

Pro MUW Proposal: 144

Mississippi Department of Education
359 North West Street
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Dear Dr. Boone,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Adeola Adebisi, and I am a 2007 graduate of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science and a 2012 graduate of Mississippi State University. I was also born and raised in Starkville, MS, and though I attended Hebron Christian School from K4 – 10th grade, three of my older siblings attended Armstrong Middle School and Starkville High School. I am a proud Mississippian, and I have carried this identity with me through graduate school in Tennessee and as a teacher working in Texas and now in Atlanta, Georgia. I include all of this background to say that I love my state and my hometown, and I strongly believe that, of the two options proposed, MSMS is better located on the campus of Mississippi University for Women.

The core challenge facing my high school is underfunding. I remember that my class was on the smaller side, but our numbers increased after we re-opened applications following Hurricane Katrina. The school numbers were forced to be smaller, though, when the girls moved out of Fant Hall into Goen Hall at the back of campus during my senior year, the 2006-2007 school year. Shortly after this, a tuition cost was added, increasing barriers for economically disadvantaged but brilliant scholars. Various scholarships were developed, but surely this was not the intention of the founders of the school. As highlighted in MUW's proposal, Mississippi is funding its math and science school at \$16,000 less per student than the average funding of programs in sister schools in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Alabama. Closing this gap for an enrollment of 250 students would require \$4 million dollars, which is less than the \$7.9 million that the 106 graduates of the Class of 2024 *accepted* in scholarships (www.msms.org).

I have taken the time to read through both proposals. First, I want to point out that MSU is not proposing any financial contribution, so their proposal carries no more weight in that regard than MUW. MSU's proposal will actually increase the financial burden with brand-new facilities more than MUW's proposed renovation of existing buildings. Second, MSU leverages their existing partnership with the Starkville Oktibbeha County School District as reference, but as a residential school, MSMS is inherently different.

At MSMS, students do not just "visit" school during the day; they live on campus, so campus size and atmosphere matters. Many students may complain that MUW and downtown Columbus are boring, but for students aged 15 – 18, that is ideal. Beginning with campus size, as stated in the MUW proposal, MSMS students "are never more than a five-minute walk" from what they need, from dining halls to recreation centers to libraries and so on. The MSU plan does not include information on dining, but the remaining non-academic facilities are significantly further. Sanderson Gym is 10 minutes from the proposed site (assuming students are afforded access). Mitchell Memorial Library is located on the opposite side of campus, roughly 30 minutes by foot.

Culturally, MSMS operates differently, too. For one thing, the class schedule for an MSMS student is more consistent with a college schedule than a typical high school one, which would add an even greater challenge in harmonization with SOCS. In dorms, MSMS residential life serves as *in loco parentis*, engaging in a greater capacity of a student's life than MSU's residential life. This is a factor that the university diminished in its proposal.

Also, while MSU elected to highlight the research park to the north and the buffering residential neighborhood (i.e., college housing) to the south, they failed to mention that the proposed space borders the athletic facilities to the west, including the football practice fields, Dudy Noble Field, and the athletic-academic building, Templeton (where I recall having lunch with my friends and running into many college athletes while I was at MSU). MUW pointed out that MSMS has opted to maintain separate campus events, and it is worth noting that it makes perfect sense to separate 15 – 18-year-old high school students from 18+ year old college students. Many of us alumni are concerned that this separation would be harder to achieve on a large campus like Mississippi State University.

Another thing that was highlighted heavily in MSU's proposal was potential research partnerships. I want to explicitly state the following: MSMS already has partnerships with MSU. This is nothing new. As a senior in 2006 - 2007, I rode a bus with a few of my classmates to Starkville weekly to conduct research. MUW pointed out that students are offered dual enrollment courses, and we already have qualified teachers with dual appointments at the university to facilitate our classes. While expanding the curriculum is certainly beneficial, this is already in the works, and as far as I can tell, a new location would not affect this aspect of the program.

