

May 13, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

As I reach the end of my first year as your president, I am expected to submit the first budget of my administration. The restructured budget plan I am sharing with you is the culmination of nearly a year of discussion, analysis, and deliberation. If we consider the pattern of budgeting at Delta State University in the last few years, we see an institution struggling to operate under tight fiscal constraints. As revenues shrank due to decreasing enrollments, university officials drew on cash reserves until the point was reached where there was no capacity for anything beyond hand-to-mouth survival.

Deferring our fiscal reckoning is not in the best interest of the future of Delta State University. In the FY23 budget, Delta State University spent more than \$50 million. The University brought in only \$47 million in revenues (tuition, fees, and state funds). Three million dollars had to be found to balance the budget; however, those dollars were drawn from one-time funds that have now been expended and are no longer available for use. Going forward, we will only spend what we take in.

You will note that I describe this FY25 budget plan as “restructuring.” I do not choose that word to avoid the truth — budget cuts are necessary. But, I have worked with a range of stakeholders — from the Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Sustainability, to the Academic Program Review Measures Task Force, to the Cabinet, to the staff at the Institutions of Higher Learning — not only to save money, but to redirect funding into initiatives that I believe will make Delta State University more durable and effective. We begin by “balancing the books,” but we must do more than that; we should secure resources necessary for Delta State University to thrive.

I want us to be prepared for the unprecedented challenges facing higher education in the coming years. We will modernize our recruitment operations so we can mitigate the effects of a national decline in enrollment. We will revise our academic offerings so we can welcome a wider range of students and provide them with learning opportunities in forms and schedules that fit their lives. We will reconsider how we have been delivering student services so that the Delta State experience can last a lifetime. We will resist tuition increases so that our most economically vulnerable students can continue to have access to the opportunities that a college degree can provide. We will move beyond basic survival and into a place where we have the capacity to take better advantage of our undeniable strengths.

Saving money takes a great deal of time and energy. I pledge to spend just as much time and energy adding to revenues by all the methods at hand: enrollment recovery, enhanced state support, increased philanthropy, and an expanded capacity for grant writing.

While eliminating programs, services, and positions is never easy, it is necessary if we are to provide resources to those programs and services that have the capacity to help this university

grow and thrive. That is why you will see new degree programs proposed below, and that is why there are new positions funded, even as some current positions are being discontinued. This university cannot continue to try and be “all things to all people.” This line of thinking has caused us to accept a level of lowered expectations and impoverishment inconsistent with the traditions of Delta State University. None of us want that, and our students expect and deserve better.

This plan will help us make significant progress toward a sustainable budget, which:

- is built on reasonable revenue projections;
- ends each year with a 3-5% contingency;
- devotes that contingency to the university’s cash position until Delta State has at least 90 days cash on hand; and,
- makes meaningful annual progress toward IHL-mandated debt coverage ratio.

Before I move into the plan's details, I want to offer my sincere thanks to the Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Sustainability and the Program Measures Review Task Force for their dedication to this important process. These two groups devoted untold hours researching the information relevant to their respective charges. The best way I can honor their work is to take their reports seriously, and I assure you their work has informed my decisions regarding the next budget. Having said that, please know that the responsibility for these decisions is mine.

I want to make it clear that everything that is included in this restructuring of the university budget will be accomplished in compliance with the policies of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). In the case of program closures, final approval lies with the IHL, and SACSCOC requires us to follow certain procedures in order to protect the integrity of the student experience. These proposed changes will be communicated to those bodies as appropriate, and results will be communicated to the campus community.

I realize that major organizational changes cause anxiety and uncertainty. Leadership has worked hard to notify the affected colleagues as quickly as possible to give them notice of the changes. Staff changes have been communicated through the appropriate Vice President. Faculty reductions will be determined by the Interim Provost, as chief academic officer, in consultation with me, the deans, and disciplinary experts identified through the IHL, SACSCOC, and professional bodies.

Per university and IHL policy, all tenured and tenure-track faculty will receive a contract for FY25, despite the program changes. In areas where degree programs are being discontinued, the Interim Provost will work with the Deans and Department/Division Chairs, as appropriate, to determine which faculty positions will be needed in future years to support the teach-out plans and programming. These future decisions will be communicated to faculty before July 1, 2024.

