

**DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**PRESIDENT'S CABINET**  
*Minutes*

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**Meeting date: November 1, 2016**

**Members in attendance:** President William LaForge, Dr. Vernell Bennett, Mr. Keith Fulcher, Dr. Leslie Griffin, Dr. Chris Jurgenson, Mr. Ronnie Mayers, Dr. Charles McAdams, Ms. Allie Rose Parker, Dr. Michelle Roberts, Ms. Christie Rocconi, and Mr. Jamie Rutledge (Ms. Claire Cole – recorder)

**Members not in attendance:** None

**Guests:** Mr. Todd Cooley, Head Coach, Football  
Mr. Tyler Sullivan, student-athlete, William V. Campbell Trophy finalist

**Call to Order:** A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the President's Conference Room on November 1, 2016. The meeting convened at 2:00 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

On motion by Dr. Jurgenson, seconded by Ms. Parker, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on October 17, 2016.

**GENERAL OVERVIEW**

- President LaForge announced that today marks the three-year anniversary of his inauguration as President of Delta State.
- President LaForge welcomed Mr. Todd Cooley and Mr. Tyler Sullivan to Cabinet. President LaForge announced that Mr. Sullivan was selected as one of twelve finalists for the prestigious William V. Campbell Trophy. Mr. Cooley stated Mr. Sullivan is the definition of the ideal student-athlete. Mr. Sullivan has excelled on the field and in the classroom, and is very deserving of this recognition. Mr. Cooley said he is very proud of Mr. Sullivan and believes his accomplishments speak volumes of the education and training he received at Delta State. Mr. Mayers congratulated Mr. Sullivan on this award, and also praised Mr. Cooley for his work in ensuring players are focused on all aspects of the well-rounded student-athlete: academics, athletics, and community service.
- President LaForge hosted lunch for a group of Cleveland leaders a few weeks ago. He meets with this group on occasion to promote Delta State's and Cleveland's town-gown relationship.
- President LaForge attended the Institutional Executive Officers and Institutions of Higher Learning Board meetings earlier in October. During the IEO meeting, several important topics were discussed. The Student Government Association presidents brought a few requests to the IEO meeting, such as conservation and textbook costs. Commissioner Boyce informed the university presidents that he believes the "Weapons on Campus" policy will be discussed during the next legislative session. The non-resident tuition waiver has benefitted all public universities, but this is being questioned by some legislators who feel the public universities are subsidizing out of state students. However, without the waiver, most of the students would not have chosen Mississippi for their college education. IHL is going

to begin promoting the Complete-2-Compete program. Universities will reach out to former students who are only a few hours shy of graduating with a college degree and urge them to consider completing their degree.

- President LaForge met with Mr. Neal Holcomb and Dr. Robert Elliott to discuss the possibility of moving a portion of Dr. Elliott's research to Delta State from Baton Rouge. Also, the focus of the Elliott Symposium was discussed. The focus of the symposium will move towards a student-centered approach with sessions and subjects that are understandable and meaningful to them.
- President LaForge attended the BPAC performance of Mavis Staples and the Blind Boys of Alabama. Prior to the performance, President LaForge extended an invitation to Ms. Staples to receive an honorary degree from Delta State University, pending IHL approval, at our December or May commencement ceremonies. She was very excited and accepted the offer.
- President LaForge met with Ms. Emily Havens and Mayor Billy Nowell regarding diversity initiatives as it relates to GRAMMY Museum® Mississippi. They discussed ways to make sure all community members feel welcome and included.
- Dr. McAdams hosted an event to honor Mr. Kim Rushing and Mr. Talbot Brooks on the publishing of their books. President LaForge stated it was a great celebration honoring our colleagues.
- President LaForge attended the NCAA Division II Presidents' Council meeting last week in Indianapolis. During the meeting, NCAA officials were very complimentary of our reaffirming our commitment to diversity.
- The Executive Committee hosted Ms. Lina Caoping, Delta State's international relations contact in China, and her staff for dinner last night. They discussed potential program areas that Chinese students might be interested in pursuing at Delta State.
- President LaForge and Mr. Rutledge met with the Facilities Management staff today to discuss a few topics. President LaForge thanked them for the great work they do and reminded them of their important role in Delta State's mission. He asked the staff to work with their new director to create an atmosphere of honesty and integrity. Also, President LaForge announced he will work a half-day with Facilities Management staff in the near future to get a better understanding of what their jobs entail.
- Mr. Mayers gave an update on Athletics. The football team lost on Saturday to the University of North Alabama. Women's soccer won their last game and men's soccer came up short in their last game. The coaching staff is recruiting hard for the next class of soccer recruits. The "Trunk or Treat" event on Monday had more than 1,000 participants, and Mr. Mayers gave away over 500 tickets for the first home basketball game. The basketball teams will play in an exhibition game at Mississippi State University on Friday.
- President LaForge asked Dr. Bennett to give an update on Student Affairs' First Halloween Boo Bash. She stated a couple hundred students attended, and it was a diverse group.
- President LaForge thanked Mr. Rutledge for filling in for him as host at the President's football reception on Saturday and at Cannon Motors Ribbon Cutting for their new facility.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the upcoming week's activities. On Wednesday, President LaForge will travel to Tate and Desoto Counties for recruiting and donor visits. The Cleveland Music Foundation Board meeting will be held on Thursday. The Levitt AMP Music Series concert is Thursday evening and features Black Water Trio.
- President LaForge shared a note thanks and gratitude from Mr. Judson Thigpen, Director of the Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce, for Delta State's assistance with their Annual Banquet and with Octoberfest.
- President LaForge spoke with former DSU student, Mr. Leon Yu, who received a perfect score on the SAT and was a Delta State student for a year. He asked Mr. Yu about his experience at Delta State. Mr. Yu said he had a good experience but chose to return home to California to explore other options.

