

# DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S CABINET

### *Minutes*

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**Meeting date: July 13, 2020**

**Members in attendance:** President William LaForge (via Zoom), Dr. Vernell Bennett-Fairs (via Zoom), Chief Jeffrey Johns (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:** None

**Call to Order:** A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom conference call on July 13, 2020. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

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

On motion by Mr. Word and seconded by Mr. Rutledge, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on July 6, 2020.

#### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the last week. The Office of Human Resources hosted the Retirement and Service Awards Recognition Luncheon last week. Mr. Rutledge thanked President LaForge and Dr. McAdams for participating in the event via Zoom. Dr. Temika Simmons provided an update to President LaForge on the Winning the Race Conference for Spring 2021 and the Delta Proud Initiative. President LaForge received an update on the Gulf South Conference and the state of Fall sports from Commissioner Matt Wilson.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The final light pole for the McCool Stadium lighting project was erected, and the final step will be to take down the old light poles. Also, the press box at McCool Stadium will receive renovations. The original light poles and press box at McCool Stadium were damaged during storms at the beginning of the Spring semester. Mr. Kinnison stated student-athletes are continuing their voluntary, supervised workouts, in groups of 17 or less, with the strength and conditioning coaches. Mr. Kinnison and other Athletic Directors in the Gulf South Conference continue to have weekly conference calls with Mr. Matt Wilson to discuss all aspects of sports for the Fall semester.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The roofing projects for Sillers Coliseum, Fielding Wright Art Building/Holcombe-Norwood Hall, and the Facilities Management Building are complete. The storm damage projects are on schedule. Facilities Management has been preparing and cleaning Hill Apartments for use in the Fall semester for students needing to quarantine.

Also, they are cleaning and preparing all other residence halls for students return in August. The new HVAC units for Mayers Aquatics Center won't be received until later in the year, so the contactor, Upchurch Plumbing, will work on the existing units so that the swimming and diving season can continue until the new units arrive. Issues with the HVAC system in Sillers Coliseum began this week, and Facilities Management is looking into it. The architect for the elevator project was chosen and plans are ready. Mr. Rutledge is hopeful the project will be advertised and awarded by the end of August. The list of bond fund priorities for this fiscal year are due to IHL by the end of July. Mr. Rutledge will discuss the priorities with the Executive Committee and bring them to Cabinet prior to submitting the final list to IHL.

- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge, Commissioner Al Rankins, the other Institutional Executive Officers, and IHL staff had a conference call with Dr. Thomas Dobbs, State Health Officer, and some of his staff this morning to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic. The fourth Virtual New Student Orientation took place this morning: 138 students registered, and 63 students participated. Dr. Bennett-Fairs stated she would know later today the number of students who registered for Fall courses.

### **CABINET TOPIC**

#### **COVID-19 Action Plan for Fall 2020 ..... President LaForge**

President LaForge provided a brief overview of the COVID-19 Action Plan for Fall 2020. The action plan will be an internal, living document and will be updated as new information arises. President LaForge asked that whenever changes are made, Cabinet members send the edits to Ms. Cole. All changes will be tracked and documented within the action plan. Dr. McAdams revised the first statements under Academic Continuity to provide more clarity. This was not a substantive change. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members Sodexo will re-open in phases, and they were planning to be in their second phase once students arrived in August. Following the Cabinet Advance, it was decided Sodexo will remain in their first phase for at least the first two weeks of school. Meals will be available for pick up only. After the first two weeks, the plan will be evaluated to see if it should continue or if the second phase can begin.