The remaining portion of this document includes the details of the restructuring plan, which the Cabinet has approved. This information will also be presented at **today’s Town Hall meeting at 2:00 p.m. in the State Room of the H.L. Nowell Union**, and attendees may ask questions then. I will continue to be available to you in the coming months to answer additional questions and

provide information on the implementation of these changes.

Administrative Changes

The Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Sustainability recommended “reducing \$250,000 from Executive, Administrative, and Managerial salaries or Professional Non-Faculty salaries, along with corresponding fringe benefits from the adjusted FY24 budget.

The Committee also recommended “reducing “\$500,000 from Executive, Administrative, and Managerial salaries and Professional Non-Faculty salaries each, along with corresponding fringe benefits from the FY25 budget.” The recommendation noted increases in these areas that had occurred since 2019.

My response to those recommendations is embodied in the following administrative cost reductions:

1. The retirement of the Vice President for Executive Affairs and Chief of Staff has created the opportunity for savings. This position will be eliminated at the end of this fiscal year and associated duties will be distributed among other positions.
2. Until recently, the position of Vice President for University Advancement and External Relations oversaw fundraising, alumni affairs, communications and marketing, and legislative matters. In cooperation with the leadership of the Delta State University Foundation, that position has been redefined to focus solely on fundraising and alumni affairs, with the other two areas being moved to other university personnel. With that change, this Vice President position will now be funded with a 50/50 split between university and foundation funds.
3. During its deliberations, the Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Sustainability recommended that “the President consider restructuring the Academy.” To that end, I have made the decision to eliminate three Dean positions and reduce related administrative costs.
 - a. Effective July 1, 2024, I am eliminating the Graduate and Honors Studies unit; thereby eliminating the Dean of Graduate Studies position. This role recently became vacant, and therefore administration of individual graduate programs will be the responsibility of the respective college deans. University-level graduate program policies will be the responsibility of the Provost. Recruiting for graduate programs has already been assigned to the Office of Admissions. The role of Honors Program Director will be reduced to a quarter-time position and assigned to a faculty member in consideration for a reduced teaching load and summer stipend. Continuing Education and Institutional Grants will now report directly to the Provost.
 - b. The position of Dean of Library Services is eliminated. This role has been vacant since August 2023, and Delta State will go forward with a Library Director model.
 - c. Effective July 1, 2024, I am eliminating the College of Arts and Sciences; thereby eliminating the Dean’s position and the associated Administrative Secretary position.

I am charging the Interim Provost to convene a group to recommend the best ways to realign, consolidate, and rename departments and programs among the remaining three colleges, which will result in a reduction of department/division chairs and administrative support staff. Those colleges and departments will be reorganized to reflect a wider range of programs.

Retirement Incentive and Vacant Positions

As related to the opportunity for salary savings via an early retirement incentive or making the decision to discontinue vacant positions, the Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Sustainability made the following three recommendations:

1. “pursuing an incentive option at 25% paid over 5 years, assuming that we will not fill more than 50% of those positions at the original salary or less, so as the Institution does not take on additional debt.”
 - a. There were 53 employees eligible for the retirement incentive. Of those eligible, only 16 individuals (30%) took advantage of the retirement incentive. Seven (44%) of the vacated positions will not be replaced.
2. “deleting all open positions that have an end date prior to July 1, 2022.”
 - a. All of these positions were deleted, except for one. This resulted in a savings of \$407,911.
3. “any open positions with end dates after July 1, 2022, must submit a brief, but detailed statement that...” justifies the position.
 - a. Each Budget Manager submitted a justification for the positions that needed to be filled. The remaining unfilled positions were deleted, which resulted in a savings of \$1,912,263 (51% of total).

Finance and Administration

The Finance and Administration unit has made several structural changes in the past four months and is continuing to do so.

1. Facilities Management will be restructured to improve efficiency and streamline operations.
 - a. Supervisory functions will be realigned to have a supervisor of inside plant operations and a supervisor of outside plant operations. These two positions will report to the Director of Facilities Management. Trade Foremen will be aligned to report to the supervisor in the respective areas.
 - b. Facilities Management will also eliminate the unfilled positions of Grounds Manager position and the Manager of Custodial Support Services position. Living wage salary adjustments will be made for lower paid individuals utilizing salaries from these two positions.