**CABINET TOPIC**

**Mississippi Flag..... President LaForge**

President LaForge announced this would be the concluding discussion regarding the Mississippi flag. Cabinet Members said the perception of the flag has changed over time, leading to the fact that it is now considered divisive. The flag is viewed by many as a barrier to progress and is disrespectful to many of Delta State’s constituencies. President LaForge thanked Cabinet Members for being thoughtful and deliberate about the process, but the time has come for Delta State to make a decision that is best for the university. President LaForge expressed he is in favor of taking down the flag because it is the right thing to do. He believes the stars and bars are polarizing, and that Delta State’s visioning principles are at odds with what the Mississippi flag has come to stand for. The university has to rally together to advocate for a flag that unifies the state. If the flag is taken down, the university will continue to honor the state by inspiring students to be a part of a new Mississippi.

**BUSINESS**

**Action**

**Mississippi Flag..... President LaForge**

President LaForge asked Cabinet Members to present a motion regarding their wishes either to continue flying the Mississippi Flag or to take it down.

**Motion:** Moved by Mr. Rutledge to take down the Mississippi flag and place it in the Archives and seconded by Dr. Bennett. **The motion was approved.**

**Motion:** Moved by Ms. Rocconi to purchase a bicentennial banner from Mississippi Economic Council and begin flying the banner two weeks after the Mississippi flag is taken down and seconded by Dr. McAdams. **The motion was approved.**

**Discussion**

**IHL’s Financial Health Policy..... President LaForge**

President LaForge shared with Cabinet Members the press release from IHL regarding Jackson State University’s financial health. The figures in the article are a picture of what Delta State went through a few years ago, but this is on a larger scale. In order to keep this situation from happening to other universities, financial health will become a part of the IEO’s annual performance evaluation conducted by Commissioner Boyce. President LaForge asked Mr. Rutledge to give an update on Delta State’s cash balance. Mr. Rutledge stated that through Delta State’s due diligence to bettering our financial health the last couple of years, Delta State now has 71 days of cash and has increased its cash balance from \$680,000 in 2010 to \$4.7 million in 2016.

**Mission IT Project..... President LaForge**

President LaForge gave an update on the Mission IT project that was discussed during the recent IEO meeting. In order for both the regional universities and research universities to have better access to IT capabilities, a one-time appropriation of \$4.5 million is needed to upgrade the technology infrastructure in Jackson. After the upgrades occur, Delta State will pay approximately \$8,000 per month for our services. Due to the state’s contract negotiations with vendors, this state appropriation will likely not occur until the 2018 legislative session.

**Police Department Changes .....Dr. Bennett**

Dr. Bennett informed Cabinet Members that Chief Lynn Buford will retire effective January 16, 2017. She has received a recommendation for a candidate for an interim Chief of Police, and hopes to fill the Chief of Police position early in the new year.

**Capital Campaign Update .....Mr. Fulcher**

Mr. Fulcher stated Phase One of the Foundation’s Capital Campaign is to assess the readiness of the university and the Foundation. The consultants of Alexander Haas have begun the internal readiness assessment process by reading documents pertaining to the university and the Foundation and visiting the campus to perform internal assessment interviews. They interviewed Delta State employees, Alumni Association Board members, and Foundation Board members. Following their interviews, the consultants will analyze Delta State’s Banner database capability and its utilization. Mr. Fulcher is scheduled to speak with the consultants on Thursday to learn what steps to take next. The next phase is to develop a case statement. Mr. Fulcher stated the ultimate goal is to finish all six phases by April 2017 in order to officially start the campaign. Mr. Fulcher feels very good about the consultants and their ability to help us reach our goals.

**Other Discussion**

- Dr. Bennett stated the Homecoming Task Force met and formalized a plan for next year. Homecoming will be managed by a committee comprised of all areas involved with Homecoming. The committee will meet regularly to discuss progress and develop a master calendar of events, which will be released in August so guests can make travel arrangements earlier. The Committee will be chaired by Dr. Bennett.
- Mr. Fulcher gave an update on the Annual Fund. He stated \$124,000 is needed to reach their goal.
- President LaForge asked Cabinet Members to help in gathering a large crowd for the Colloquia lecture next week.
- Dr. Bennett announced the “Carols for Cleveland” event will occur on December 1 at 7:00 pm. Members of the Delta State family and Cleveland community will perform Christmas music.
- Dr. McAdams announced that Library Dean Jeff Slagell received the 2016 Outstanding Achievement Award from the Mississippi Library Association. Also, Ms. Robin Boyles is resigning at the end of November to take a new job. Dr. Moon will begin the search for a new Director of Institutional Grants.
- President LaForge announced the next two Cabinet meetings will be held on Tuesdays.

**INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:**

- Colloquia Lecture Series, Congressman Bennie Thompson, November 9, 6:00 pm, Jobe Auditorium
- Parsons Dance Company, BPAC, November 10, 7:30 pm
- Thanksgiving Holidays, November 24-25
- Elf the Musical, BPAC, December 2, 8:00 pm
- Fall Commencement, Graduate students, BPAC, December 10, 10:00 am
- Fall Commencement, Undergraduate students, BPAC, December 10, 2:00 pm

**NEXT MEETING:**

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Tuesday, November 8 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.