

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: January 11, 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

Guest: 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 January 11, 2021. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Dr. Westfall and seconded by Mr. Rutledge, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on December 14, 2020.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge welcomed Interim Vice President for Student Affairs Kurt Keppler.
- Delta State lost several family and friends during the holidays including: Governor William Winter, Coach Ray Bridges, Ms. Debra Ferguson, Mr. Owen Taylor, Ms. Diane Makamson, Ms. Barbara Varner, Representative Nolan Mettetal, Mr. Munroe's brother in law, and Ms. Waukesha Pate's father. Mr. Kinnison informed Cabinet members of the passing of Ms. Nell Foreman, as well.
- Dr. Vernell Bennett-Fairs began her journey as President of LeMoyne-Owen College last week. She shared with President LaForge that she appreciated the Cabinet's virtual farewell celebration prior to her departure.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events since the last Cabinet meeting. President LaForge provided a tour of the President's new home to Mayor and Mrs. Billy Nowell. The Gulf South Conference Board of Directors met and continued discussing activities and scheduling for the Spring semester. The Institutional Executive Officers met for their monthly meeting, and they also participated in a conference call with Dr. Thomas Dobbs to discuss the impact of COVID-19 and preparing for the Spring semester. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors met for their monthly meeting.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The swimming and diving teams compete this weekend on campus. The women's team will compete against the University of West Florida, and the men's team will compete against Ouachita Baptist University. The men's basketball team hosts University of Alabama-Huntsville on Friday and Saturday, and the women's basketball team competes at University

of Alabama-Huntsville on Friday and Saturday. All student-athletes participating in Spring sports reported to campus yesterday to begin the COVID-19 testing protocols, and they will begin practicing today. Mr. Kinnison shared with Cabinet members the two big topics within the NCAA right now: 1) Name, Image, and Likeness and 2) transfer athletes' legislation. According to NCAA President Mark Emmert, the Name, Image, and Likeness issue will not be a topic at the NCAA's annual Convention this week.

- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project continues with renovation of the entrance to the H. L. Nowell Student Union. The entrance is complete minus the handicap ramps. Mr. Rutledge stated the entrance should be fully functional next week. The concrete for parts of the sidewalk will be poured this week; and, the remaining portion of the project will be brick laying, dirt work, and landscaping. The elevator project and residence hall roofing project must be re-bid, and the bidding will open on January 28. Mr. Rutledge hopes both projects will begin in March. The Bureau of Buildings provided an advance in funds for the university to begin each project since the \$3million in bond funds won't be available in time to start the projects. Bonds were to be sold by the State in October, but they won't be sold until March. The Mayers' Aquatics Center HVAC project remains on schedule and should be finished next month. The President's new home is 98% complete.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. Night classes begin tonight with all classes meeting virtually, and day classes begin tomorrow. The NCAA will host their annual Convention this week, and all Convention activities will be virtual. President LaForge continues his participation as a mentor in the NCAA Pathway Presidential Program on Tuesday. The Martin Luther King Holiday is Monday, January 18, and the next Cabinet meeting will take place on Tuesday, January 19.

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. 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 has no current hotspots. Ms. Douglas worked with the Office of OIT on the COVID-19 Canvas Module for Spring 2021. Upon the approval of the Executive Committee, it will be published today. The Canvas Module informs students of the university's COVID-19 Protocols and what is expected of them as a student. After reviewing the COVID-19 Canvas Module, students are required to sign an attestation form stating they have reviewed and understand the COVID-19 Protocols. Ms. Douglas continues to work with Communications and Marketing on updating the Student Health Center webpage on the Delta State website to reflect its current status; however, it is on hold for now. Currently, 66 international students have returned to campus. Ms. Douglas is working with International Services, Student Life, and Housing regarding: student arrivals; notifying the students of the re-entry to campus process; testing; quarantine placement; required documentation; and, release to return to campus. The international students are administered a COVID-19 test three to five days after their arrival, and their quarantine lasts seven days if they have a negative COVID-19 test. Ten international students have completed the re-entry process and were released to return to campus. In the event of a surge in student COVID-19 cases, Facilities Management has 23 units at Hill Apartments ready for use, and Mr. Rutledge will secure a block of hotel rooms, as well. The paperwork for the practice agreement for the Healthcare Specialists was submitted to the Mississippi Department of Nursing in Jackson. Upon final confirmation

from the Mississippi Department of Nursing, the Healthcare Specialists can provide their new services to campus constituencies. Ms. Douglas announced South Delta Planning and Development District funded 20 point-of-entry screeners for the Spring semester. Ms. Douglas has worked with Human Resources to hire additional point-of-entry screeners to be funded by the \$92,100 in CARES Act funds. She hopes to have all point-of-entry screener positions filled by the end of the week. At this time, the Student Health Center is not approved to be a provider of the COVID-19 vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have stringent guidelines and processes that must be strictly followed including having a medical director on staff and a special freezer that maintains the vaccines' proper temperature. The Executive Committee has discussed making the Student Health Center an approved COVID-19 vaccine site; however, additional information is needed and planning needs to occur. 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. Rebecca Bouse will be the "COVID-19 Hero of the Week" for January 11-15.