MSMS exists as a space for smart students to be themselves. I wish you could read the stories and hear the testimonies of students who never felt they belonged in their own schools before finding their place at MSMS. For me, MSMS was a way to reach a level academically (in math. Hi, I'm a nerd; I own it.) that I would never have achieved at my previous school. When I think back on my time at MSMS, though, I remember classmates – like my fellow Class Favorite who now works in public health in Jackson and my suitemate who is a dentist on the coast – and Latoya from Res Life and Lyn, who always checked the mirror for toothpaste spots on room check. I remember my teachers, too, and can only hope that my Physics room will grow to be as captivating as Mr. Reed's room was. My ultimate career goal is to return to Mississippi to teach at MSMS, but I do not feel qualified yet to teach there. I do not feel that I can bring the high quality of teaching – academic, social, cultural, experiential learning – that the students deserve. Yet.

To conclude, MSMS is already a top-tier high school that garners the state national attention year after year. MSMS already has a nationally recognized faculty and caring residential life that looks after its students. What we need are the funds to continue to operate at a safe and effective level on a small campus, to continue to draw the state's top students and to give them a space where they can blossom during high school and where they can think of Mississippi as home.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Adeola Adebiyi

Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science, c/o 2007

Mississippi State University, c/o 2012, B.S. Chemical Engineering, Math and Music Minor

Vanderbilt University, c/o 2015, M.S. Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering

MSMS

From Linda Ross Aldy <lrossaldy@gmail.com>
Date Sun 3/2/2025 6:06 PM
To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dr. Boone, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposals and the RFP related to MSMS.

First, I'd like to offer my appreciation to you and Dr. Evans for making MSMS a priority issue. For the first time in its existence, there is recognition of this amazing high school and the results it is achieving in spite of funding for both facilities and for per pupil expenditure when compared to surrounding states.

The lack of funding through the years has compounded and brought us to this point.

I don't have to tell you about the reasons that MUW was originally chosen as the home for both Governor's School and MSMS. Those reasons remain valid to this day.

Adequate funding for MSMS is going to be necessary regardless of where the legislature decides to locate it. Obviously, from the proposals submitted by MSU and MUW, the W is more cost effective. The W does not propose to rename MSMS or to piggyback it with another high school. As the premier high school in Mississippi, it deserves to maintain its own identity and reputation.

Finally, the W provides a smaller and safer campus environment for high school students. I know that you will consider Clery Report information as you review the proposals. If MSMS and MDE are successful in adding a 10th grade level, that becomes even more important as adding 15-year-olds to the mix is an important challenge. Being on the W campus does not require students to shuttle to any class, fitness center, post office, food service, or library.

There are clear advantages to maintaining MSMS on the W campus, not the least of which are student safety and cost effectiveness. I appreciate your taking the time to review my comments and all the others that I know you will receive.

Linda Ross Aldy
Madison, MS
601-573-0896

MSMS Move

From Annagrace Anderson <annag1018@yahoo.com>

Date Fri 2/28/2025 10:33 AM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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To whom it may concern,

As a student at the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science, I strongly oppose moving to Mississippi State University on the terms that have been presented so far. I believe that so much more could be done to benefit the students of MSMS. I also feel that the MSMS to MSU move would benefit Starkville and Mississippi State much more significantly than MSMS or the surrounding districts that we serve through outreach and other community based events. Many aspects of the proposal from MSU take away from the exclusivity of MSMS, and the combination of MSMS being in such close relation to other highschools opens doors to bullying--seeing how diverse the MSMS population is-- and other loopholes that dilute the prestige of MSMS. However, while I oppose that option, I also believe that the Mississippi University for Women proposals are also highly contingent on money that is not guaranteed or even noticeably advocated for beyond MSMS students' efforts. Beyond the monetary aspects of the proposal from MUW, there is nothing that would noticeably benefit MSMS students that we do not already have access to. Furthermore, there is a feeling among many of those related to MSMS--whether through being a student, family member to a student, graduate, or any other relationship--that MUW has frequently taken credit for many of our accomplishments without providing the proper support necessary for them to be credited as well. That being said, I question why the University of Southern Mississippi has not been taken into consideration on any of these prospective moving proposals. USM has an amazing polymer science program, research facilities, and central areas near campus that would allow for limited interaction between college students and MSMS students. I believe that they would be open to discussing this considering their support of furthering our post-secondary education through providing full tuition scholarships to the past 2 graduating classes.

Thank you for all that you do!