#### **COVID-19 Protocols for Employees ..... Dr. Roberts**

Dr. Roberts shared with Cabinet members the COVID-19 protocols for employees. These protocols are an expansion of Delta State's June 1 Guide for Returning to the Workplace. Delta State's policies and protocols for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic are rooted in the safety of our students, staff, and faculty, and of the public with whom we interact. The primary goals for Delta State's response to the COVID-19 pandemic are to keep our Delta State family and our campus safe and virus-free, protect public health, and maintain the academic mission of Delta State. Delta State's plan will be aligned and consistent with local orders and ordinances of the City of Cleveland and Bolivar County, policies and guidelines of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, as well as the State of Mississippi's Reopening Model and the Mississippi Department of Public Health. Our plan will also follow recommendations from the federal government and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Delta State's knowledge of the COVID-19 virus continues to evolve, and our policies and plans will be updated as more information becomes available. All employees are expected to fully comply with the policies, protocols, and guidelines outlined in the COVID-19 Protocols for Employees. All employees must sign the "Delta State University COVID-19 Attestation Form" indicating they understand the institution's policies, guidelines, and protocols regarding keeping the workplace as safe as possible, COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, quarantine, and isolation procedures, and that they agree to try in good faith to abide by the policies. An employee's refusal may result in corrective action per the "Work Performance and Code of Conduct" policy. To help contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus and minimize the risk for all members of the Delta State family, the university

has implemented several preventative measures for employees: 1) all employees are required to complete by August 14 the “COVID-19 Campus Protocols” training video and sign the “Delta State University COVID-19 Attestation Form” affirming their understanding of the responsibility to adhere to current university-established protocols and procedures; 2) all employees are required to complete each day before reporting to work the COVID-19 screening process for checking symptoms and risk factors; 3) employees who feel ill and/or believe he/she has been exposed to or contracted the COVID-19 virus should stay home (or leave the workplace); 4) employees are required to self-report to Human Resources if he/she displays signs or symptoms of the COVID-19 virus and/or the results of all COVID-19 tests; 5) employees must wear a face mask or face covering at all times while in a shared work space/room and must follow social distancing guidelines; 6) employees should report any safety and/or health concerns to their supervisor and/or Human Resources; 7) employees should intensify their cleaning and disinfection practices in their work space and ensure healthy hygiene practices to reduce the spread of germs; 8) all employees who are high-risk for COVID-19 and individuals with serious underlying health conditions are encouraged to work remotely when possible; 9) employees who have other COVID-19 issues (i.e. childcare) may be eligible to work from home; and 10) Delta State will reimburse the employee for any out-of-pocket expense for a COVID-19 test.

If an employee falls into one of four categories — 1) experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms, 2) close contact with someone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms/diagnosed with COVID-19, 3) tested positive for COVID-19, or 4) returned from international travel in the last 14 days — they should self-report to Human Resources. A staff member in Human Resources will conduct the Workplace Health Screening assessment and advise the employee regarding the next steps. Delta State has created protocols for each category including a COVID-19 test and a quarantine/isolation period. The university will keep track of those employees who tested positive and who they came in contact with while on campus. Dr. Edwin Craft is working on a software system to help keep track of all information and dates received via the Workplace Health Screening assessment. Employees will not return to campus until cleared by Human Resources.

Delta State will follow the guidelines of the CDC with regards to “close contact” for purposes of contact tracing. Close contact is defined as: 1) being with six feet (for at least 15 minutes) of someone who has COVID-19; 2) providing care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19; 3) having direct physical contact (touched, hugged, kissed) with someone who has COVID-19; 4) shared eating or drinking utensils with someone who has COVID-19; and 5) having had someone who has COVID-19 to sneeze, cough, or somehow get respiratory droplets on you.

The university strongly prohibits all university travel domestically or internationally. If an employee believes their travel is essential, they can apply for a waiver with their respective vice president. Employees are discouraged from traveling internationally for personal reasons, as well.

During this time, Delta State university will provide additional leave options for employees under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Human Resources is working on developing the protocols for these leave programs, and additional information will be forthcoming.

All employees who are at high risk for COVID-19, including individuals age 65 and older and individuals with underlying health concerns, are encouraged to work remotely, when possible.