2. Restructuring within other areas of Finance and Administration has resulted in the following positions being eliminated:
 1. OIT Technical Support Specialist (*vacant*)
 2. OIT Program Analyst Administrator of CRM (*retirement*)
 3. OIT Network Technician (*vacant*)
 4. BPAC Lighting Technician (*vacant*)
 5. BPAC Arts Education Director
 6. BPAC Associate Director of Production (*retirement*)
 7. SBS WIA Coordinator/Collections Clerk (*vacant*)

Delta State University Foundation

In addition to the vice president's salary change listed above, the Centennial Campaign fundraising goal has been increased from \$50 million to \$100 million. While increased giving will not offer immediate relief for ongoing costs, gifts will provide: 1) scholarships, which will contribute to our enrollment efforts; 2) programming funds, which will enhance the student experience; and, 3) renovations of our physical spaces, which will make our campus more attractive and efficient.

Student Affairs

The Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Sustainability recommended that "Student Affairs reorganize and/or combine units to reduce staffing by combining redundant functions..." The Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) was charged with the reorganization of his division to realize savings while maintaining student services appropriate for the current size of the student body. At the end of FY24, ten (10) positions within Student Affairs will be eliminated and five new positions will be created. Affected personnel have been notified of these changes.

1. Director of Career Services and Placement
2. Assistant Director of Career Services
3. Nurse Practitioner (Student Health Center)
4. Director of Housing and Residence Life
5. Assistant Director of Operations (Housing and Residence Life)
6. Assistant Director of Residential Education (Housing and Residence Life)
7. Director of Student Life
8. Assistant Director of Student Life
9. Coordinator of Campus Diversity (*vacant*)
10. Administrative Assistant, Police Department (*retirement*)

The elimination of these positions within Student Affairs is intended to enhance the student experience by centralizing and streamlining student services.

The Vice President for Student Affairs will also eliminate the following three offices:

1. Career Services
2. Housing and Residence Life

3. Student Life

In their place, he will establish a single office of “University Services” to include the following new positions:

1. Program Manager, Housing Administration, Assignment, and Facilities
2. Program Manager, Residential Education, Learning, and Staffing
3. Program Manager, Union and Student Programming
4. Program Manager, Student Conduct and Community Support
5. Program Manager, Sorority and Fraternity Recruitment, Retention, and Risk

These five program managers will report directly to the Vice President for Student Affairs. Other services and constructs, such as support for the Student Government Association, will be managed by the VPSA’s Office or within offices established in the division prepared for such oversight.

Regarding the Ad Committee on Budget Sustainability’s three recommendations related to Housing and Residence Life, the Vice President for Student Affairs provided a response to the Committee Chair and to me on January 29, 2024, that included various recommendations to address the items. Also, the Committee recommended that the vice presidents and Cabinet identify possible service overlap and ways to reduce costs by assessing service delivery. These recommendations will continue to be discussed and addressed in the near future.

Athletics

The Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Sustainability recommended “that Athletics adjust their budget by \$350,000 either through reducing E&G expenses and/or increasing E&G revenues.” The Athletic Director has made the commitment to increase revenue by approximately \$350,000 through increased recruitment efforts and adjustment of roster sizes for several sports.

In addition, the Athletic Director will reduce the Athletics draw on the E&G budget by \$200,000, by either reducing expenditures or replacing E&G funding with increased external revenue.

Academic Affairs

The education of our students remains the reason this university exists, and the only adequate rationale for changes in Academic Affairs is that which supports our educational mission. Student enrollment patterns point us to a future that favors flexibility, interdisciplinarity, and career readiness. Our enrollment recovery will be fueled by an emphasis on transfer-friendly policies and programs, our reputation for instructional excellence, and a closer alignment between what we teach and what contemporary students seek to learn and in what modality/format.

At the February 2024, Town Hall meeting devoted to academics, I noted that Delta State’s 10:1 student-to-faculty ratio was unsustainable. A review of our peer institutions suggests that a 15:1

ratio is the norm for higher education institutions of our size and profile. A lack of regular and rigorous program review has resulted in too many low-enrolled sections and too few students spread across too many disciplines. Maintaining programs with few students enrolled has led to the bizarre phenomenon of faculty being simultaneously overworked and underemployed. Those who have taught five, six, or even more sections in one semester, but found that the total enrollment of those many sections would not fill a single classroom, know this too well.

