

# DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S CABINET

### *Minutes*

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**Meeting date: February 28, 2022**

**Members in attendance:** President William LaForge, Dr. Vicki Bingham, Mr. Mike Kinnison, Dr. Eddie Lovin, 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:** Mr. Rick Munroe

**Guests:** None

**Call to Order:** A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on February 28, 2022. 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 February 21, 2022.

#### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. President LaForge participated in a conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and the IEOs regarding COVID-19 updates and issues. He also continued his departmental visits by going to Counseling and Testing and the Student Health Center, Division of Social Sciences and History, and the Office of Financial Aid. President LaForge was interviewed by WLBT for a special segment on Dr. Lusia Harris. The Delta State ODK Circle hosted a restructuring meeting for all faculty, staff, and students. Students from Pearl High School toured Delta State, and President LaForge provided a welcome on behalf of the university. President LaForge hosted a thank you reception for members of the Winning the Race Committee at his home. The Mississippi Municipal League hosted their annual Youth Summit on Delta State's campus on Friday and Saturday. President LaForge provided the welcome on behalf of the university on Saturday.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The campus wide roofing project is on schedule, and it should be completed by March 31. Facilities Management staff are replacing flooring in several of the elevators across campus. The bids for the Delta Music Institute roof and Broom Hall water damage projects were released and are due on March 15. Mr. Rutledge hopes to have both projects finished by June 30. Due to a shortage of available workers for contractors, projects are not being bid on or completed in a timely manner. Other universities are experiencing this issue, and the IHL system plans to ask for an extension on usage of Repair and Renovation funds. The ground-breaking ceremony for the addition to the School of Nursing is scheduled for March 21, and the time is to be determined. Mr. Rutledge plans to share with the Executive Committee the next bond fund cycle priorities list, and then he will bring the list to Cabinet for approval. The memorandum of

understanding for the golf course development project was signed by the developer, and it will be sent to the university for President LaForge's signature. After all parties have signed the memorandum of understanding, the attorney will create the ground lease and development plan to be approved by IHL. Mr. Rutledge received the award letter for the Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project. The university has to provide a match of 20% for the grant, and Mr. Rutledge will work with the Executive Committee to identify available funds.

- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The women's basketball team traveled to Alabama last week to compete against University of West Alabama and University of Alabama-Huntsville, and they won against both teams. The women's basketball team competes in the GSC tournament beginning Tuesday at University of West Florida. The men's basketball traveled to Alabama last week to compete against University of West Alabama and University of Alabama-Huntsville, and they lost both of their games. The men's team travels to University of West Alabama for the GSC tournament on Tuesday. The baseball team hosted University of Montevallo over the weekend, and they won both games in their series. They compete tomorrow at University of Arkansas-Monticello, and they travel to Alabama over the weekend to play in a series with University of Alabama-Huntsville. The softball team competed and lost to University of Montevallo, and they host Henderson State University on Tuesday. The softball team travels to University of Alabama-Huntsville this weekend. The men's and women's tennis teams competed against Christian Brothers University last week, and the men's team won while the women's team was defeated. Both teams travel to Mississippi College on Wednesday. The swimming and diving teams had 17 student-athletes qualify to compete in the NCAA DII Swimming and Diving Championships, which begins on March 9.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. The Ten Tenors: Love is in the Air performance takes place tonight at the BPAC. President LaForge and Mr. Munroe are traveling to Washington, D.C. this week to speak to Mississippi's Congressional delegation. They will present three proposals: 1) expansion of the campus radio station, 2) Center for Rural STEM Education (CRSE), and 3) extension of Statesmen Boulevard. The Delta Music Institute is hosting the Thacker Mountain Radio Show on Saturday.

**CABINET TOPIC**

None

**BUSINESS**

**Action**

**Telecommunications policy (new – final reading) ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge brought the new Telecommunications policy to Cabinet for a final reading. The university provides telephone services for faculty and staff for business operations. It is important to handle telephone calls in a timely and appropriate manner as it effects the overall perception of the university. The main line for a university department should be staffed and answered during normal office hours. Cabinet members suggested revisions to the policy: change the acronym 'DSU' to Delta State University throughout the policy.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the Telecommunications policy for a final reading and seconded by Dr. Lovin. The motion was approved.

**Summer Work Schedule ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the proposed work schedule for the summer term. The proposed summer office hours are 7:00 am – 5:30 pm, Monday through Thursday, with a 30-minute lunch break. The summer work schedule will start on Monday, May 9 and end on Thursday, August 11. Kent Wyatt Hall will remain open on Fridays during the summer work schedule. Mr. Rutledge reported that the summer work schedule has contributed to substantial savings in utility expenditures over the past five years. Offices are not required to be open on Friday unless special departmental activities/events require them to be open or if deemed a critical need by the respective vice president.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the summer work schedule and seconded by Dr. Lovin. The motion was approved with one abstention.

**COVID-19 Protocols – revised..... Dr. Novobilski and Dr. Wegmann**

Dr. Novobilski and Dr. Wegmann shared with Cabinet members recommended revisions to the COVID-19 protocols. The Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences would like their Speech and Hearing Clinic to be considered a clinical setting and therefore require patrons to wear a mask.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. Novobilski to revise the COVID-19 protocols to allow the Speech and Hearing Clinic to require patrons to wear masks and seconded by Dr. Lovin. The motion was approved.