BUSINESS

Action

Grade Forgiveness policy (new – final reading).....Dr. McAdams

On the recommendation and approval of the Academic Council, Dr. McAdams brought the new Grade Forgiveness policy to Cabinet for a final reading. An undergraduate student who has not been enrolled at Delta State University for 18 consecutive months may improve his or her overall GPA by applying for forgiveness or exclusion on grades for a maximum of five Delta State courses (not to exceed 16 credit hours) in which the student received a grade of C, D or F. If approved, these grades will remain on the student's permanent record, but the forgiven or excluded course grades will not count towards any degree requirement and will not be used to calculate the GPA. Any required courses approved for grade forgiveness must be retaken to earn credit towards the degree. The original course will be recorded with both the grade earned and the symbol "R" to denote that the course grade has been removed from the student's GPA calculation.

Motion: Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the final reading of the new Grade Forgiveness policy and seconded by Mr. Slagell. The motion was approved.

Discussion

Vice President for Student Affairs Search Process..... President LaForge

President LaForge provided Cabinet members with an update on the search process for the Vice President for Student Affairs. President LaForge plans to appoint a search committee this week, and he asked Cabinet members to provide him with recommendations from their respective areas. Dr. Keppler has offered to share his vast network of contacts from his time as President of Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education to enhance the search. President LaForge will keep Cabinet members abreast of any progress during the search, and he hopes to have the position filled by July 1.

Spring Semester plans and readiness Cabinet members

Dr. McAdams shared with Cabinet members the Spring semester plans for the academy. He reported that 37 full-time faculty members and three adjunct faculty members will teach remotely for Spring 2021. These faculty members received permission to teach remotely for underlying health reasons. Currently, 87 students have requested to complete courses online, and 41% of students enrolled in Spring 2021 are taking courses exclusively online. This percentage excludes Dual Credit students. Of this number, 21% of

undergraduate degree seeking students are taking courses exclusively online, and 85% of graduate students are taking courses exclusively online. Dr. McAdams is confident the number of students requesting to take their Spring 2021 courses exclusively online will increase. There are 739 courses that have enrollment for Spring 2021. An additional 80 courses have enrollment for Spring 2021, but those courses are Dual Credit courses, special topics, internships, private lessons, dissertation, zero enrolled courses, etc. Of the 739 courses, 371 will be online-only courses: 244 courses are undergraduate level courses, and 127 courses are graduate level courses.

Chief Johns informed Cabinet members the university received from Homeland Security several pallets of PPE, hand sanitizer, and other needed supplies to combat the COVID-19 virus for the Spring semester. Chief Johns will work with Mr. Rutledge and Ms. Douglas to inventory all items received.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget. The university has and continues to keep expenses down. The operating budget is on track with our projections. Mr. Rutledge stated the university currently has approximately \$3 million more in cash than this time last year. Mr. Rutledge won't have the final tuition revenue until the last purge date. Contingencies are in place for an enrollment drop; however, additional budget cuts will need to be made if the tuition revenue falls below projections. Mr. Rutledge will provide an update on tuition revenue at the next Cabinet meeting. Mr. Rutledge provided Cabinet members a review of the CARES Act grant funds the university received to offset the budgetary woes COVID-19 caused. Delta State received \$1,289,000 in CARES Act grant funds and \$124,800 in CARES Act Minority Service funds for a total of \$1.4 million. The funds were dispersed in three phases. The university has awarded \$214,375 in individual grants to 307 students, as part of Phase I CARES Act grant fund distribution. Applications for the funds are still being received and reviewed. Funds are available until April 2021. The second phase of funds will go to the universities to help reimburse themselves for refunds given to students for housing, meals, and parking fees. Delta State reimbursed students \$630,922 for room refunds, \$230,749 for meal plan refunds, and \$20,500 for parking permit refunds for a total of \$882,000 in refunds. The university has \$531,627 remaining to help with other expenses incurred during the COVID-19 crisis. Mr. Rutledge shared the university received \$1,900,000 in CARES Act grand funds from the State. Funds were used for training, professional development, measures to decrease the spread of COVID-19, cleaning supplies, technology, medical supplies, and PPE for employees and students. All funds from the State were spent. The university has approximately \$530,000 remaining from the Federal CARES Act grant funds, which are to be used by April 2021. Mr. Rutledge will work with Dr. Keppler on the plan Dr. Megan Smith in Student Financial Assistance created to disperse the remaining funds to students. Lastly, Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the reorganization of staff positions in his area. He created two new positions: Director of Accounting and Director of Financial Reporting. The Director of Accounting will oversee the day to day processes of the budget, and this position was filled by the Assistant Comptroller. Mr. Rutledge will interview for the Director of Financial Reporting next week.

Legislative Update Mr. Munroe

Mr. Munroe provided Cabinet members with an update on the 2021 Legislative session. The session began on January 5 and will end on April 9. Top priorities for this session are taxes and pay raises for K-12 teachers. President LaForge has requested conference calls with all of the committee chairs, both the majority and minority parties. Mr. Munroe plans to set up conference calls for President LaForge, Dr. Roberts, and himself with the committee chairs of the majority and minority parties to lobby for the university's needs of bond funds and R&R funds. The Legislative Budget Office predicts the IHL budget will be cut by 1.92%. Mr. Munroe will provide updates as information is presented.

Additional information

- President LaForge asked Dr. Keppler to bring an enrollment update to the next Cabinet meeting.
- Dr. Keppler informed Cabinet members the Martin Luther King event would be postponed. The new date will be announced soon.
- Mr. Rutledge announced the software for the Listserv Archive has been ordered.
- Mr. Munroe announced the Foundation received \$788,000 in gifts in December 2020.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Night classes begin, January 11
- Day classes begin, January 12
- Martin Luther King Holiday, January 18

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Tuesday, January 19 at 2:00 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – COVID-19 Response Update and Plans

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:02 p.m.