

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: January 19, 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), 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: Dr. Michelle Roberts

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 19, 2021. The meeting convened at 2:00 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Mr. Rutledge and seconded by Chief Johns, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on January 11, 2021.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. Classes for the Spring 2021 semester began last week. The virtual NCAA Convention began last week. President LaForge informed Cabinet members the Name, Image, and Likeness legislation was postponed and will not be voted on during the convention. President LaForge recorded a clip for Delta News regarding the donation made by Mr. and Mrs. Tom Gresham for scholarships. President LaForge stated this gift will impact students for years to come. President LaForge continued his participation as a mentor in the NCAA Pathway Presidential Program. The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi hosted their Annual Crystal Ball Gala on Saturday, virtually.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The swimming and diving teams competed over the weekend. The women's team fell to the University of West Florida, and the men's team won against Ouachita Baptist University. The men's basketball team hosted the University of Alabama-Huntsville over the weekend, but they lost their series. The women's basketball team competed at the University of Alabama-Huntsville, and they lost one game. The swimming and diving teams will compete against Rhodes College at home this weekend. The men's basketball team will compete at Christian Brothers University this weekend, and the women's team will compete against Christian Brothers University at home this weekend. The Athletics' Department continues to prepare for upcoming Spring sports and follow COVID-19 Protocols with testing of the student-athletes.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members of below normal temperature in buildings following the winter break. He worked with

Facilities Management to upgrade their protocols to ensure this doesn't occur after breaks again. The H. L. Nowell Student Union entrance portion of the Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project is complete and fully functional. 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 projects will be open for bidding on Friday.

- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. The NCAA Convention continues this week with an educational session on Student-Athletes' College Experiences and Post College Outcomes. The Gulf South Conference Board of Directors met earlier today. The Board of Directors reviewed an analysis of lost basketball games for the season thus far, and it was determined all games postponed were due to COVID-19. The Division I basketball tournament, March Madness, will proceed for 2021 in Indianapolis. This tournament provides the NCAA with the bulk of its yearly revenue. Without the tournament in 2020, all three divisions of the NCAA had to dip into rainy day funds. Mississippi College President Blake Thompson was selected as a member of the Division II Presidents' Council. The Martin Luther King "Remembering the Light" candlelight ceremony occurs tonight in Jobe Hall and will be live-streamed. The Institutional Executive Officers meet on Wednesday for their monthly meeting, and the IHL Board of Trustees meet on Thursday for their monthly meeting. President LaForge and Mr. Munroe have a campaign prospect meeting on Friday. President LaForge shared his reflections on the January 6th Capitol Hill insurrection with faculty, staff, and students over the weekend via email. He has received positive feedback for his reflections.

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 are 12 students 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. 1,740 students enrolled in the module have signed the attestation form stating they have reviewed and understand the COVID-19 Protocols. Currently, 54 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. 43 international students have completed the re-entry process and were released to return to campus. Three students tested positive in their home country, and they will isolate there. One international student has tested positive during the re-entry process; three are waiting to be tested; and four are waiting on their arrival documentation. Ms. Douglas has worked with Human Resources to hire an additional ten point-of-entry screeners for the Spring semester to be funded by the \$153,000 in CARES Act funds. Five point-of-entry screeners have completed the background process, and they will begin working on Thursday or Friday. Ms. Douglas reported there is a new database for COVID-19 reporting for students. The Office of Student Life will need assistance with keeping the new database up to date. Ms. Douglas provided the draft Student Health Center budget to Mr. Rutledge which includes supplies and salaries. The salaries listed in the budget are covered by CARES Act funds, and Mr. Rutledge believes the remaining supplies can be covered by CARES Act funds. Chief Johns and Ms. Douglas met with Bolivar County Emergency Management Assistance

Director Michael Lamb to discuss the possibility of Delta State being a vaccine site for Bolivar County. The possible location on campus would be the McCool Stadium parking lot. At this time, the Student Health Center is not approved to be a provider of the COVID-19 vaccine; however, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 Vaccination application has been started. The CDC requires any vaccine location to follow stringent guidelines including storing the vaccines in a special freezer that maintains the proper temperature for a vaccine. Ms. Douglas has identified freezers for the vaccines that Delta State owns. If the Student Health Center becomes an approved COVID-19 vaccine site, Delta State will offer the Moderna vaccine due to the type freezer available for use. Additional information is needed and planning needs to occur. Ms. Douglas will work with Communications and Marketing to update the COVID-19 webpage on the Delta State website to include a link for the COVID-19 vaccination. The link will provide vaccine site information and vaccine resources. The Student Health Center will purchase some antibody tests in order to test any employee or student that has previously tested positive. Ms. Douglas placed an order for the antibody tests last week, and they will arrive by the end of this week. Anyone with the COVID-19 antibodies can return to work and will not have to quarantine. 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. Mr. Dan'l Murray and Kyle Friesenhan will be the "COVID-19 Hero of the Week" for January 18-22. Ms. Douglas requested to send faculty and staff her Weekly COVID-19 Update each week after the document is reviewed by Cabinet members. Cabinet members approved her request. Mr. Kinnison informed Cabinet members the men and women basketball team are tested three times a week for COVID-19, but testing is going well overall. Mr. Rutledge provided Cabinet members a review of the CARES Act grants 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 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 went to 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. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the Department of Education awarded Delta State \$4,272,712 in CARES Act funds to be spent by May 15. There are less restrictions on spending for this particular grant, and Mr. Rutledge is hopeful some of the funds can be used to reimburse the university for lost tuition revenue. Mr. Rutledge will discuss potential ways to spend these funds with the Executive Committee on Friday.