New degrees will consolidate our students into fewer programs, thereby increasing degree productivity and streamlining the curriculum. My intention, as we achieve fiscal stability, is to plow additional savings back into the academic enterprise, providing additional (and much needed) resources to the remaining programs in order to bolster their likelihood for being more viable, prosperous, and successful.

New Programs and Positions

I am authorizing four new positions in Academic Affairs, all of which are intended to “pay for themselves” by increasing revenue.

1. I authorize the Interim Provost to create the position of Executive Director of Sponsored Programs and Special Projects, effective July 1, 2024. This position will be 100% supported through grant funding and will enhance the University’s ability to secure large multi-year grants and provide additional oversight and training to ensure continuance of this pipeline. As a result, the Office of Institutional Grants will have two full-time positions devoted to assisting faculty and staff in securing an important source of revenue and support for the University and its programs.
2. Effective immediately, I authorize the Interim Provost to conduct a search for three (3) professional academic advisors, who will report to the Registrar. As we compete for new students, the ability to quickly assess prior credits earned and generate a schedule in a single transaction is a key yield strategy. Faculty will retain an advising role for continuing students. However, entering freshmen and first-year transfers are best served when advising resources are available 40 hours a week, 12 months a year, and so these two student groups will be advised by the professional academic advisors.

In a related manner, I am authorizing the Interim Provost to pursue adding four new degree programs (pending IHL and SACSCOC approval) and conducting a search for the needed positions listed below.

1. The Interim Provost is authorized to conduct a search for a faculty position to lead the design and implementation of a new undergraduate degree in visual and performing arts studies. This new degree should place an emphasis on interdisciplinarity in the arts — allowing students to pursue either a music track or a visual arts track — and is more likely to meet IHL viability standards than offering separate art and music degrees. This type of degree is often present at regional universities working under staffing constraints.

2. Delta State would benefit from the creation of a new interdisciplinary undergraduate degree that allows students to pursue studies in humanities and social sciences. Such a degree will allow students to “bundle” two minors, as directed by the faculty. The combination of coursework from otherwise underenrolled majors is intended to group sufficient majors around a degree so that a viability threshold of approximately 30 majors is reached.
3. Given industry trends and employment patterns, should we offer a new undergraduate degree in digital media, with an emphasis not just on visual arts, but on the interconnected elements of visual, audio, and written media in digital forms. Multiple disciplines could contribute to the development of skills across multiple facets of media production and content development. The increase in workforce needs in video production, social media content generation, web development, podcasting, and short-form digital media suggest such a program would benefit our students.
4. Changing enrollment patterns in teacher education suggest we would be more competitive if we offered a new Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education. The Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education (BSSE) prepares students to teach specific content in a secondary school or a special subject area in grades K-12. The coursework in this degree program would provide pathways for teacher licensure in the areas of English, biology, mathematics, vocal or instrumental music (K-12), physical education (K-12), and social studies. Students can choose a content area of emphasis and a second area for endorsement to create a pathway for dual certification upon degree completion. Coursework in the BSSE will prepare students for the licensure requirements in the state of Mississippi and meet all Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) coursework requirements for educator preparation programs in secondary or K-12 education.

This degree pathway will require a coordinator who will oversee program reports, curriculum management, and student advisement for this major, and who will also teach coursework in the degree program. This revision to the pathway for licensure in these areas will provide a more streamlined route for students to enter the teaching profession. It will also eliminate the need for multiple program coordinators, facilitate successful state program reviews and reports, and simplify oversight of accreditation requirements.

These anticipated new degrees will ensure that students have opportunities to pursue the liberal arts, whether through the content areas or through educator preparation. Also, these new degrees are intended to preserve a range of disciplines available for student learning, require fewer resources, and be more competitive for transfer students. All four degrees can be modelled on successful similar degrees housed at other public regional universities. I request and encourage faculty to participate in the design of the four new degree programs listed above, which will better position Delta State to recruit students and reduce barriers to graduation.

Deletion of Programs

The Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Sustainability recommended implementing an academic

review process using the following metrics to assess degree viability and sustainability:

1. Instructional FTE below 1 for an individual faculty member;
2. Class size of less than 10;
3. University student-to-faculty ratio of less than 15-to-1;
4. Credit hour production of less than 120 for an individual faculty member;
5. Negative budget and credit hour production by organization calculation per program;
6. Enrollment of less than 30 students in a program.

