be determined at a later time.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the housing rates for FY23 and seconded by Dr. Lovin. The motion was approved.

**Book fee ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge invited Mr. Kelvin Davis and Mr. James Sorey to Cabinet to discuss the First Day® Complete program offered by Barnes & Noble College. The First Day® Complete program supports student success by ensuring students have access to their course materials on or before the first day of class. The program works in collaboration with academic leadership and faculty. A customized portal is available for researching and selecting course materials, and faculty can continue to select materials across all publishers in any format. This program is only available to undergraduate students at this time and will be used for all semesters (Fall, Spring, and Summer). The First Day® Complete program is priced at \$20 per credit hour, and full-time students would pay approximately \$300 (based on an average course load of 15 credit hours) for their books. This will be a fee added to the student’s account. Students will receive an email from Barnes & Noble College during the summer about opting in or out of the First Day® Complete program. Students will not be able to “opt in” for certain classes, and to “opt out” for others. Also, a student will automatically be opted into the program if they do not respond to the email from Barnes & Noble College. If a student drops a class prior to the last day to drop a course and returns their books and materials, a refund will be issued to the student for the materials they no longer need. Faculty Senate and Academic Council approve of the First Day® Complete program and recommend it to Cabinet for their approval. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members the current version of the First Day® Complete program contract charges the university even if a student opts out of the program. However, this program will not cost the university any money, and this clause will be removed before Delta State agrees to participate.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to modify Delta State’s services agreement with Barnes & Noble College to include the First Day® Complete program and seconded by Dr. Novobilski. The motion was approved.

**Discussion**

**Cabinet Art Award ..... Dr. Roberts**

The Art Department has begun collecting funds for their annual art awards for students. The Cabinet award is a \$500 cash award that goes to the student with the second-best piece in the student art show. The top prize is the President’s Award, which is a \$1,000 cash award. The artwork selected for the Cabinet Award and the President’s Award will be displayed in the President’s Office for one year, and then each piece will become a part of the university’s permanent collection. Dr. Roberts asked Cabinet members to consider donating for the Cabinet award. Ms. Claire Cole will send to Cabinet Members an email with the link for donations. Also, Cabinet Members may give their donation to Ms. Cole. The donations are due by Tuesday, February 22.

**Enrollment Update/Overview ..... Dr. Lovin**

Dr. Lovin shared with Cabinet members the enrollment update and overview he provides to the Executive Committee each week. Going forward, he will provide this update to all Cabinet members. The enrollment update shared today is from Thursday February 10: 683 admitted students; 1,750 incomplete applications (missing documents); 347 online applications started; and, 5,020 prospects — for a total of 7,800 students being targeted for undergraduate admissions. Dr. Lovin is working in Kent Wyatt Hall two days a week to help the Office of Admissions with their recruitment and admission efforts.

**New Student Orientation Re-design ..... Dr. Lovin**

Dr. Lovin announced Delta State’s New Student Orientation program is being re-designed. New Student Orientation will take place after students move into the residence halls and prior to the start of classes. During this time, students will gain important information about the university, be educated on how to survive the first week of college, and provided information on where to go for answers to their questions. The New Student Orientation program will have fun activities and be interactive. One part of the re-design of the New Student Orientation program is the consolidation of Orientation Leaders and the Office of Admissions Delta Diplomats. Students chosen as Delta Diplomats will have a larger role going forward that includes providing assistance with New Student Orientation.

**New Student Registration Re-design ..... Dr. Lovin**

Dr. Lovin announced the registration process for incoming students is being re-designed. When students come to the university for New Student Registration, they will meet with an advisor to create their class schedule and have the opportunity to finalize their parking, housing, and Okra Card. The New Student Registration process is available to students living within 250 miles of campus. Students living farther than 250 miles from the campus can complete this process online.

**Title IX Presence on University Homepage ..... Dr. Lovin**

Dr. Lovin informed Cabinet members the university did not have a link to Title IX resources on the university website’s homepage. Ms. Rodriguez discovered this absence, and she has worked with Communications and Marketing to add a link to Title IX resources on the homepage.

