

# DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

## PRESIDENT'S CABINET

### *Minutes*

---

**Meeting date: March 29, 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), Dr. Jonathan Westfall (via Zoom), Mr. Jeff Slagell (via Zoom), and Mr. Richard Word (via Zoom) (recorder – Ms. Claire Cole)

**Members not in attendance:** None

**Guests:** Dr. Vicki Bingham, Incoming Representative, Academic Council  
Ms. Robin Douglas, COVID-19 Response Coordinator  
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 29, 2021. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

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

On motion by Mr. Word and seconded by Dr. McAdams, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on March 22, 2021.

#### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. The Student Government Association hosted the State of the Student Union Address last week, and the candidates for president and vice president for the 2021-22 academic year addressed the student body. The annual F. E. Woodall Conference was held last week, and President LaForge provided welcome remarks. The Institutional Executive Officers had an emergency call to discuss proposed gun legislation. The Alumni Association Board met and had a reception afterwards at the President's new home. The Winning the Race Conference began on Sunday and continues through Tuesday.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The women's soccer team competed against and tied Lee University in the Gulf South Conference tournament. They compete against University of Louisiana at Monroe here on Thursday. The men's and women's tennis teams lost to University of West Florida over the weekend, and the women's team won against the University of West Georgia. Both teams compete against Lee University and Shorter University this weekend. The softball team won two of three games against Christian Brothers University over the weekend, and they compete tomorrow against University of Arkansas at Monticello. The baseball team won two games against Christian Brothers University over the weekend, as well. Both teams will host Valdosta State University this weekend. Mr. Kinnison announced two student-athletes have been recognized for their achievements

this season. Ms. Zyaire Ewing was named to the Honorable Mention All-America team by the Women’s Basketball Coaches Association, and Mr. Maalik Cartwright garnered Second Team National Association of Basketball Coaches Division II All District team honors. The “Hey Coach Radio Show” broadcasts tonight from Lost Pizza on 107.5 FM.

- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. Facilities Management is working with the architects and engineers today on a punch list for the Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project. The HVAC systems project in the Mayers Aquatics Center will be complete by the end of the week, and the substantial complete notice should be received this week. The campus-wide elevator project pre-construction meeting is this week, and Mr. Rutledge will provide information to building managers following the meeting. The residence halls roofing project received verification and approvals last week, and two residence halls repair and renovation projects need final approvals from IHL before proceeding. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members the bonds approved for FY21 have not been sold and may not sell until June or July, which will delay some campus projects.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. He will film another segment of his Statesmen Insider this week regarding the Finance Lab in the College of Business and Aviation. The university will be closed on Friday for the Good Friday holiday.

**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. 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 an update on current active cases at all eight universities. 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 six students in Hill Apartments, and there are no students in the off-campus location. Currently, the university has one hot spot. The Bolivar County drive-through COVID-19 vaccine distribution site has provided more than 1,000 vaccinations, and they began providing the Pfizer vaccine last week for first doses. Ms. Douglas continues to work with Dr. Keppler and Mr. Munroe on a promotional campaign geared towards Delta State students getting vaccinated prior to the end of the semester. The first email in the campaign was sent to students last week. The Student Health Center is open to all employees and students for basic health services Monday through Friday; however, the nurse practitioner is not on site on Tuesdays and Fridays due to serving the Bolivar County vaccine distribution site. 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. Michael Lamb will be the “COVID-19 Hero of the Week” for March 29 – April 2. Mr. Kinnison announced all football related activities were shut down last week after seven student-athletes on the football team tested positive for COVID-19. The remainder of the football team will be tested today. The Athletics Department is encouraging all student-athletes to utilize the Bolivar County vaccination site to get vaccinated before the end of the semester. Dr. Keppler informed Cabinet members approximately 1,300 to 1,400 applications have been submitted by students for the federal Coronavirus Responses and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act. The application deadline for students was extended to April 1. The funds allocation began last week. Any funds remaining after the April 1 deadline will be made available to students enrolled in the Summer or Fall. Mr. Rutledge provided an update on how the Higher Education Emergency Relief grant funds will be spent. The Executive Committee approved the remaining \$95,000 to be used for FY22 athletic scholarships.

**BUSINESS**

**Action**

**COVID-19 Protocols - revised ..... Dr. Keppler**

In moving forward towards normalcy in operations and programming, President LaForge appointed Dr. Keppler as the chair of a task force to consider all aspects of the university’s COVID-19 protocols and bring forth a recommendation to Cabinet on how best to return to normal operations and when to do so. Dr. Keppler provided an overview of the recommended revisions to the COVID-19 protocols suggested by the COVID-19 “Return to Normal Operations” Taskforce and approved by the Executive Committee.

