

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: October 12, 2020

Members in attendance: President William LaForge (via Zoom), Dr. Vernell Bennett-Fairs (via Zoom), Chief Jeffrey Johns (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: Mr. Mike Kinnison

Guest: Ms. Brittany Davis-Green, Director of Media Relations, Communications and Marketing
Ms. Robin Douglas, COVID-19 Response Coordinator
Mr. James Forte, Director, Alumni Relations

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom video conference on October 12, 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 Chief Johns, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on October 5, 2020.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- Mr. Munroe introduced the new Director of Media Relations Brittany Davis-Green. Ms. Davis-Green is a two-time graduate of Delta State and is excited to reconnect with the campus through this position.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from the last week. President LaForge continued his internal relations efforts with departmental visits, via virtual format, with Facilities Management, Student Life, and the Radio Station. President LaForge provided welcome remarks for a virtual program hosted by the College of Education and Human Sciences where Mr. Dustin Stensland detailed his journey paddling the entire 2,320 miles of the Mississippi River in a birch bark canoe. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors held their monthly meeting and presented the Chamber's new Strategic Plan. President LaForge provided a campus update to the Cleveland Board of Aldermen at their monthly meeting. President LaForge began making phone calls to the 2020 Alumni Service Award winners to congratulate them on their achievement. President LaForge and Mr. Rutledge participated in a conference call about the golf course feasibility study. Mr. Rutledge stated the feasibility study is set to begin soon, and the Delta State Foundation will hold the escrow funds from the developer to cover the cost of the study. Upon completion of the feasibility study, President LaForge will present the findings to the IHL Board of Trustees.
- In the absence of Mr. Kinnison, President LaForge gave an update on Athletics. The golf team hosts the

Derrall Foreman Invitational today and tomorrow at the Cleveland Country Club. The cross-country team will compete in their third and final meet on Saturday prior to their conference championship at the end of the month. The football team will begin practice on Friday. The women's swimming and diving team hosts Tulane on Saturday.

- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The Mayers Aquatics Center HVAC project will receive the Dectron unit for installation the first of December. After installation, the second Dectron unit will be removed for repairs. The elevator project was advertised last week, and bids will be accepted on October 30. Mr. Rutledge participated in a conference call today with the Bureau of Buildings staff regarding Delta State's roofing project for residence halls. The project will be advertised next week, and the project will commence in mid-November. Mr. Rutledge will host a meeting tomorrow to discuss preliminary plans for the residence hall renovation project. The architects for the Robert E. Smith School of Nursing expansion project are working on their preliminary plans, and Mr. Rutledge hopes to provide an update to Cabinet members within the next month.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge participated in the weekly COVID-19 update conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and the other Institutional Executive Officers (IEO) this morning. On Tuesday, Dr. Temika Simmons will provide President LaForge with an update on plans for the Winning the Race Conference. President LaForge will continue his internal relations efforts with virtual departmental visits with HPER, Career Services, and Speech and Hearing Sciences. President LaForge will speak with staff at IHL on Wednesday regarding the Education Achievement Council's adoption of a state educational attainment goal. The IHL Board of Trustees meet on Thursday, and Commissioner Rankins will provide a report to the Board of Trustees outlining each institution's mix of instruction delivery. Alumni Affairs will begin the filming of the Alumni Awards Gala this Friday, and the Office of Admissions will film their DSU Spotlight Day on Friday, as well. On Saturday President, LaForge will participate in a drive-by birthday celebration for Delta State alumna Ms. Lucy Seaberry.

CABINET TOPIC

COVID-19 Plans for Fall 2020President LaForge

President LaForge led Cabinet members in a discussion of the university's COVID-19 plans for Fall 2020. As mentioned earlier, President LaForge participated in a conference call with Commissioner Al Rankins and all IEOs this morning to discuss COVID-19 related issues. He shared with Cabinet members the update on current 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 six students are in Hill Apartments, and no students are in the off-campus location. The university has no current hotspots. The Student Health Center will no longer open on Saturdays due to the lack of usage. Ms. Douglas informed Cabinet members that employees and students are required to wear masks outdoors only when social distancing is not possible.

