

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: March 1, 2021

Members in attendance: President William LaForge (via Zoom), Chief Jeffrey Johns (via Zoom), Dr. Kurt Keppler (via Zoom), Mr. Mike Kinnison (via Zoom), Mr. Rick Munroe (via Zoom), Dr. Michelle Roberts (via Zoom), Mr. Jamie Rutledge (via Zoom), Dr. Jonathan Westfall (via Zoom), and Mr. Richard Word (via Zoom) (recorder – Ms. Claire Cole)

Members not in attendance: Dr. Charles McAdams and Mr. Jeff Slagell

Guests: Dr. Natasha Barnes, Co-Chair, Winning the Race Committee
Dr. Vicki Bingham, Incoming Representative, Academic Council
Ms. Robin Douglas, COVID-19 Response Coordinator
Dr. Temika Simmons, Chair, Winning the Race Committee
Ms. Nakikke Wallace, Chair-Elect, Administrative Staff Council
Dr. Andrew Wegmann, President-Elect, Faculty Senate

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom video conference on March 1, 2021. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Chief Johns and seconded by Dr. Westfall, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on February 22, 2021.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge welcomed Ms. Nakikke Wallace, chair-elect for the Administrative Staff Council; Dr. Andrew Wegmann, President-Elect of Faculty Senate; and, Dr. Vicki Bingham, incoming Academic Council representative to Cabinet as they begin the process for shadowing their outgoing counterparts on the President's Cabinet.
- President LaForge congratulated Dr. Roberts on completing her 29th year of service to Delta State.
- President LaForge informed Cabinet members of the recent deaths of Delta State alumnae Dr. Mary "KayKay" Elliott and Delta State alumnae and retiree Betsy Bobo Elliott. Mr. Kinnison and Mr. Rutledge are helping the family plan a memorial service for Ms. Betsy Bobo Elliott in Walter Sillers Coliseum on March 13 at 1:00 p.m.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. Delta State chose Dr. Tomeka Harbin as its nominee for the IHL Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award, and President LaForge presented Dr. Harbin with her plaque last week. President LaForge provided the welcome for the Mississippi Humanities Council Teacher of the Year presentation to Dr. Andrew Wegmann last week. President LaForge participated in teleconferences with the other Institutional Executive Officers regarding sabbatical issues. The Large Foundations Task Force met last week, and President LaForge

and Mr. Munroe spoke to Senator John Polk about Delta State's appropriations and bond funds. Delta State hosted the New South Intercollegiate Swim Conference (NSISC) championship meet last week. All seniors and scholar athlete were recognized, and President LaForge was able to participate in the recognition. The IHL Internal Audit Department Directors are in the process of a Quality Assessment Review being performed by a team of external peers, and President LaForge was interviewed about Delta State's Internal Auditor. President LaForge had a phone call with Ms. Jackie Nicholson for the NCAA Pathway Presidential mentorship program. President LaForge accepted a membership to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' (AASCU) Committee on International Education, and he participated in his first meeting last week. The Social Work Department hosted President LaForge for the Virtual Dementia Tour, and President LaForge provided a welcome for the virtual Margaret Tullos Field Symposium. President LaForge had the pleasure of visiting with two students last week: the new Miss Delta State University Taylor Street and international student Mr. Muhammed "Hassen" Irshad.

- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The men's and women's basketball teams competed against University of West Alabama over the weekend. The men lost both games and the women won one game. Both teams will travel to Valdosta State University for the GSC Championship Tournament beginning tomorrow. The baseball team competed in a series against the University of West Georgia over the weekend, finishing with two wins and one loss. They will host the University of West Alabama at home this weekend. The softball team competed in a series against University of West Georgia over the weekend finishing with two wins and one loss. They will compete at home this weekend against University of West Alabama. The golf team is competing today and tomorrow in the Mississippi College Invitational. The men's soccer team lost to Mississippi College over the weekend and will compete on Saturday at the University of Montevallo. The women's soccer team won against University of Alabama-Huntsville over the weekend and will compete at home Tuesday against Christian Brothers University and Saturday at Union University. The women's tennis team will compete tomorrow against Mississippi College and both men's and women's team will compete at Valdosta State University on Saturday. Delta State hosted the New South Intercollegiate Swim Conference (NSISC) tournament last week. The men's swimming and diving team placed first, and the women's team placed second.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The brick laying portion of the Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project is almost complete; however, good weather is needed to complete the project. Once the brick laying portion is complete, additional dirt work and landscaping will take place. Facilities Management staff were trained on the new HVAC systems in the Mayers Aquatics Center last week, and the new scoreboard is being installed today. The bid for the campus-wide elevator project was accepted, and Mr. Rutledge stated the notice to proceed should arrive in the next three weeks. Bids for the residence halls roofing project and residence halls renovations will be received this week. These projects will begin in May and continue throughout the summer. The HVAC unit for Lawler-Harkins Hall is not working properly, but it is still within warranty. Mr. Rutledge is asking the contractor and manufacturer to replace it.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge participated in the bi-weekly COVID-19 update conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and the other Institutional Executive Officers this morning. The Administrative Staff Council presented this morning the February Employee of the Month to Mr. Hunter Kovac, Plumbing Supervisor. President LaForge spoke with Ms. Emily Havens, Director of GRAMMY Museum® Mississippi this morning about diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. On Tuesday, President LaForge will participate in the Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber Board of Directors meeting. The Office of Admissions will host the Statesmen Kickback event on Saturday, and this event will serve as the Spring Preview Day.
- President LaForge invited Dr. Temika Simmons and Dr. Natasha Barnes to Cabinet. He thanked Dr.