Protocols to be established after May 3, 2021:

- The daily symptom checker and temperature check will be eliminated.
- Campus services (fitness center, pool, etc.) will be open to outside entities, with minor concessions.
- Campus facilities/venues will be open for outside entity use; however, the outside entity must comply with all COVID-19 protocols.
- The Young-Mauldin Cafeteria will be open to the public, with minor concessions.
- The Young-Mauldin Cafeteria can increase capacity to 75%. Masks are to be worn when not eating.
- Masks will continue to be worn indoors, in public spaces, and in the presence of others.
- Delta State will allow summer residential camps.

Protocols effective immediately:

- Arena capacity will be 50%. Masks are required, and people must social distance unless in a family unit.
- The COVID-19 Response Coordinator will provide guidelines to organizers of on-campus and off-campus events, but she will no longer “approve/monitor” events.
- The Student Health Center is open for all faculty, staff, and students for basic health services.
- Domestic travel will be allowed, beginning July 1, 2021.

The COVID-19 Return to Normal Operations Taskforce will review international travel for business in June or July, and they will meet again in mid-May to consider the revision/elimination of additional protocols for the Fall semester.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. Keppler to approve the revised COVID-19 protocols and seconded by Chief Johns. The motion was approved.

**Faculty Rights and Responsibilities policy (revised – first reading) .....Dr. McAdams**

On the recommendation of the Academic Council, Dr. McAdams brought to Cabinet the revised Faculty Rights and Responsibilities policy for a first reading. The revisions to this policy help manage the transition from a majority of virtual instruction to face-to-face instruction. With the permission of their department or division chair, faculty members can provide a balance of virtual and face-to-face advising appointments for registration, and they may schedule up to 50% of their office hours virtually.

**Motion:** Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the revised Faculty Rights and Responsibilities policy for a first reading and seconded by Dr. Westfall. The motion was approved.

**2021-2022 Holiday Schedule ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge presented to Cabinet Members the 2021-22 Holiday Schedule prepared by the Office of Human Resources. The proposed holiday schedule is compliant with IHL’s policy of 15 paid holidays. The holidays include: Independence Day, Labor Day, two days for Thanksgiving, eight days for winter holidays, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a spring holiday, and Memorial Day.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the 2021-2022 Holiday Schedule and seconded by Chief Johns. The motion was approved.

**Proposed Tuition Rates for FY22 ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the proposed tuition rates for FY22. Delta State is requesting a 3% increase in tuition. He stated all IHL institutions except one are requesting a tuition increase for FY22. The increases range from 3% to 5%. With the 3% increase, Delta State students will pay \$8,190 per year. If tuition remains flat, the university will receive approximately \$800,000 in additional tuition revenue.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the 3% tuition increase for FY22 and seconded by Mr. Word. The motion was approved.

**FY22 Budget Phase I: Facilities ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the recommended priorities for Phase I: Facilities for FY22. Priorities for Phase I are broken down into four funding categories: university funds, Entergy grant funds, Repair and Renovation funds, and bond funds. The priorities to be funded by university funds do not qualify for Repair and Renovation or bond funds, and the university does not have the means to fund the priorities at this time. As funds in each category become available, priorities will be funded accordingly.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the Budget Phase I: Facilities priorities for FY22 and seconded by Dr. McAdams. The motion was approved.

**FY22 Budget Phase II: New and Expanded ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the recommended priorities for Phase II: New and Expanded for FY22. Priorities for Phase II are broken down into recurring expenses and one-time expenses. The recurring expenses to be added to the university budget going forward are: Scholarship Coordinator position; scholarship software annual fees; Coordinator of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion salary; Strength and Conditioning staff and program; and, student health services. One-time expense priorities for FY22 will be funded with Higher Education Emergency Relief funds. Those priorities are: classroom computers; inflationary increases for the Roberts-LaForge Library resources; National Pan-Hellenic Council meeting areas; two travel vans; Degree Works program; training for Degree Works program; computer and technology upgrade for the Dorgan Center study rooms; and athletic scholarships. If the university receives an increase in E&G funds or COVID-19 relief funds, the priority list will be revisited.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the Budget Phase II: New and Expanded priorities for FY22 and seconded by Mr. Munroe. The motion was approved.