President LaForge shared information he received from Dr. Thomas Dobbs and his officers. The spread of the COVID-19 virus grows each day, and the number of positive tests and deaths increases every day. The state of Mississippi has seen a lag in reporting times due to commercial labs being inundated with tests,

resulting in a wait time of seven to ten days for results. With such a large lag time in reporting, predictions can be negatively altered. Dr. Dobbs spoke with the IEOs and IHL staff about what students returning to campuses in the Fall may bring. One percent of all Mississippi citizens have COVID-19, and students are going to bring it to campus thereby causing a ripple effect. Dr. Dobbs believes the classroom environment can be well controlled with students wearing face masks/coverings and maintaining proper social distance. The Achilles heel of the university system will be the social aspect of campus life including cafeterias, student unions, events hosted by student organizations, etc. For the first few weeks of school, Dr. Dobbs recommended doing the absolute minimum possible with regards to student activities, including putting limitations on Greek recruitment. This will help to let the presence of the virus die down prior to activities beginning. The final decisions on Fall sports has not been made throughout the State and the multiple conferences; however, Dr. Dobbs stated the State is currently leaning towards allowing stadiums to fill up to 25% capacity, but there will be no tailgating. Dr. Dobbs recommended the continuation of screening/temperature taking of students and employees, and all protocols/policies should be posted throughout campus as not all students will be screened every day. If the State/IHL system/Delta State shuts down to stop the spread of the virus, the closure should be for at least two weeks as this fulfills the quarantine period.

**BUSINESS**

**Action**

None

**Discussion**

**Budget Update ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge provided Cabinet members with an update on the FY20 and FY21 budgets. Mr. Charles Lindsay of Matthews, Cutrer, and Lindsay P.A. verified all of Delta State’s reconciliations, and his final report should be completed and submitted to IHL by Wednesday.

Delta State budgeted for a 5% or \$837,000 decrease in State appropriations. The university’s projected decrease, according to the Mississippi Legislative Budget Office, will be a 2.6% decrease or \$371,132 in State appropriations. Delta State’s four line items — Aviation, the Delta Center, E-Learning, and the Delta Music Institute — received a 2.6% decrease in appropriations; however, the decrease for our line items will not affect our Fund 10 budget. Mr. Rutledge recommends leaving the difference in the projected State appropriations untouched to help offset any enrollment decline. The difference in the projected State appropriations along with Delta State’s contingency plan of \$500,000 and delayed expenses of \$670,000 can provide \$1,635,868 in total for an enrollment contingency. This contingency would allow for an 11% decrease in enrollment. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the State CARES Act grant funds will be regulated by the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration. Currently, the funds cannot be used to reimburse State agencies for administrative leave. A request has been submitted to the Department of Finance and Administration to allow the funds to be used for reimbursements in lost revenue and administrative leave. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members a listing of the university’s needs due to COVID-19 that could be purchased with State CARES Act grant funds. From the original list, a contingency was not built in. Cabinet members decided to remove camera temperature scanners and temperature stations from the list of needs, as well as, dropping the number of computers to be purchased for faculty and staff from 350 to 200. By removing these items, the university will have a contingency of \$287,500.

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

Mr. Munroe had nothing new to report on the State’s legislative session. He was asked by Senator Roger Wicker’s staff to provide a listing of needs the university had due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Additional information**

- Dr. Bennett-Fairs shared with Cabinet members the average rate of return of participants for a New Student Orientation from those that registered is 85-90%. For a Virtual New Student Orientation, the average rate of return of participants is 50-55%. Even though registrations for the Virtual New Student Orientations are higher than last year’s registrations, additional registrations need to occur to see a higher return of participants. Dr. Bennett-Fairs stated some students who registered and did not participate had previously registered for their Fall courses, and the Office of Admissions is contacting more students to see if this is why they didn’t participate.
- Mr. Munroe shared with Cabinet members he has offered the job of Athletics Development Officer and a decision should be received by the end of the week.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- Virtual New Student Orientation IV, July 13
- Virtual New Student Orientation V, July 27

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, July 20 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 4:32 p.m.