Sincerely,
Anna Anderson

MSMS location

From Baldwin, DeeDee <DBaldwin@library.msstate.edu>

Date Thu 2/27/2025 9:44 AM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone,

As both a graduate of MSMS (class of 1997) and a current employee of Mississippi State, I strongly urge the Board to recommend keeping MSMS at MUW with proper state funding to support it. The small, intimate campus environment is exactly what MSMS needs, and all the infrastructure for the school is already there – and worthy of properly funded upgrades. Despite being the lowest funded school of its kind in the South (to my knowledge), MSMS consistently shines in national rankings. The people of MUW and Columbus have invested decades in championing MSMS, and the SBE should consider how much greater the school could become with all that support, love, and **appropriate funding**.

The proposed location in Starkville is too isolated for students who are currently able to walk a few blocks to Columbus' downtown. And the proposed melding of MSMS with Starkville High School is unacceptable. I say that as someone who loves Starkville's public schools; my niece is a freshman at SHS, and my sister is a teacher in the district. MSMS belongs to the people of the state, and the students both need and deserve their own dedicated spaces.

Finally, though these may be considered small things in the overall picture, I want to say something about two MSMS programs that are extremely close to my heart and inextricably tied to Columbus. History teacher Chuck Yarborough (who was also my teacher back in the 90s!) directs the award-winning and nationally-recognized "Tales from the Crypt" program (<https://themsms.org/tales-from-the-crypt/>), which has been performed by MSMS students in Columbus' Friendship Cemetery since the 1990s. Students who participate in this program are able to walk to the Columbus library's outstanding archives, where my friend Mona Vance-Ali and her colleagues have years of experience helping them conduct in-depth historical research on local figures. "Tales" draws thousands of attendees each spring and is a stellar example of community engagement and public history. Mr. Yarborough's students also put on Columbus' "Eighth of May Emancipation Celebration" (https://www.wtva.com/news/highlighting-history-8th-of-may-celebration-at-a-historic-columbus-cemetery/article_b8a237a6-0edb-11ef-96c9-5fd33985d468.html), which is held annually in the city's historic Sandfield Cemetery. Like "Tales," it engages research from the Columbus archives, brings local history to life, and always draws a big crowd from the community. It is an event that I prioritize attending every year. Neither of these important and impactful programs should be lost.

MSMS already has a home and a community. Let it stay there.

Thank you for your consideration,
DeeDee Baldwin
MSMS Class of 1997
Engagement Librarian at Mississippi State
Vice President, Society of Mississippi Archivists
Board Member, Mississippi Historical Society
(opinions represent me alone)



Stakeholder letter re: proposal to move MSMS from The W to MSU

From Megan Bean <meganbean2@hotmail.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 1:49 PM

To Dboone@mdeck12.org <Dboone@mdeck12.org>; SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

Cc Ben Harvey <obridge@hotmail.com>

 1 attachment (61 KB)

Ltr_re_MSMS_potential_move-MBeanBHarvey-4_Mar_2025.pdf;

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone:

During a busy time in our lives, our family has spent a fair bit of time thinking about and crafting the attached letter. We hope you will read it and take it into consideration.

Thank you for all you do to support the success of Mississippi's schools,
Megan Bean

Megan Bean meganbean2@hotmail.com

Megan Bean & Ben Harvey
1 Talley Ho
Starkville, MS 39759
meganbean2@hotmail.com
662-648-9547

4 March 2025

Re: Whether to relocate MSMS to MSU or leave it at the W

Dear Dr. Boone:

We're writing to you in response to the two proposals before you that may decide the fate of the Mississippi School for Math & Science. We're taking the time to write as MSMS stakeholders, and from a position with layers of knowledge about the possible options.

We are the parents of a current MSMS junior and a 2024 MSMS graduate. Our family resides in Starkville, and we are proud to have had both kids attend the Starkville Oktibbeha School District for their entire education before receiving the opportunity to attend MSMS. We have insider knowledge of both Starkville High School and MSU, where my husband and I are both faculty. Our kids grew up with the Drill Field as their playground and later, as a place of research through opportunities provided by MSU-MSMS partnerships.

Based on our experience and knowledge, our whole family believes that MSMS should remain located on the campus of the W and not be relocated to MSU. We acknowledge that the conditions of the MSMS academic buildings are out of date and have long been in need of investment. Even with the recent small fixups, thanks to MSMS alumni donations, the dorms have serious habitability issues. But in our view, the W and Columbus offer a Far Better setting/environment than that could be offered by MSU's proposal. We would like to see MSMS adequately funded in its current location.