BUSINESS

Action

None

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 shared the names of the search committee: Dr. Westfall; Mr. Word; Chief Johns; Ms. Rochelle Owsley; Mr. Merritt Dain; Dr. Ellen Green; Ms. Dana George; Ms. Michelle Johansen; Mr. Patrick Davis; and, Ms. Lisa Giger. The committee will be complete upon Mr. Word providing President LaForge with two student recommendations and a chair. Once President LaForge has the final three committee members, he will provide an update. The position will be posted soon, and it will be a nation-wide search. Any inquiries about the position should be directed to the search committee or Human Resources.

Online instruction and academic performanceDr. McAdams

Dr. McAdams shared with Cabinet members data referencing the academic impact of greatly increased online courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. When comparing a three-year period of the average GPA of full-time, degree seeking students, Delta State students performed slightly less well academically, as measured by GPA, but not by a large amount. The average GPAs of full-time, degree seeking students (freshmen to graduate) for the past three Fall semesters is: 1) Fall 2018 – 3.08; 2) Fall 2019 – 3.07; and, 3) Fall 2020 – 3.01. There are students negatively impacted by the increase in the number of courses offered solely online; however, the increase in the number of courses offered solely online has not impacted GPAs significantly at the macro level. Dr. Westfall shared with Cabinet members the faculty did not cut corners when creating their online courses; the faculty ensured students are provided the materials needed to do well and continue their academic progression. Dr. McAdams’ focus the last several years has been to improve the quality of online teaching and course design provided to students and to help students become better virtual learners.

Spring 2021 Enrollment UpdateDr. Keppler/Dr. McAdams

Dr. Keppler shared with Cabinet members an enrollment update for undergraduate students for Spring 2021. He stated it is unclear the impact COVID-19 has had on enrollment, but it stands to be the number one reason enrollment decreased from this time last year. Enrollment decreased 11-12% or approximately 300 students. Dr. McAdams provided Cabinet members with an enrollment update for graduate students for Spring 2021. Graduate enrollment has increased, and it is up 11%, right now, prior to the purge. Dr. McAdams has worked with Mr. Rutledge on rearranging some funds to allow Student Financial Assistance to offer scholarships to those who need extra help to remain enrolled. After the purge, Dr. McAdams believes graduate enrollment will remain above a 10% increase. President LaForge requested Dr. Keppler, Dr. McAdams, and Mr. Rutledge invite Mr. Merritt Dain, Dr. Christy Riddle, Dr. Beverly Moon, Dr. Megan Smith, and Mr. Kelvin Davis to the next Cabinet meeting for Cabinet members to thank them for their enrollment efforts.

Fall 2021 Admissions Report Dr. Keppler

Dr. Keppler provided a Fall 2020 Admissions report. 401 first-time, freshmen are provisionally admitted to Delta State for Fall 2021. This is an increase of 22 students from this time last year. The first-time, freshmen applications have decreased by 158 from this time last year. 46 first-time, transfer students are provisionally admitted to Delta State for Fall 2021. This is a decrease of 26 students from this time last year. The first-time, transfer applications have decreased by 119 from this time last year. Dr. Keppler believes some of the decrease in transfer students is due to the decrease in amount of Phi Theta Kappa scholarships offered. Dr. Keppler has a meeting with Mr. Merritt Dain and his staff tomorrow to learn more about their recruitment process. A few plans Mr. Dain has shared with Dr. Keppler are: visiting every county in Mississippi and attempting to recruit more in border states of Arkansas, Tennessee, and Louisiana.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget and shared with Cabinet members the Cash Flow projections for December 2020. This report compares the current cash flows to the cash flows from December 2019. The university’s bank receipts from December 2019 to December 2020 have increased, and the increase stems from the State’s CARES Act reimbursement of \$1.9 million. Tuition and fees decreased due to a decrease in enrollment. Employee payroll decreased from December 2019 to December 2020 even though the university employed more personnel in December 2020 due to COVID-19. The additional personnel employed due to COVID-19 are paid with CARES Act funds. Vendor disbursements increased, but Mr. Rutledge stated most disbursements will be reimbursed with CARES Act funds. The December 2020 ending cash balance was \$4,413,486.13, which is more than this time last year. The university continues to increase its cash balance. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the 2021 Monthly Cash Flow Report that he updates monthly once the bank reconciliations are complete. Mr. Rutledge will update the monthly projections accordingly to adjust for any unexpected expenses or revenues. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members he created the FY22 Budget Process Timeline, and he will send the timeline to Cabinet members.

Legislative Update Mr. Munroe

Mr. Munroe provided Cabinet members with an update on the 2021 Legislative session. Mr. Munroe and the other legislative liaisons are meeting once a week to discuss legislation tracked by IHL. Mr. Munroe has contracted Delta State alumnus Charlie King to help do some of the legwork for this year’s legislative session. The deadline for general bills and amendments was yesterday, and currently, IHL is tracking approximately 50 bills.

Additional information

- Chief Johns thanked President LaForge for sharing his reflections on the January 6th Capitol Hill insurrection with faculty, staff, and students.
- President LaForge informed Cabinet members Delta State alumnus Jim Hunter McCaleb passed away last week. Mr. McCaleb was a part of Delta State’s only undefeated football team.
- Dr. Keppler participated in his first Bologna Performing Arts Center (BPAC) Advisory Committee meeting, and he provided an overview for Cabinet members. The BPAC has plans to host four events this Spring in April and May, and they are planning for a regular season beginning in the Fall.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Martin Luther King Holiday, January 18

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, January 25 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – COVID-19 Response Update and Plans

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:37 p.m.