**FY22 Budget: Scholarships ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge presented a review of the \$4,795,817 recommended for the scholarship budget for FY21. The scholarship budget is split into three categories: admissions - \$2,649,727; athletics - \$1,766,425; and, academics - \$379,665. For FY21, \$3,842,049 was expended for scholarships. In creating the FY22

scholarship budget, Mr. Rutledge began with \$3,842,049, the expended scholarships for FY21, and added \$130,000 for the 3% increase in tuition. He deducted \$366,594 for scholarships that would roll off the budget in FY21, and he added \$831,987 for additional new students. The recommended final scholarship budget for FY22 is \$4,437,442.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to approve the FY22 scholarship budget and seconded by Mr. Munroe. The motion was approved.

**Discussion**

**FY22 Budget Plans ..... Mr. Rutledge**

The FY22 budget proposal suggested by the Executive Committee totals \$44,057,349 in revenue, which includes a decrease of \$4,864,141 from the FY21 budget in the following areas: CARES funding, Delta State University Foundation contributions, scholarship funds, tuition revenue (based on FY21 actual numbers), and projected loss of other revenues (sales, services, commissions, etc.). The budget proposal plans for flat funding from State appropriations; \$810,000 in additional revenue from the 3% tuition increase; and, the use of \$1,000,000 from the Higher Education Emergency Relief funds to cover lost revenue. The proposed FY22 budget has several reductions in expenses from FY21: insurance costs, removal of the cash contingency; computer equipment; technology equipment; vehicle replacements; payments to the Department of Education; and, Admissions scholarships. The budget reductions total \$3,712,816. Additional expenses for FY22 include: scholarship budget adjustment for the tuition increase; Coordinator of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion salary; new Scholarship Coordinator salary; scholarship software; Student Health Services budget; Department of Athletics Strength and Conditioning staff; and, additional monies for the contingency fund. The additional expenses for FY22 total \$658,675. The university budget proposal for FY22 is \$44,057,349. Mr. Rutledge reminded Cabinet members the budget proposal could change based on Board approval of the tuition increase request, as well as actions by the State Legislature regarding our appropriations. The budget proposal will be voted on by Cabinet members at a later date.

**VPSA Search Committee Update ..... Mr. Kinnison**

Mr. Kinnison provided Cabinet members with an update on the Vice President for Student Affairs search. The search committee reviewed 58 applications, and they interviewed seven applicants. The final four applicants will visit the university for in-person interviews and to meet with various constituent groups. The first two applicants will be on campus Wednesday and Thursday of this week, and the final two will be on campus Monday, April 5 and Tuesday, April 6.

**Orientation 2021 Steering Committee Recommendations ..... Dr. Keppler**

Dr. Keppler shared with Cabinet members the recommendations made by the Summer Orientation Steering Committee. Orientation 2021 will consist of five dates: June 8, June 15, June 22, June 29, and July 27. June 8, June 22, and June 29 will be held in person, and June 15 will be held virtually. The final date, July 27, will be in-person and will be made available virtually for those not attending in-person. Following an opening session, students and parents will be separated into different tracks. Students will end their day with registration and advisement, and parents will finish their day with conversations with Alumni Affairs, Athletics, and the parents' association. The steering committee will meet again in April to continue planning Orientation 2021.

**Summer work schedule ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge announced an adjustment was made to the official summer work schedule. The summer

work schedule will start on Monday, May 3 and end on Thursday, August 5, instead of Thursday, August 12, to allow for the Convocation luncheon to be held on Friday, August 13, if COVID-19 protocols allow.

**FY21 Budget Update ..... Mr. Rutledge**

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget. Expenditures for March are below the target. He will share the budget-to- actual report to Cabinet next week for review.

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

Mr. Munroe provided Cabinet members with an update on the 2021 Legislative session. The bond bill and appropriations bill were reviewed in each chamber, and they were received by their original committee for review. Mr. Munroe announced Delta State’s four-line items might be adjusted, but the university does not have a definitive answer at this time.

**Additional information**

- None

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- Winning the Race Conference, March 29-30, Virtual
- Faculty and Staff Forum, April 14, 3:00 p.m., Virtual
- Research Showcase, April 14, 6:00 p.m., Virtual
- Student Hall of Fame Ceremony, April 29, BPAC
- Commencement, April 30, Sillers Coliseum

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, April 5 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – COVID-19 Response Update and Plans (President LaForge)

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 3:28 p.m.