

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: September 28, 2020

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

Guest: Mr. Kelvin Davis, Director, Student Business Services
Ms. Robin Douglas, COVID-19 Response Coordinator

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held via Zoom video conference on September 28, 2020. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. with President LaForge presiding.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Dr. Westfall and seconded by Mr. Word, all Cabinet Members present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on September 21, 2020.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- 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 Child Development Center and Tennis. Dr. Bennett-Fairs reported that the "Coping with COVID" event hosted by the Counseling Center was cancelled last week due to lack of participation. The GSC Board of Directors met last week, and President LaForge reported that plans for Spring sports and competition are still in progress. The Office of Student Affairs, the Office of Student Life, and the Quality Enhancement Plan hosted a screening of the film "John Lewis: Good Trouble." Prior to the screening, a panel discussion with President LaForge, Executive Director of Mississippi Votes Arieka Bennett, The Rosedale Company CEO Jack Coleman, Representative Abe Hudson, and Mr. Word took place. Dr. Bennett-Fairs stated the event was well attended; however, the venue changed at the last minute due to weather, and the new venue didn't allow for as many students to view the event in person. President LaForge had a meeting with Dr. Temika Simmons regarding closing out the Local Government Leadership Institute program. The program will close in February, and Dr. Simmons will provide an executive summary of the program to Cabinet members upon its completion. Dr. Simmons provided an update to President LaForge on two other programs she manages: 1) the Delta Proud Fellows, a program funded by the Casey Family Foundation focusing on young African American males, will bring some programming to campus, and 2) the Winning the Race Conference will be held virtually in March.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. The Gulf South Conference Athletic Directors continue to

have their weekly calls, and they are finalizing dates for their upcoming athletic seasons. The cross-country team competed in their second meet last week at the University of North Alabama. The golf team begins competition in October. The Student-Athlete Advisory Council met for the first-time last night. This group is comprised of 28 student-athletes who help bridge communication between administration and the student-athletes.

- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The Mayers Aquatics Center HVAC project is on schedule and awaits the return of a Dectron unit for installation. The elevator project will be advertised Wednesday, and bids will be accepted in two weeks. The Bureau of Buildings approved our roofing and renovation plan for the residence halls project, totaling \$2.5 million. The plans from the architect should be complete in a few weeks. There is \$2.8 million remaining from the 2020 bond issue for renovation of our residence halls, and Mr. Rutledge will add these funds to the \$3 million we received from the 2021 bond issue for residence hall and HVAC renovations. The project will go for bid in January.
- 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. Campus Counseling will host the final session of “Coping with COVID” this afternoon. President LaForge continues his internal relations meetings this week with a virtual departmental visit with Family and Consumer Sciences. The Cleveland-Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce will host a retirement celebration on Tuesday for Executive Director Judson Thigpen.

CABINET TOPIC

COVID-19 Plans for Fall 2020 President 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. Mr. Kinnison provided an update on the surveillance testing they are conducting with student-athletes. The Athletics Department tests 25% of their 13 teams every two weeks. With the cross-country team being engaged in outside competition, their student-athletes are tested each week. In the last two weeks, no tests were positive during the surveillance testing. The next round of testing will be a big week as it will test the football and soccer teams. 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 no students are in Hill Apartments, and no students are in the off-campus location. The COVID-19 Dashboard on the COVID-19 webpage now features the total number of recovered cases. The student protocols subpage on the COVID-19 webpage was updated to include “what to do if” situations including close contact with someone who tested positive, failing the daily symptom checker, and testing positive for COVID-19. Ms. Douglas thanked Graphic Designer Holly Ray and Web Designer Gregory Braggs for their hard work on this project. Ms. Douglas has reached out to building managers to request backup point-of-entry screeners. A backup point-of-entry screener would be a Delta State employee who fills in until the actual point-of-entry screener arrives for their shift. Employees will be trained prior to filling in for a point-of-entry screener, and the training is virtual. Point-of-entry screening occurs on the weekend in the H.L. Nowell Student Union (Union) from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. If someone needs entry into a building that doesn’t have a point-of-entry screener on the weekend, they must be screened in the Union prior to entry. If there is a need for a point-of-entry screener to be in additional buildings during the weekend, arrangements can be made. 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. The first hero is Dr. Edwin Craft. If any Cabinet members would like to nominate a faculty or staff member, nominations are to be sent to Ms. Douglas. A new hero will be chosen each Friday. Ms. Douglas is currently working on two items: 1) surveillance testing for campus, and 2) an outbreak plan in conjunction with the Mississippi State Department of Health’s COVID-19 Isolation, Quarantine and Outbreak Guidelines for Colleges and Universities. Mr. Rutledge invited Student Business Services Director Kelvin Davis to Cabinet to discuss the GET app. Mr. Davis shared with Cabinet members an overview of this all-inclusive app that can transform the way students access card-related services on campus. Students will now be able to use one app to manage their campus account, manage account balances, show an ID card, pay for purchases, place orders for food, and more. Students can download the app from Apple’s App Store or Google Play Store. In a time of extreme caution, this app will help promote social distancing for food purchases. Also, Mr. Davis stated the app will revamp the process of creating Okra Cards during New Student Orientation sessions. The GET app will be available for student use on October 15. Mr. Davis has plans for a large advertising campaign through Communications and Marketing to inform students about the app. Mr. Rutledge informed Cabinet members Phase II of re-opening the Young-Mauldin Cafeteria was well received, and Mr. Davis requested to increase “in-person” dining to 100 patrons. The additional 25 patrons will not interfere with social-distancing guidelines and is below the 50% maximum limit. Cabinet members agreed with the increase. Mr. Rutledge provided Cabinet members with an update on CARES Act funds. He was notified by IHL that the Legislative Budget Office will alter the date by which the State CARES Act funds must be spent from December 30 to November 30. 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, and flu shots for our students. Mr. Rutledge has reviewed items obligated with Federal CARES Act funds to see if State CARES Act funds can be used. If State CARES Act funds can be used to pay for any items, Mr. Rutledge will transfer the items to the State CARES Act funds list. Mr. Rutledge will bring additional recommendations to the Executive Committee on Friday and a report to Cabinet next week.

