

*Kim Hunter Reed, Chair
James Ammons
Gerald Boudreaux
Joseph Bouie
Preston Castille
Ava Dejoie
Rodney Ellis
Randal Gaines
Richard Gallot, Jr.
James Henderson
Patrick Jefferson*



*Walter Kimbrough
Orlando McMeans
Mandi Mitchell
John Pierre
Edward Price
Larissa Littleton-Steib
Toya Barnes-Teamer
Brianna Thomas
Reynold Verret
Arlanda Williams
Stephanie Willis*

MINUTES

Historically Black Colleges and Universities Advisory Council
Via Zoom
August 3, 2020

The Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Advisory Council met in session at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, August 3, 2020 via Zoom. Dr. Kim Hunter Reed called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called and a quorum was established.

Present at the meeting were:

Dr. Kim Hunter Reed
Dr. James Ammons
Preston Castille
Ava Dejoie/Kellie Taylor White
Dr. Rick Gallot
Dr. Walter Kimbrough
Dr. Jim Henderson
Representative Jason Hughes
Dr. Orlando McMeans
Mandi Mitchell
John Pierre
Dr. Larissa Littleton-Steib
Dr. Toya Barnes-Teamer
Arlanda Williams/Dr. Ray Belton
Stephanie Willis
Dr. Reynold Verret

Absent from the meeting were:

Senator Gerald Boudreaux
Senator Joseph Bouie, Jr.
Dr. Rodney Ellis
Representative Randal Gaines
Senator Jimmy Harris
Representative Patrick Jefferson
Brianna Thomas

Commissioner Kim Hunter Reed welcomed Representative Jason Hughes and explained the purpose of the HBCU Advisory Council.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On the motion of Dr. Rick Gallot, seconded by Kellie Taylor-White, the HBCU Advisory Council voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the February Council meeting.

IMPACT OF THE DIGITAL DIVIDE BY DR. SUSANNAH CRAIG

Dr. Susannah Craig explained that the challenges of digital access and equity were recognized at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic by the Commissioner, Dr. Kim Hunter Reed. In response, a Strategic Action Team was created by Dr. Craig to address digital disparity issues. In Phase One, the Team conducted an assessment to determine: (1) digital needs; (2) student engagement; (3) faculty support; and (4) student withdrawals. Phase Two will begin soon, and will involve an Operation Action Team comprised of one representative from each state institution. The Operational Action Team will begin its work in the context of Governor John Bel Edwards' commitment of over \$15 million to building digital inclusion and increasing education and training. This financial investment has supported institutions in purchasing devices for students and conducting faculty and staff training. Over the summer the Southern University System conducted a six-week training for faculty and the University of Louisiana System had trained 527 faculty as of August 3, 2020.

According to reports, 5,290 students withdrew in Spring 2020: 3,310 females and 1,980 males. Black student withdrawal numbers are 1,627 at two-year institutions and 565 at four-year

institutions. Additional data will be provided in the BESE report presented during its upcoming joint meeting with the Board of Regents.

COVID-19 IMPACT ON UNIVERSITIES

A) President Rick Gallot, Grambling State University

President Rick Gallot indicated that a cloud computing solutions academic program will be offered this year at Grambling State University (GSU). President Gallot informed the Council that in Fall 2020 GSU experienced growth in admissions, and housing filled quickly. Classes start August 10, 2020, with dormitories opening on Thursday, August 6, 2020 for staggered move-in. GSU will also host an Instagram session with students on Tuesday, August 4, 2020 to review guidelines from the CDC and UL System regarding COVID-19. Students have the option to select 100% online instruction, and over 2,000 students have chosen this approach. Over the past three years, GSU has utilized Title III dollars to invest in its IT infrastructure.

B) President Reynold Verret, Xavier University of Louisiana

President Reynold Verret was congratulated on the recent \$20 million private gift made to Xavier. President Verret informed the Council that students are returning to campus in about a week and a half and that the campus will enforce COVID-19 guidelines by:

- (1) Providing supplies to students and faculty to wipe down spaces and equipment before and after use. This is in addition to sanitation done by university facilities and maintenance staff;

(2) Creating the Student Community Health Ambassadors, to allow students to help keep each other accountable for health safety practices; and

(3) Creating a daily check-in app, on which students and faculty will respond every morning to six questions assessing health status. Responses from faculty and staff will be sent to human resources and student responses to student health units.

Further, all dormitory rooms will be single occupancy. Several students, primarily from out-of-state, opted for online instruction. Despite the COVID-19 disruption, laboratory courses are not feasible to offer via remote instruction.

