

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Minutes

Meeting date: April 26, 2021

Members in attendance: President William LaForge, Chief Jeffrey Johns, Dr. Kurt Keppler, Mr. Mike Kinnison, Dr. Charles McAdams, Mr. Rick Munroe, Dr. Michelle Roberts, Mr. Jamie Rutledge, Dr. Jonathan Westfall, Mr. Jeff Slagell, and Mr. Richard Word (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
Mr. William Young, President-Elect, Student Government Association

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the President's Cabinet was held in the Simmons Room of the Hugh Ellis Walker Alumni-Foundation House on April 26, 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 April 19, 2021.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- President LaForge recognized outgoing and incoming Cabinet Members: Academic Council representative, Mr. Jeff Slagell (outgoing) and Dr. Vicki Bingham (incoming); Faculty Senate President, Dr. Jonathan Westfall (outgoing) and Dr. Andrew Wegmann (incoming); Staff Council Chair, Chief Jeffrey Johns (outgoing) and Ms. Nakikke Wallace (incoming); and, SGA President, Mr. Richard Word (outgoing) and Mr. William Young (incoming). President LaForge expressed his gratitude to the outgoing members for the service they provided, and he welcomed the incoming members.
- President LaForge gave an overview of the activities and events from last week. GRAMMY Museum® Mississippi hosted their first in-person event last week — Women in the Round, featuring Delta State's own Ms. Tricia Walker and some of her colleagues from Nashville, TN. The Campaign Steering Committee met last week. President LaForge participated in the Gulf South Conference Board of Directors meeting, and he met with Mr. Will Young about his upcoming term as President of Student Government Association. The BPAC hosted their first event for the season — the Allman Betts Band. President LaForge met with GRAMMY Museum Mississippi Executive Director Emily Havens and Ms. Michelle Johansen to discuss the museum's diversity and inclusion initiatives. The Campus Forum for faculty and staff was held last week, and approximately 250 faculty and staff participated. President LaForge filmed another segment of his Statesmen Insider regarding Spring Commencement. The

Greenville Rotary Club invited President LaForge to be their guest speaker for one of their weekly meetings, and President LaForge was interviewed by the *Bolivar Bullet* regarding the upcoming open house event for the President's new home. Human Resources hosted the annual Retirement and Service Awards Ceremony. Lastly, President LaForge met with Dr. Leslie Griffin to discuss the Vice President for Academic Affairs search committee's summation of candidates and their observations.

- President LaForge congratulated Mr. Kinnison on the retirement of his baseball jersey, #15, which occurred at a special event on Saturday.
- Mr. Kinnison gave an update on Athletics. Mr. Kinnison informed Cabinet members only three teams remain in competition: men's golf, baseball, and softball. The men's golf team finished seventh in the Gulf South Conference tournament, and Mr. Landon Cottrell may have a chance to advance to the regional tournament. The men's tennis team competed in the Gulf South Conference tournament over the weekend competing against Lee University and University of West Florida, and they may have a chance to advance to regionals. The announcement for the regional slate will be released tomorrow. The baseball and softball teams competed over the weekend against University of Alabama-Huntsville. Both teams finished with one win and two losses. The baseball team will compete against Mississippi College this weekend, and they will advance to the Gulf South Conference tournament. The annual Green and White Awards ceremony will be held virtually again this year, and will take place on Tuesday, May 4 at 6:00 p.m. The Hey Coach Radio Show broadcasts from Lost Pizza tonight at 6:00 p.m. on 107.5 FM.
- Mr. Rutledge gave an update on Facilities Management projects. The Mississippi Department of Transportation sidewalk project is complete, and Facilities Management will install sod along the sidewalks. The contractors for the Mayers' Aquatics Center are working on the punch list. Some of the materials for the roofing project won't arrive until May 21, which will delay the start date. The renovation project for the residence halls has begun with deep cleaning and replacing air ducts. The campus-wide elevator project begins next week, and the first installation will be in the Roberts-LaForge Library. The ribbon cutting for the President's home will take place on May 11, beginning at 3:00 p.m. Faculty and staff will receive invitations via email.
- President LaForge shared with Cabinet members some of the meetings and events planned for this week. President LaForge participated in a Zoom meeting this morning with high school administrators around the state. There were 32 administrators in attendance. The meeting was sponsored by the Office of Admissions, and it focused on Delta State's admissions process. The campus forums for students hosted by the Office of Student Life begins at 6:00 p.m. tonight in Jobe Hall. The Student Government Association Inauguration will take place immediately following the forum. On Wednesday, President LaForge will meet with DMI staff member Ms. Laeitta Wade to discuss the Healing with a Groove project. The Student Hall of Fame ceremony will be held Thursday night in the BPAC. Students from the Classes of 2020 and 2021 will be inducted into the Student Hall of Fame during the ceremony. On Saturday, President LaForge will travel to Jackson to attend the inauguration of Dr. Carmen Walters, President of Tougaloo College.