Ms. Douglas recommended Cabinet members revise the COVID-19 Protocols for Employees and Students to reflect current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and State Department of Health guidelines. The revisions focus on international travel.

- Delta State will follow quarantine guidance from the CDC for students who travel internationally.
- Students returning from international travel are not required by the CDC to quarantine, currently; however, students cannot return to campus until cleared by Student Life.
 - Students must call Student Life within one business day of returning from international travel.
 - Student must be tested for COVID-19 and provide a copy of the test results to Student Life within one business day of receiving the results.

BUSINESS

Action

COVID-19 Protocols for Students - revised President LaForge

Ms. Douglas provided an overview of the recommended revisions to the COVID-19 Protocols for Students. Once Ms. Douglas finishes her edits, she will post the updates to the COVID-19 webpage on the Delta State website, and the revised protocols will be sent to faculty, staff, and students.

Motion: Moved by Dr. Westfall to approve the recommended revisions to the COVID-19 Protocols for

Employees and Students and seconded by Dr. Bennett-Fairs. The motion was approved.

Academic Calendar 2020-21 - revised.....Dr. McAdams

With the approval and recommendation of the Academic Council, Dr. McAdams brought the revised Academic Calendar for 2020-21 to Cabinet for review and approval. Universities in Mississippi and across the southeast are revising their Spring 2021 academic calendars to eliminate Spring Break in order to remove the possibility of students returning to campus after being exposed to COVID-19 from people outside the Delta State community. Academic Council recommends eliminating Spring Break and moving final examinations and Spring Commencement up one week. Spring examinations will be April 26 through 29, and Spring Commencement will be April 30.

Motion: Moved by Dr. McAdams to approve the revised Academic Calendar 2020-21 and seconded by Mr. Slagell. The motion was approved.

Discussion

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget. The scholarship budget was analyzed last week, and Mr. Rutledge saw a decrease in scholarships awarded. He projects the scholarship savings to \$750,000 for the year. Once the savings are realized and confirmed by the Office of Financial Assistance, Mr. Rutledge will use these savings in the place of our cash contingency in order to increase our days of cash at year's end. As mentioned in a previous Cabinet meeting, the housing budget currently has a deficit due to a decrease in the number of students living on campus, and it's estimated that the decrease in housing revenue will be \$1.1 million for this fiscal year. The Executive Committee discussed several options on how to offset the decrease in housing revenue, including: 1) using the \$650,000 housing auxiliary fund revenue realized during FY20; and, 2) consolidating housing units. Blansett Hall and Brumby Castle Hall will be closed for occupancy beginning on January 1, and their residents will be moved to other residence halls. The university will save 70% on utilities and will furlough or relocate six custodial positions for those two residence halls. Plans are to re-open Blansett Hall and Brumby Castle Hall in in Fall 2021. A surplus in revenue from the Sodexo auxiliary fund may be used to further balance the housing auxiliary fund at the end of the fiscal year.

Additional information

- Mr. Munroe announced he is posting for advertisement this week two available positions: Campaign Coordinator and Director of Development.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Coping with COVID Conversation with Campus Counseling via Zoom, September 28, 3:00 p.m.
- 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 5 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:06 p.m.