Our core thoughts:

- MSMS is an absolute **gem and a gift** to the whole State of Mississippi. The MSMS faculty and program understand the particular needs of gifted and talented high school students and provide them with a setting of amazing growth and opportunity. We are so grateful that our family made the sacrifice and took the risk of sending our kids away and into the care of MSMS for their last two years of high school.
- **Sacrifice & Risk:** Yes, it's a sacrifice for parents to lose two years of having their kids at home, well before they were expected to test leaving the nest. Yes, it's a risk to see if your kids can handle the responsibility and opportunities of living away from

home. Yes, it's both a risk and a sacrifice for the kids to give up the familiarities of home and the networks of friends and community that had supported them until 11th grade.

- **Fairness:** But the point is that part of what makes MSMS work is that all who attend DO make those sacrifices for the educational opportunity of MSMS. Everyone is on equal footing and made similar sacrifices. There's no "day school" option that's available for local Columbus kids or the offspring of MSMS or W faculty. I fully understand why MSU and SOCSO would want to purchase special access to MSMS:E that no one else in the state is allowed. It would be a coup for MSMS:E to privilege the children of Starkville above all others: SHS students could just dip in to MSMS:E for the classes and the stellar faculty, getting to be surrounded by the best and brightest... all without the sacrifice. Starkville SHS students would still get to participate in SHS's D1 competitive sports, be surrounded by the peer groups they grew up with, and sleep in their rooms at home and party after school as much as their parents allow. Because MSU and SOCSO foot the bill for the building and physical amenities, they'd get a special deal no one else gets!? We can see how MSU would like to use the promise of an improved school system through MSMS:E to recruit and retain new faculty, administrators, and athletic staff. But this is fundamentally unfair to the other communities in Mississippi (college towns and otherwise!).
- The lovely and safe setting of the W, with the charming small main street of Columbus and the River Walk a short distance away are the **Just Right location** for MSMS. We feel So Safe with our kids there AND they get to have a long leash, walking to all those nearby amenities. No cars are needed on campus and the circle of their range is perfect for 11th & 12th graders learning how to be independent, without (a) having a strange isolated prison vibe, like the MSU proposal for MSMS:E or (b) the tantalizing risk of MSU's wild frat parties, weekend college parties in the Cotton District, or the drugs and parties on abundant offer to the Starkville High School set (yes, as locals, we know of those opportunities well, too).
- Because of the rigor and focus required by the MSMS college preparatory program, the MSMS students need the benefit of the **Just Right atmosphere**, where they can gain the trust of the MSMS administrators to enjoy wholesome fun with their fellow students, without the temptation to take that fun too far, derailing the promise of MSMS and all they have sacrificed to get there.
- Again: the challenging college prep inquiry, writing, and STEM work of MSMS is not offered by the former local high schools of its students. There's a reason they had leave those schools behind and make the sacrifice to attend MSMS. Yet the proposed MSMS:E sounds like it's designed to clip the wings of the MSMS students,

creating some sad middle ground between the focus of MSMS to nurture its students to push their academic boundaries and SOCSO's more modest focus on preparedness for immediate careers. The expectation of most MSMS students is that their careers may launch in the more distant future, certainly after their undergraduate educations and more likely after an additional investment in graduate school.

- If MSU thinks that more MSMS:E students will want to attend its campus after living on it an extra two years, we expect that they will be sorely mistaken. My MSMS kids assure me that they and their peers want a college experience that is DIFFERENT from their high school experience. Being on MSU's campus for high school may actually push them away to an alternate Mississippi college or beyond.
- If potential **brain drain** from Mississippi is the concern, this proposal won't solve it. Please note that even if a number of current MSMS graduates take the opportunities they've earned to attend out of state colleges after HS graduation, this is not a loss to Mississippi, but an INVESTMENT in Mississippi's future. It's a good thing for a handful of the state's best and brightest to bring Mississippi's viewpoint into the world, make valuable national connections, and gather resources to bring home. Many of them will later return back to Mississippi as leaders, bringing and building their businesses, careers, and families, all with the benefit of context and national and international networks. Don't be short-sighted in your decision making.
- **MSMS's faculty** are the true strength and core of MSMS's curriculum and magic. They are specialized and exceptional in teaching students of this age and with these capacities. Please don't underestimate the risk of moving MSMS to MSU or thinking that MSU faculty can replace them. If the move happens, we fear that many of the excellent MSMS teachers would not follow the institution to Starkville. They will not be easily replaced.
- MSMS has never been adequately funded. The best use of state **funds**, and the most "bang for buck" for taxpayers, is not to build a completely new facility in Starkville, but to improve and build on MSMS's facilities in its current location.