**Legislative Update ..... Mr. Munroe**

Mr. Munroe provided Cabinet members with an update on the Mississippi legislative session. February 10 was the deadline for each chamber to take original floor action on general legislation and constitutional amendments that originated in their own chamber. This week the Legislature’s focus shifts to appropriations and revenue bills in preparation for the February 23 deadline for original floor action on those bills. Mr. Munroe highlighted a couple of the bills being tracked by IHL. House Bill 1068 will provide possible amendments to the Mississippi Intercollegiate Athletics Compensation Rights Act. House Bill 1394

will create the Dual Credit Community College Scholarship Program that consists of the Academic Dual Credit Community College Scholarship Program and the Career and Technical Dual Credit Community College Scholarship Program. House Bill 1059 will provide possible amendments to educator licensing and qualifications.

**Budget Plans for FY23 – update ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members an update on the budget planning process for FY23. Phase I and Phase II budget requests were sent to the vice presidents and to Mr. Kinnison in order for them to place them in priority order for their areas. The Executive Committee has discussed reinstating the 5% fee for all 108 funds; reinstating funds for a contingency plan; adding a contingency for increasing days of cash; transferring monies from auxiliary funds to E&G funds for FY23; and, the tuition increase. The current enrollment projection for Fall 2022 to be used for budget planning purposes is 2,275. President LaForge stated the Executive Committee has been reviewing all potential budget savings and cuts; discussing ways to reimagine core programs and growth areas; and, talking about ways to realign the budget to highlight the university’s priorities. All items will be discussed with Cabinet members throughout the remaining budget planning process this Spring.

**Report on APPENDIX I and APPENDIX II action items..... Cabinet members**

President LaForge asked Cabinet members to provide updates on their APPENDIX I and APPENDIX II action items. Dr. Novobilski is working with Institutional Research and Planning to continue to develop a data dashboard for executives to use to inform decisions. The final dashboard will be ready for Cabinet in April. Mr. Rutledge has worked with OIT to develop a policy regarding which offices must have a phone, and include information about the main line in offices being answered instead of using voicemail for all calls. He will bring this policy to Cabinet within the next two weeks. Dr. Roberts shared with Cabinet members an update on the Scholarship Management Task Force. Most of the work completed thus far has been focused on cleaning up university processes and data in order to ensure that the scholarship information is correct before placed into the new software system. Mr. Rutledge will bring an update to Cabinet soon on HEERF III funds and its allocations. The Office of Financial Aid sent out information for additional HEERF III funds to students, and they are to apply for the funds by February 25. Dr. Lovin hopes to have all HEERF III funds allocated for students disbursed by the end of the month. Dr. Novobilski plans to host a workshop/professional development seminar for faculty in August regarding best practices for faculty to use to recruit students. Dr. Novobilski is working on getting additional help for Ms. Heather Miller in Institutional Grants.

**Additional Information**

- Mr. Young announced SGA is creating a Canvas shell, and the shell will be available to all students. SGA will post pertinent information and announcements to students in the shell. The SGA Canvas shell should be live by March 1.
- SGA Awareness Week will be the week of March 7. SGA will advertise heavily for the Big Green Event during this time.
- With the approval of Cabinet members, Mr. Rutledge stated the Retirement and Recognition Ceremony will return to its original format in the H. L. Nowell Student Union. Cabinet members approved the request.
- Dr. Bingham announced the Robert E. Smith School of Nursing is partnering with Bolivar Medical Center to host a health screening on February 21.
- Mr. Munroe announced Pig Pickin’ 2022 is scheduled for October 1 and Homecoming 2022 is scheduled for November 5.

- Dr. Novobilski announced the Regional Science Fair is looking for people to serve as judges. The science fairs are scheduled for February 23 and March 23.
- President LaForge extended greetings from former SGA President Richard Word to Cabinet members.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- Statesman's Shelf Open House, February 15, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., H.L. Nowell Union 102 (behind Chick-fil-A)
- The British Invasion, February 15, 7:30 p.m., BPAC
- NSISC Swim and Dive Championships, February 16-19, Ronald G. Mayers Aquatics Center
- Mississippi Municipal League's annual Youth Summit, DSU campus, February 26
- Colloquia Lecture Series with The Honorable David Bowen, March 8, 6:00 p.m., Jobe Auditorium

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Wednesday, February 21, 2022 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – None

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 4:24 p.m.