Using the guidance provided by the Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Sustainability, the Interim Provost assembled the “Program Measures Review Task Force” to develop the criteria and to provide oversight for the compilation of data for each academic program. Faculty were invited to attend informational sessions, which were held to explain the criteria and the related forms that would be used in the review process, and to provide feedback. Both qualitative and quantitative information was utilized in the process. The [results](#) of that review were compiled and made available via the Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Sustainability’s webpage and presented to me for consideration.

I reviewed the information provided, as well as the productivity standards for each public university that are included in IHL Policies 501-505:

- Baccalaureate Level – Graduation of eighteen (18) students over a three-year period;
- Master’s Level – Graduation of twelve (12) students over a three-year period;
- Specialist’s Level – Graduation of five (5) students over a three-year period;
- Doctorate Level – Graduation of five (5) students over a three-year period.

Both quantitative and qualitative responses were used to inform my recommendation to IHL about program and unit deletions. Academic changes will be implemented consistent with IHL and SACSCOC guidelines. Deleted programs will be afforded a two-year teach out period, per Delta State’s [“Program Closure” policy](#) and [“Teach Out” policy](#), so that most students currently enrolled in those programs can complete their degrees.

Per IHL Policy 403, the termination of service of a tenured/tenure track faculty member is permissible in the event of termination or reduction of programs, academic or administrative units as approved by the Board. As such, IHL Policy also directs that tenured faculty members who are dismissed as a result of termination or reduction of programs “shall remain employed for a minimum of 9-12 months, consistent with current contract, periods of time, from date of notification.”

Because of the need for teach-out plans and the 9-12 month period afforded tenured/tenure-track faculty upon notification of dismissal, most of the changes detailed below will not result in savings during FY25, but instead will be realized in the FY27 budget cycle.

I have included below the listing of degree programs I have submitted to the IHL for deletion or modification. The number of students enrolled in each program for Fall 2023 is indicated parenthetically. No program proposed for deletion has the notional enrollment (30 for undergraduate, 20 for graduate) necessary to meet IHL productivity standards.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Art Department

In the Department of Art, the following degree programs have been recommended for deletion:

- Art – BA (8)
- Art – BFA (26)
- Digital Media Arts - BFA (25)
- Studio Art – MFA (6)

Students seeking a degree centered around the arts will be directed to the anticipated new undergraduate degree in visual and performing arts studies.

A sufficient number of faculty in the visual arts will be retained to support the new degrees proposed above, as well as to perpetuate Delta State's art outreach programs, including the Wright Center Art Gallery and collaborations with regional visual arts organizations.

Delta Music Institute

In the Delta Music Institute, the Entertainment Industry Studies BS has been retained.

- Entertainment Industry Studies – BS (53)

I note that while this plan anticipates no changes in the offerings of the Delta Music Institute, enrollment has declined in that area. While enrollments in DMI are still well above the IHL productivity standard, any declines ought to be addressed, and I believe that students seeking to develop as musicians, but who are not interested in music education, should be advised to explore the anticipated new undergraduate degree in visual and performing arts studies.

Languages and Literature Division

In the Division of Literature and Languages, the following degree programs have been recommended for deletion:

- English – BA (9)
- English Education – BSEd (11)
- Secondary Education English – MEd (6)

Students seeking an undergraduate degree centered around language, literature, and writing will be directed to the anticipated new undergraduate degree in humanities and social sciences.

Students seeking licensure as teachers of English will be directed to the anticipated new degree in Secondary Education (English track).

Mathematics and Sciences Division

In the Division of Mathematics and Sciences, the following degrees have been recommended for deletion:

- Chemistry – BS (15)
- Natural Sciences – MSNS (3)
- Mathematics Education – BSEd (6)
- Mathematics – BS (14)

Students seeking licensure as math or science teachers will be directed to the proposed undergraduate degree in Secondary Education (math track or science track).

Music Department

In the Department of Music, the following degree programs have been recommended for deletion:

- Music – BA (7)
- Music Education – BMEd (20)
- Music – BM (8)

Students seeking a degree centered around music will be directed to the anticipated new undergraduate degree in visual and performing arts studies.