Simmons for serving as Chair of the Winning the Race Conference, as this will be her last year as conference chair. President LaForge announced that Dr. Natasha Barnes, Assistant Professor of Counselor Education, will assume the role of Chair of the Winning the Race Conference, starting with the 2022 conference. Dr. Simmons and Dr. Barnes will return to Cabinet in the coming weeks to discuss details and plans for the 2021 Winning the Race Conference.

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. As mentioned earlier, President LaForge participated in a conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and all Institutional Executive Officers this morning to discuss COVID-19 related issues. He shared with Cabinet members the update on current active cases at all eight universities. Delta State is the only public university with no active cases in the last two weeks. 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 no students in Hill Apartments, and there are no students in the off-campus location. The university had no hotspots last week. The Bolivar County vaccine distribution site opened last week and provided vaccines on Tuesday and Friday. There were 284 people vaccinated last week at the Bolivar County distribution site. Beginning this week, 150 doses of the first vaccine and 50 doses of the second vaccine will be available at the Bolivar County distribution site. Ms. Douglas shared the site needs additional staff -- medical and non-medical. She hired three additional nurses last week and four additional nurses this morning. Some of the point-of-entry screeners are filling the need in the non-medical area. The site could always use volunteers, as well, and, Ms. Douglas shared with Cabinet members the Bolivar County Vaccination Site Volunteer Interest Forum is on the COVID-19 webpage on the Delta State website for any interested in volunteering. Ms. Douglas expressed her gratitude to Dr. Vicki Bingham and Chief Johns for their continued efforts for making sure the Bolivar County vaccine distribution site runs smoothly. 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. Dr. Vicki Bingham will be the “COVID-19 Hero of the Week” for March 1-5. Mr. Kinnison announced the testing of student-athletes continues, and both basketball teams tested negative prior to their games over the weekend and before leaving for the GSC tournament. Dr. Keppler informed Cabinet members that less than \$10,000 remains of the CARES Act funds. At the request of Mr. Rutledge, Dr. Keppler will ask Dr. Megan Smith to award the remaining funds to allow for the next round of Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds to be requested. A press release was released today announcing the \$1.2 million federal Coronavirus Responses and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act available to students. Eligible students received an application link in their Okramail email address this morning, and the application remains accessible through March 15. Students will receive between \$300 to \$750. Students will be encouraged to apply any funds received to their student account to pay their existing account balances; however, a student is not mandated to put any funds towards their account. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members an update on how the \$3,010,494 of newly allocated Higher Education Emergency Relief grant funds will be spent. The Executive Committee approved two new items at their last meeting. A Scholarship Manager position will be created and funded through June 30, 2021 for \$17,600, and scholarship software will be purchased for \$20,000, which leaves \$393,240 that is currently unobligated. Dr. Roberts expanded upon the two new items to be funded. A current staff member will assume the role as Scholarship Manager, effective March 15 and will assist her with the work of the Scholarship Task Force. This staff member will report to the Director of Student

Financial Assistance. The new software will be used to implement an electronic system for managing scholarships.

BUSINESS

Action

COVID-19 Protocols – revised President LaForge

Ms. Douglas provided an overview of the recommended revisions to the COVID-19 Protocols for students. She recommends revising the COVID-19 Protocols for Students to reflect new practices for student organizations hosting off-campus events. All student organization off-campus events are to be approved by the Coordinator of Student Life and the COVID-19 Response Coordinator. An off-campus event is defined as any activity/event that takes place off-campus and is organized/funded/attended by an officially recognized campus related entity. Student events held off campus are allowed if the protocols below are followed.

- Large events are prohibited, and event attendance limits will be enforced, per Executive Order 1525.
- Event registration and attendee lists are required.
- Events must comply with current state and local ordinances. The organizer/host must ensure that all current state and local COVID-19 ordinances are followed.
- Food and beverage options must be grab-n-go options.
- Symptom screening must be in place.

Final approval of the event may be denied, cancelled, or revoked by the COVID-19 Response Coordinator up to the day of the event. All responsibilities for enforcing COVID-19 protocols will be on the event planner and group hosting the off-campus event. Once approved, Ms. Douglas will post the updates to the COVID-19 webpage on the Delta State website, and the revised protocols will be sent to students.