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 no students in Hill Apartments, and there are no students in the off-campus location. Currently, the university has no hot spots. The Bolivar County drive-through COVID-19 vaccine distribution site has provided more than 2,700 vaccinations, and 1,642 people have completed their vaccination process. The Bolivar County drive-through COVID-19 vaccine distribution site has seen a substantial decrease in appointments for the first dose vaccines. This decrease is being seen statewide at all drive-in vaccination distribution sites. Due to substantial decrease in appointments, Ms. Douglas suggested reducing the site schedule for May and June with the site closing in June. The suggested final dates are: April 27, April 30, May 4, May 7, May 11, May 14, May 18, May 25, June 1, and June 8. If any day has a limited number of appointments, the site will operate for a half-day. Vaccinated employees and students will be exempt from a mandatory quarantine if they come in close contact with someone testing positive for COVID-19. In order to be granted this exemption, employees and students must upload their completed COVID-19 vaccination record to the university server. Instructions on how to upload completed COVID-19 vaccination records will be sent out via email, posted on the COVID-19 webpage, and updated in the COVID-19 protocols. Ms. Douglas is working with Communications and Marketing on a marketing campaign for student vaccination. The next portion of the campaign will center around common myths surrounding the vaccine. The campaign includes emails to students, posters, a social media push, and videos. Ms. Douglas is working with Communications and Marketing on a marketing campaign to promote the Student Health Center and the basic health services they will provide students and employees. A new page on the Delta State website is being created. 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. Ms. Barbara Livingston will be the “COVID-19 Hero of the Week” for April 26-30. Mr. Kinnison stated the mandatory COVID-19 testing for student-athletes produced zero positive tests last week. The NCAA has begun discussing the need for a percentage of teams to be vaccinated to allow for lesser restrictions. Mr. Rutledge shared with Cabinet members the university should receive its next round of Higher Education Emergency Relief funds by mid-May.

BUSINESS

Action

Emeritus Status – Staff (revised – final reading) Chief Johns

On the recommendation of the Administrative Staff Council, Chief Johns brought to Cabinet the revised Emeritus Status - Staff policy for a final reading. The policy was revised to mirror the Emeritus Status – Faculty policy. All staff employees in good standing who have served at least ten consecutive years at Delta State are eligible for emeritus status in their final year of service, once their official date of retirement has been determined. Previously, staff employees had to serve at least 15 consecutive years at the university. The nomination process was revised to include: a February 1 deadline for Human Resources to notify department heads of any staff members who are retiring and eligible for emeritus status; a recommendation must be submitted to the Chair of the Administrative Staff Council by March 1; the Chair of the Administrative Staff Council will present staff nominees for approval to the President’s Cabinet; and, the final decision will be made by the President. The previously recommended changes were made in order for this policy to mirror the Emeritus Status – Faculty policy. The one major difference between the two policies is a staff member is eligible for emeritus status upon retirement, and a faculty member is eligible in their final year of service.

Motion: Moved by Chief Johns to approve the final reading of the revised Emeritus Status – Staff policy and seconded by Mr. Munroe. The motion was approved.

Scholarships: GPA maintenance requirement Dr. Keppler

Dr. Keppler brought to Cabinet members a suggestion to lower the GPA maintenance requirement for university scholarships due to the COVID-19 hardships and the changes in mode of instruction. Currently, students must maintain a 3.25 GPA to keep their university scholarship. Dr. Keppler recommends lowering the GPA requirement to 3.0 for Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 students. This requirement adjustment will be temporary. Dr. Keppler will work with Dr. Megan Smith, Director of Student Financial Assistance, on notifying students of the change. Dr. Westfall suggested distributing the information to the faculty listserv, as well, so that faculty can help answer student questions regarding their scholarships.

Motion: Moved by Dr. Keppler to lower the GPA maintenance requirement for university scholarships for Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 students due to COVID-19 hardships and seconded by Mr. Word. The motion was approved.

Discussion

Commencement Plans Dr. McAdams

Dr. McAdams reminded Cabinet members that the Spring 2021 Commencement will be held in person on Friday, April 30 in the Sillers Coliseum. Several strict guidelines will be in place to maintain COVID-19 related university protocols. All students and guests will be required to follow the COVID-19 protocols of wearing a mask, social distancing, and adhering to point-of-entry screening. Facilities Management will sanitize Walter Sillers Coliseum between each ceremony. Dr. McAdams stated the event will have a significant number of volunteers and security. Dr. Westfall shared that 11 to 15 faculty members will participate at each ceremony. Spring 2021 Commencement will take place with three ceremonies: 10:00 a.m.; 1:00 p.m.; and, 3:30 p.m. The first ceremony will confer graduate degrees for all colleges, as well as baccalaureate degrees for the Robert E. Smith School of Nursing. The second ceremony will confer baccalaureate degrees for the College of Arts and Sciences and College of Business and Aviation. The final ceremony will confer baccalaureate degrees for the College of Business and Aviation and the College of Education and Human Sciences.

FY21 Budget Update Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge provided an update on the FY21 budget. The monthly projections remain on target. He shared a piece of good news with Cabinet members — the university will receive \$400,000 from the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency to offset storm damage costs. The FY22 budget process continues to wind down. The budget worksheets were due last week and will go to the Executive Committee for final review. Once the worksheets are approved, Mr. Rutledge will input the data into the Annual Operating Budget format required for IHL approval. The Annual Operating Budget must be approved by Cabinet prior to submission to IHL. Mr. Rutledge will present the Annual Operating Budget prior to June 4.

Additional information

- President LaForge thanked Mr. Munroe and his staff for hosting Cabinet members at the Alumni-House for today’s Cabinet meeting.
- Ms. Wallace announced Delta State’s Congressional Fellow, Ms. Synethia Mathews, had a wonderful experience in Washington, D.C. and will return to Mississippi on May 1. Upon her return, she will resume an internship with International Paper.
- Mr. Rutledge announced the Delta Council Annual Meeting will be held on June 4 on Delta State’s campus.

INFORMATIONAL/CALENDAR ITEMS:

- Student Forum, April 26, 6:00 p.m., Jobe Auditorium
- SGA Inauguration, April 26, 6:30 p.m., Jobe Auditorium
- Student Hall of Fame Ceremony, April 29, BPAC
- Commencement, April 30, Sillers Coliseum
- Ribbon cutting President's home

NEXT MEETING:

- Next Cabinet Meeting – Monday, May 10 at 1:30 p.m.
- Next Cabinet Meeting Topic – TBD

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:03 p.m.