Students seeking licensure as teachers of music will be directed to the anticipated new degree in Secondary Education (music track).

In support of Delta State University's vocal ensembles, the Office of Student Affairs will assume oversight of student vocal ensembles, effective May 14, 2024. Current levels of scholarship support for vocal ensembles will be maintained, and scholarship offers for FY25 which have already been extended will be honored. These ensembles will be continued and funded under a staff Director of Vocal Ensembles. This full-time, twelve-month position is expected to increase the recruitment in this area, to work closely with the Office of Admissions to attract students, and to work with the Office of Advancement to seek additional scholarships and program sponsorships. The Vice President for Student Affairs is authorized to commence this search immediately.

The oversight for the Marching Band, the Pep Band, and related instrumental ensembles will be moved to the Office of Student Affairs, effective May 14, 2024. Current levels of scholarship support for instrumental ensembles will be maintained, and scholarship offers for FY25 which have already been extended will be honored. With the change, the Director of Bands will become a staff position, elevated to full-time status, report to Student Affairs, and will no longer be organizationally aligned with the Department of Music nor Academic Affairs.

Each Director will be expected not only to devote attention to the recruitment and retention of respective ensemble members, but to build ensembles capable of supporting more Delta State University events. Each Director will be expected to oversee the summer and fall training schedules, providing ensembles for the fall, winter, and spring performance seasons, which can be supported given these new staffing levels and, importantly, student interest. In addition to athletic or University events, each Director will deploy ensembles to support student recruitment activities. The increased

expectations for student performance will be matched with increased stipends for the students as determined by budget considerations, a student's performance in other ensembles, and the recommendations of the respective Director to the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Social Sciences and History Division

In the Division of Social Sciences and History, the following degree programs have been recommended for deletion:

- History – BA (12)
- Social Studies Education – BSEd (17)

Students seeking an undergraduate degree centered around history will be directed to the anticipated new interdisciplinary undergraduate degree in humanities and social sciences.

Students seeking licensure as social studies teachers of music will be directed to the anticipated new degree in Secondary Education (social studies track).

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND AVIATION

In the Division of Accountancy, Computer Information Systems, and Finance, the following degrees have been recommended for deletion:

- Accountancy – MPAC (4)
- Finance – BBA (17)

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Family and Consumer Sciences Division

The Family and Consumer Sciences Division has been moved to the Division of Teacher Education, Leadership, and Research.

Health, Physical Education, and Recreation Division

In the Division of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, the following degree has been recommended for deletion:

- Health, Physical Education and Recreation – BSEd (24)

The elimination of the BSEd in Health, Physical Education and Recreation will consolidate enrollment into programs that should meet IHL productivity standards.

Students seeking licensure in physical education will be directed to the proposed new undergraduate degree in Secondary Education (Physical Education K-12 emphasis).

Curricular Review Process

I also want to make note of the ongoing curricular review process at the program level within the College of Education and Human Sciences which resulted in the following changes already announced and approved:

- Closure of the Ed.S. in Counseling (this will enhance CED faculty/student ratios and reduce adjuncts). The M.Ed. in Counseling is retained.
- Closure of the Ed.S. in Elementary Education (this will increase enrollment in the Ed.S. in Curriculum and Instruction and reduce adjuncts)
- Closure of the SPED Concentration/track of the MAT program
- Closure of the Fashion Merchandising concentration of the FCS degree
- Closure of the Recreational Administration concentration of the HPER degree (this will streamline faculty loads)

Beyond the addition, deletion, and modification of degree programs, there will be other changes within Academic Affairs.

1. Child Development Center

The Hamilton-White Child Development Center (CDC) is projected to lose \$256,000 in FY24, which is consistent with losses in the last three years. I acknowledge that the Center provides a service to the Delta State faculty and staff, and the local community, but these losses are unsustainable. Therefore, I will appoint an Ad Hoc Committee, composed of campus officials, parents of children enrolled in the Center, and other stakeholders to meet this summer and fall to evaluate the financial situation and offer a plan to me, before November 1, 2024, that ensures a financially sustainable program year-after-year. If a plan to sustain the program financially is not conceivable, the CDC will close at the conclusion of the FY25 contracts.

2. Library Services

The Library Services unit has been restructured and services have been reorganized for efficiency.