Ms. Douglas is still working with Bolivar Medical Center on the on-campus COVID-19 testing process and hopes to get more clarification on the subject. Ms. Douglas shared Delta State's Outbreak Plan with the Executive Committee, Dr. Steven Clark, and Dr. Thomas Dobbs last week. The Executive Committee and Dr. Dobbs raised some questions and so more edits will be made. The university has not yet determined how much surveillance testing it will administer, if any, in the Spring 2021 semester. The Student Health Center will provide flu shots to employees today and to students on Tuesday. The Student Health Center is

accepting appointments for Wednesday morning. Ms. Douglas met with the swimming and diving coach, Mr. Dan'l Murray, to discuss their preparations and plans for the upcoming swim meet on Saturday. She stated the plan is in great shape, but the Mayers Aquatics Center is in need of plexiglass partitions to put between time keepers and officials. Ms. Douglas recommended allowing the Mayers Aquatics Center to host 25% of its capacity for spectators. Cabinet members agreed with this recommendation. In an effort to recognize employees going above and beyond the call of duty with regards to COVID-19, Ms. Douglas created the "COVID-19 Hero of the Week" recognition. This week's selection is Strength and Conditioning staff: Mr. Tyler Moore, Mr. Gralyn Jones, Mr. Adam Lang, Mr. Tommie Moore, and Mr. Kevin Rodriguez. Dr. Bennett-Fairs worked with IHL legal counsel Mr. Jay Woods on the COVID-19 student protocols for off campus events. Mr. Woods reviewed our protocols and our student handbook and stated the university can enforce our protocols off campus; however, he did recommend utilizing the City of Cleveland Police Department for any major offenses. Dr. McAdams provided insight into the IHL Safe Start Task Force conference call he and Dr. Roberts participated in last week. He shared the similarities between all universities and their efforts in combating COVID-19 this Fall and in the Spring. There was discussion about the complaints IHL has received regarding the perceived quality of distance learning through online courses this Fall. The larger universities are testing more students due to availability of tests and financial resources. Mr. Rutledge provided Cabinet members with an update on CARES Act funds. Mr. Rutledge provided recommendations to Cabinet members on how best to spend the remaining State CARES Act fund including: video editing software, additional sanitizing supplies and personal protective equipment, TRACSYSTEM print software, temporary janitorial staff, additional Police Office staff, distance education technology support and training, additional meals for student-athletes, additional space for quarantine and isolation, student-athlete testing, and cameras to monitor the entrances of buildings.

BUSINESS

Action

None

Discussion

Campus Forums Dr. Roberts

Dr. Roberts provided Cabinet members an overview of the upcoming Campus Forums, which will be held via Zoom. The forum for students will be held on Wednesday, October 28 at 3:00 p.m., and the forum for employees will be held on Thursday, October 29 at 3:00 p.m. Topics for the campus forums include: a COVID-19 overview; the revised academic calendar for Spring 2021; Fall 2020 enrollment overview; budget overview; campus projects; new initiatives; and, campus events. Questions can be submitted to constituency group leaders prior to the forum or asked during the event. Incentives will be put in place to garner an audience for the student forum. Mr. Word will work with the President's Office staff on creating the incentives. Advertising for the forums begins this week.

Homecoming 2020 Mr. Munroe

Mr. Munroe invited Director of Alumni Affairs James Forte to Cabinet to discuss the virtual Homecoming 2020 schedule. Mr. Forte shared with Cabinet members Homecoming week will begin on Sunday, November 8 and conclude on Saturday, November 14. Alumni can participate in a Virtual 5K Challenge, social media trivia, and virtual campus tours throughout the week. On Monday, November 9, Mr. Chris Smith, James Beard Award-winning author of *The Whole Okra: A Seed to Stem Celebration*, will lead a discussion about okra. Bolivar County Alumni can attend DSU Trivia at Hey Joe's on Wednesday,

November 11. The Alumni Awards Gala and Golden Circle Celebration will be pre-recorded and released on all Delta State Alumni social media platforms on Friday, November 13.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members he will present the September cash flow report and Fall 2020 tuition and scholarship analyses at the next Cabinet meeting. He reminded Cabinet members the budgeted contingencies for FY21 are to cover the deficits in tuition and fees revenue. The contingencies do not cover the deficit the university is experiencing in the housing budget. The closing of Blansett Hall and Brumby-Castle Hall beginning January 1 will save the university 70% on utilities. Also, six custodial positions will either be relocated or furloughed to help balance the housing budget.

Additional information

- President LaForge announced the Colloquia lecture featuring Mr. Jim Morhard will be held on Tuesday, October 27. A limited group can view the lecture live in Jobe Auditorium, and the event will also be livestreamed.
- Dr. Bennett-Fairs announced Campus Counseling and Title IX hosted a virtual Sexual Assault presentation last week, and 298 people participated. The event was led by Our House, Inc. in Greenville, MS.
- Faculty Senate meets this week, and Mr. Rutledge will provide a budget update and review to the senators.
- Mr. Rutledge announced he is working to hire a new Comptroller and to reorganize the department.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Statesmen Emerald Awards of Excellence, October 21, 7:00 p.m., BPAC
- Okra Out Front, October 22, 6:00 p.m.
- Foundation Board of Directors meeting, October 23

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, October 19 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – COVID-19 Plans for Fall 2020 and a report from the Coordinator of Diversity and Inclusion

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 2:54 p.m.