C) President Ray Belton, Southern University Baton Rouge

President Ray Belton informed the Council that 100% of campus faculty are certified to provide online instruction. Southern University Baton Rouge (SUBR) will begin classes on August 12, 2020 and 30% of students have opted for face-to-face instruction. At SUBR, enrollment of new students has increased. SUBR will work with Board of Regents to address challenges in implementing its new policy requiring all students to have digital devices. Due to COVID-19, 300 students continue to face financial challenges; SUBR has provided additional grants for students with CARES Act support.

SUBR's health partnerships include:

(1) Ochsner Health Care: Walking the campus with facilities personnel to reconfigure classrooms, etc.; and providing webinars for staff, faculty, and students on health safety practices.

(2) Care South Community Clinic: Established a clinic on campus that will provide unlimited testing for COVID-19 and flu for faculty and staff. There is also

potential to create a faculty-staff employee health program with the School of Nursing.

D) Chancellor James Ammons, Southern University New Orleans

Southern University New Orleans (SUNO) begins classes on August 12, 2020 and most faculty are trained to deliver instruction online. SUNO has just completed its SACSCOC compliance visit with no recommendations; its next step is to go before the Board of Trustees in the fall.

SUNO's health partnerships include:

- (1) Ochsner Health Care: Providing daily health checks with Health Center staff at various campus checkpoints.
- (2) New Orleans East Hospital: Providing testing for the SUNO community free of charge.

Chancellor Ammons informed the Council of how SUNO plans to address the Digital Divide since several students continue to have challenges with access even after CARES Act support was provided to them. Laptops have been ordered and delivered to faculty and students. There are also laptops in the library to equip a check-out program. SUNO is still working to reconfigure space and improve technology.

E) Chancellor John Pierre, Southern University Law Center

Southern University Law Center (SULC) starts classes on August 7, 2020. Chancellor Pierre reported an increase in fall enrollment, with a total of 800 students enrolled overall. To ensure the safety of faculty, staff, and students, all rooms have been retrofitted with plexiglass. Instruction is offered both virtually and in-person, with 400

students opting for in-person instruction and 400 for virtual instruction. SULC hired additional faculty to reduce class sizes and offer more course sections. Chancellor Pierre informed the Council that \$1 million had been invested to support COVID-19 changes in several areas including digital divide, regular temperature checks, retrofitting, tele-health rooms (provided to employees and students by Ochsner Health), and continued development with an outside agency of a scope of work to conduct contact tracing.

(F) Chancellor Orlando McMeans, Southern University Agriculture Center

Southern University Agricultural Center has begun hemp trials. Laboratories are to be cleaned twice a day, masks are mandatory, and social distancing is required. Additionally, all face-to-face interactions have been cancelled and all field research is done virtually. Chancellor McMeans is chairing a committee with Chancellor Richardson of the LSU Agricultural Center and submitted a grant for \$3 million in supplemental funding for Land Grant institutions. Small farmers, comprised largely of African Americans, need funding assistance. Most of the farmers do not have computers and broadband is non-existent in the rural areas in which many are located. Mobile units will go out to farmers to assist them in completing applications for funding assistance.

(G) President Walter Kimbrough, Dillard University

Dillard University starts classes on August 18, 2020, and student leaders have already moved onto the campus. The Health Department will conduct testing at Dillard and other universities in New Orleans. President Kimbrough informed the Council that he is uncertain of enrollment numbers at that time, but remains hopeful. To prevent the spread

of COVID-19, housing will be single occupancy and students can take online courses through other private institutions.

CENTER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

In collaboration with Michael Jones, lead attorney for the Maryland case related to funding of HBCUs, the Center for Racial Justice plans to hold broad discussions about racial justice and the role higher education plays in addressing this issue. Several faculty members are involved in this effort, as well as in a partnership with the Georgetown Law Center. The Council will continue to be informed and discuss how it can be of assistance.

FUTURE MEETINGS, FUTURE FOCUS AREAS, AND NEXT STEPS

The next Council meetings, tentatively, will be held in November 2020 and February and April 2021.

CLOSING REMARKS

President Gallot offered to share information regarding the “I Am A Man” voter registration project initiated by New Orleans native Anthony Mackey. Mr. Mackey’s goal is to spur one million African American males to vote.

Preston Castille, new BESE appointee, asked to determine how K-12 can become involved with the Advisory Council and HBCUs.

President Belton thanked Commissioner Reed for her leadership.

Commissioner Reed indicated that she has asked the Governor’s Office to provide masks to all Student Government Association (SGA) members at each institution, private or public.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the HBCU Advisory Council, the meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.