3. Student Success Center

The Student Success Center has been restructured, positions have been moved to grant funds, and pooled salaries have been removed.

4. Continuing Education

The Continuing Education Office has eliminated the Coordinator of Continuing Education position and reduced its adjunct pooled salaries.

BUDGET SAVINGS

The year-long effort of so many people — the Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Sustainability, the Program Measures Review Task Force, budget managers, and many others — produced more than \$5M in cuts/savings, with another \$1.5M anticipated by the end of the teach out plan. I applaud everyone's diligence in putting the university in a place, fiscally, where we can now

begin to put Delta State back on the path to success.

I have listed below a summary of the results. Please note that all salary savings are estimates based on the actual salary information, and anticipated savings are presented as good faith projections and expressed as annual savings.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Budget Restructuring Results for FY25:

• Amount cut as result of Budget Committee recs	\$5,310,091
• Additional amount cut as result of zero-based budgeting	\$854,789
• Required increases/amounts.....	\$(2,712,789)
• New positions.....	\$(1,215,000)
TOTAL.....	\$2,237,091

Projected increase in State Appropriations\$1,363,975

FY26 program restructuring savings\$750,000

FY27 program restructuring savings\$750,000

PERSONNEL SUMMARY

<u>Positions eliminated for FY25</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Amount</u>
• Vacant positions	49	\$3,517,652
• Retirements	7	\$631,472
• Filled positions (6 funded by auxiliary).....	17	\$782,269
TOTAL.....	73	\$4,931,393
 New positions.....	15	\$1,215,000

CONCLUSION

It has been an unpleasant, but necessary, part of my duty to study how and why American colleges and universities struggle, and to identify and thus avoid those paths that lead to complete institutional failure. Each university closure offers a lesson, if we are willing to learn. As enrollments decline, support decreases and public confidence in higher education is shaken, and therefore institutional leadership is faced with a narrowing range of options. Universities that wait too long to adjust to changing conditions move from concern to crisis. Universities that respond to fundamental problems with incremental solutions find themselves chasing temporary — and illusory — stability.

American higher education is littered with defunct universities that weren't able to adjust to changes in student needs and shifts in enrollment patterns. *Inside Higher Ed* notes that in 2023 alone, 15 nonprofit four-year colleges in the United States shut down. All those colleges had excellent faculty, dedicated staff, and conscientious leaders. Each year, they fought to stay open.

They dipped into reserves until cash-on-hand was exhausted. Too late, some of them scrambled to implement radical solutions, drawing down their endowments and selling off their buildings. Faculty protested. Presidents resigned. Students transferred. Then those colleges ran out of time and good people lost their jobs.

The changes I propose are intended to ensure that Delta State does not share the fate of those universities that have closed in recent years. These changes will be painful for some, but the distress caused by our continued struggles cannot continue. Moving forward, we will be a healthy institution, able to deliver on our mission with the resources we have at hand, and able to plan for a future that includes more than mere survival.

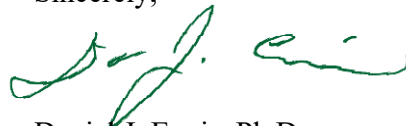
The futures our students envision – the careers to which they aspire and the hopes they have for social, economic, artistic, and personal advancement – are still possible through Delta State University. In consolidating many struggling programs into fewer, better-resourced majors, we will continue to send our students out into the world prepared for the challenges ahead. We have what we need to continue to be an extraordinary place to teach and to learn. We owe it to our students, our alumni, our community, and ourselves to see this through.

I know that the effect of the solutions I propose will be uneven, and that this restructuring will seriously impact some, but will be scarcely felt by others. No matter your role or your title, we are all obliged to protect the welfare of our students by ensuring the integrity of this institution. We are doing a hard, but necessary thing, and I am committed to taking up this work together.

During a recent visit with President Emeritus Kent Wyatt, he shared with me the significant budget cuts he had to make during the early years of his presidency due to a downturn in the economy. During the 1985-86 year, he had to eliminate 53 positions and cut \$2.5 million (22%) from the operating budget. Fast forward 5 years, and Delta State experienced record enrollments and was considered the most fiscally sound university.

When our successors pause to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Delta State University, I hope they will mark 2024 as the year our own collective challenges were met, and a stronger university emerged.

Sincerely,



Daniel J. Ennis, Ph.D.
President