Motion: Moved by Chief Johns to approve the recommended revisions to the COVID-19 Protocols for Students and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

Non-Academic Issues Grievance policy (revised – first reading) Dr. Keppler

Dr. Keppler brought to Cabinet the revised Non-Academic Issues Grievance policy for a first reading. Most of the revisions to the policy are organizational and formatting issues, particularly in clarifying and numbering the steps and in providing information on archiving of materials. In addition to reformatting and editing the policy for clarity, a few other changes were made: 1) response times were changed to “within fifteen working days” for each step to be consistent with the graduate and undergraduate Grievance Policies – Academic; 2) the specific language describing how the reporting form is initiated was added to the first step of each of the three processes; 3) the archiving office for all the non-academic grievances will be the Office of Student Affairs; 4) the process for a sexual harassment complaint included an appeal to the VPAA if the student is not satisfied with the response of the previous recipient of the appeal. That step has been removed from the policy/process since this policy is for non-academic issues. The Non-Academic Issues Grievance policy will be included in the Undergraduate and Graduate catalogs.

Motion: Moved by Dr. Keppler to approve the revised Non-Academic Issues Grievance policy for a first reading and seconded by Mr. Rutledge. The motion was approved.

Discussion

Cabinet Art Award Dr. Roberts

Dr. Roberts reminded Cabinet members of the March 8 deadline for donating to the Cabinet Art Award. The Cabinet award is a \$500 cash award that goes to the student with the second-best piece in the student art show. The art work selected for the Cabinet 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. If a Cabinet member wants to donate towards the Cabinet award, please provide the donation to Ms. Claire Cole or use the link provided by Ms. Cole.

H. L. Nowell Student Union Space Review..... Dr. Keppler

Dr. Keppler created a task force to determine the best uses for the H. L. Nowell Student Union, post COVID-19. The task force consists of Ms. Julie Jackson, Dr. Christy Riddle, Ms. Rochelle Owsley, Mr. Word, Ms. Wallace, Ms. Brittany Davis, a representative from the bookstore, and a representative from Sodexo. The task force is charged with finding the best way the building can serve more students. Dr. Keppler hopes to fill the lounge areas with additional furniture for Fall 2021 and designate certain lounge spaces for different activities. Currently, there are four non-utilized spaces within the Student Union the task force will make recommendations about usage.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget, and he stated that all expenses and revenues are on target with his original projections. Mr. Rutledge hopes to provide Cabinet members with a review of the February Cash Flow report at the next Cabinet meeting.

FY22 Budget Plans Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge announced he will present the Phase I and Phase II priority listings at the next Cabinet meeting. The Executive Committee reviewed and compiled two separate priority lists: one-time expenditures and reoccurring expenditures. A portion of the unobligated Higher Education Emergency Relief funds will be used to cover one-time expenditures. Additional priority items will be funded if the university receives “Repair and Renovation” funds from the State. Cabinet members will also review scholarships at the next meeting.

Legislative UpdateMr. Munroe

Mr. Munroe provided Cabinet members with an update on the 2021 Legislative session. Last week was the deadline for original floor action on appropriation and revenue bills. Tuesday is the deadline for committees to report bills that originated in the opposite chamber. Mr. Munroe shared a few bills of interest to the university: HB 609 - to provide that the procurement of aircraft, aircraft maintenance, parts, equipment and services by state institutions of higher learning which offer undergraduate and graduate degree programs in aviation shall be exempt from the purchasing law; SB 2904 – State appropriations to Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning for support of the eight public universities for FY2022; and, SB 2971 – issuance of State General Obligation Bonds for the purpose of capital improvements for State Institutions of Higher Learning and community and junior colleges. Mr. Munroe has scheduled calls with Senator Josh Harkins and Senator John Polk this week for President LaForge to discuss Delta State’s needs for appropriations and bond funds. Mr. Munroe and President LaForge visited with Senator John Polk last week to discuss appropriations and bonds for Delta State. Mr. Munroe has scheduled a call for President LaForge with Senator Rita Parks for next week.

Additional information

- Mr. Munroe informed Cabinet members of the new Alumni Board member orientation that occurred last week. He stated the orientation went very well, and the Alumni Affairs staff are doing an incredible job.
- Mr. Munroe announced the date of Pig Pickin' will be announced today.
- Dr. Keppler reminded Cabinet members Statesmen Kickback event takes place on Saturday, and additional Black History Month events occur this week.
- Mr. Rutledge announced the Cleveland School District Board of Directors are meeting soon to discuss the 2021-22 calendar. The proposed calendar recommends a start date after Labor Day, with the end of their school year occurring in June. If any Cabinet members have concerns, please forward them to Mr. Rutledge.
- The Student Senate has finalized a few bills, and Mr. Word is going to present them to Dr. Keppler this week for his signature.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Statesmen Kickback Admissions event, March 6, 2:00-8:00 p.m., Statesmen Park
- Emerald Awards of Excellence, March 18, 6:30 p.m., BPAC
- State of the Student Union Address, March 23, 7:00 p.m., BPAC
- Winning the Race Conference, March 29-30, Virtual

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, March 8 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – COVID-19 Response Update and Plans (President LaForge) and Budget Requests for FY22 (Mr. Rutledge)

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:12 p.m.