Dr. Wegmann shared with Cabinet members an amendment he created for the COVID-19 protocols to help each member of the Delta State community to feel protected and secure in their individual offices. The amendment adds the following standards to COVID-19 protocols:

- Any employee to whom an individual office is registered may require that masks be worn by all who enter that office, provided that the following expectations are met:
  - That the office is registered to and under the sole control of the individual establishing the mask requirement and that no other person, registered or not, regularly occupies the office.
  - That the individual establishing the mask requirement provides a mask free of charge to all people entering the office.
  - That, regardless of anyone’s willingness to abide by the office’s mask policy, the services of that office are guaranteed to all who seek them.
  - That in the case of an individual’s refusal to follow the office’s mask policy, the burden of guaranteeing the services of the office falls upon the person providing the service rather than the person seeking the service.
- This amendment is not to be interpreted as a requirement in and of itself, and that the establishment of a mask mandate within an individual’s office is entirely optional and is contained fully within the purview of the individual whose office it affects.
- Any mask requirement derived from this amendment does not extend to any common area or lobby attached or adjacent to an individual’s office.
- Classrooms do not fall under this amendment in any way, even if a classroom meets the standards defined herein.
- This amendment will expire in full on *May 6, 2022*.

The proposed revisions were discussed at length. Cabinet members expressed concerns that the proposed exceptions would carry over to other areas on campus. Another concern raised was the exclusion of employees in common areas, such as secretaries. Cabinet members discussed the need to enforce the decision that the university is moving forward and attempting to resume normal operations. With this in mind, Dr. Novobilski suggested a friendly amendment to change the expiration date to Monday, April 4.

Dr. Wegmann accepted the friendly amendment.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. Wegmann to approve the proposed revision to the COVID-19 protocols regarding masks in personal offices with an expiration date of April 4, 2022 and seconded by Dr. Bingham. The motion was approved with one opposing vote and two abstaining votes.

**Discussion**

**SACSCOC Update ..... Dr. Novobilski**

Dr. Novobilski shared with Cabinet members an update on the university’s SACSCOC reaffirmation process. The monitoring report is in draft form, and it will be sent to the Executive Committee for review prior to its submission this year. The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Committee has narrowed down potential topics for the university’s next QEP. The QEP should be university mission-oriented, affordable, and help enhance student experiences and learning outcomes. The potential topics for the QEP are: 1) updating and upgrading the First Year Seminar program, and 2) career and professional preparation. President LaForge, Dr. Novobilski, and Dr. Roberts are scheduled to meet with Dr. Beverly Moon next week to discuss the university’s strategic plan and how to integrate the plan into the university’s long-term goals.

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

Dr. Lovin reviewed with Cabinet members the enrollment update and overview he emailed to Cabinet members last Friday. The enrollment update is from Thursday, February 24: 46 confirmed students; 751 admitted students; 1,881 incomplete applications (missing documents); 356 online applications started; and, 5,336 prospects — for a total of 8,370 students being targeted for undergraduate admissions. Dr. Lovin stated the new, university-branded communication plans for admitted students and committed students is doing well.

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

Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members an update on the budget planning process for FY23. The Phase I and Phase II budget documents are due from Executive Committee members and Mr. Kinnison to Mr. Rutledge on Wednesday. The Executive Committee is working on the first draft of the FY23 budget. Each vice president and Mr. Kinnison are reviewing their respective areas for adjustments, and those adjustments are due at the end of the month. The current enrollment projection for Fall 2022 to be used for budget planning purposes is 2,275, and the total reduction to the university budget based on enrollment is \$3.4 million. With the proposed increase in tuition, as well as projected savings, the remaining reductions needed are \$830,000. If Cabinet approves adding a \$500,000 cash contingency to the budget, \$1.3 million in reductions will be needed. All items will be discussed with Cabinet members throughout the remaining budget planning process this Spring.

**Additional Information**

- On Monday, March 7, incoming Cabinet members will begin their shadowing process. The incoming members are: Faculty Senate President-Elect Josh Armstrong, Staff Council Chair-Elect Caroline Fletcher, and Academic Council representative Leslie Griffin. The incoming SGA President will begin shadowing after elections are complete.
- The student volleyball court project is in the final stages prior to construction. Dr. Lovin hopes the project will be completed by April 4.
- Mr. Young announced six students will participate in Student Legislative Day. The participation level is lower than previous years due to COVID-19 restrictions in place at the State Capitol. The SGA Canvas shell was published today. The SGA elections begin on Wednesday, and students will be given the

opportunity to vote on a new Okra Card design, as well as to vote on the new name for the “We Proudly Serve” café in the Union.

- Ms. Wallace announced that Miss Delta State University Presley Jackson will participate in a virtual Miss Mississippi orientation this week. The Most Beautiful Pageant is scheduled for April 5. Two Delta State students will participate in the FedEx Internal Audit interview on Wednesday: Ms. Synethia Mathews and Mr. Dixit Patel.
- President LaForge informed Cabinet members that, in the coming months, they will consider possible ways to honor Dr. Lusia Harris. Until that time, all inquiries can be forwarded to President LaForge.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- The Ten Tenors: Love is in the Air, February 28, 7:30 p.m., BPAC
- Beautiful: The Carole King Musical, March 7, 7:30 p.m., BPAC
- Colloquia Lecture Series with The Honorable David Bowen, March 8, 6:00 p.m., Jobe Auditorium
- Annual Juried Student Art Exhibition Opening, March 10, Fielding Wright Art Museum
- Spring Break week, March 14-18

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, March 7, 2022 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – None

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.