The fate of MSMS will not directly impact our family-- by the time any of these proposals come to pass, our children will have already graduated. Nevertheless, we feel invested in the institution and would like the future children of the whole of Mississippi to have the same opportunities that were provided to ours. Please protect, support, and nurture MSMS with its current priorities and strengths.

Thank you for giving our thoughts your attention,

Megan Bean & Ben Harvey

MSMS Proposals

From JESSE BEESON <koja76@bellsouth.net>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 12:23 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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To whom it may concern,

I'm writing to weigh in on the current proposals regarding the future of MSMS: continuing on the MUW campus versus relocation to Starkville. Just a little about me, I graduated from MSMS in 2015, went to Tulane and graduated from there in 2019, and I'm an airline pilot for American Airlines. I still maintain involvement with the school having worked on the application review and interview committees and slated to be on a committee this cycle.

While I'm glad that those involved composed a proposal for the Starkville relocation, this only completely addresses one problem, the age and condition of present facilities, and mitigates the logistics involved in moving students to and from MSU but doesn't fully resolve it as I understand it. That said, this isn't really a problem.

I'm from Wesson, about ten minutes from the Arts School in Brookhaven, and one of their biggest goals for years has been the self-containment of their operation. MSMS has never had to deal with this because we always had our own little nook on the MUW campus that was ours. It can't be overstated how much that lends to the sense of community that we have felt over the years. We're a collectively intelligent group, and people like that really develop a bond predicated on that intelligence, trying to survive our course load and activities, being interested in similar things, and having congruous aspirations. Blending the school with SHS would undoubtedly muddle this.

I completely agree with the state of the dorms, and the academic buildings are definitely in tow as related to condition. The MUW proposal of renovating Peyton and Fant and rededicating them makes a lot of sense, as these were the original dorms for the school. My understanding is that they reached a point where occupancy couldn't continue, but they also can't be demolished because they're historic buildings. The buildings, even in that state, are beautiful and fit for a school of MSMS's stature and would constitute a two birds/one stone approach to the housing issue. I think the academic buildings warrant updating, but the facilities have performed adeptly for decades, and I believe they can continue to do so.

Finally, a great deal of the school's heritage and sense of self are centered around Columbus. The various events, historical value of the city as it relates to Tales, etc. are part of the school's DNA. This isn't something you can recreate overnight. A lot of people feel homesick when they leave home for the first

time, I know I was, but the sense of community coupled with that local identity serve as carrots to stay. I have no doubt that the school can attract the best talent in the state, that's not the issue, it's retention. You want to have every resource possible to make people want to be there, and I think the aforementioned are unquestionable contributors to why the school still exists pushing 40 years after its inception.

Regardless of what happens, I'll maintain my involvement with the school, but left up to me, I vote to keep things on MUW's campus in Columbus pending the terms of the proposal being finalized and executed. I hope you take these comments into consideration.

Best,
Jesse Beeson

Sent from my iPhone

Comment on the MSMS move plan from MUW to MSU

From Alonso Bocanegra <bocanegraa26@themsms.org>

Date Sun 3/2/2025 11:47 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Greetings,

I am Alonso Bocanegra from Kosciusko, Mississippi. I am a junior at MSMS, and I believe the proposal is intolerable. I was satisfied with moving to Mississippi State University; however, I was not content to move next to Starkville High School. The proposal mentioned that the move was necessary because kids wanted a normal high school experience. This is not the reason why I came into MSMS. I came to MSMS to receive exposure to the college environment. I was not a student at Starkville High School, but I was told about some experiences with the school from my fellow peers. The school's location is substandard, and a big part of MSMS is the freedom I have to walk from local businesses to recreational parks, like the Coffee House on 5th or the Waterwalk here in Columbus. I was emotionally bullied at my old school, and I have some sense of understanding with public school students. I am terrified to return to an environment where a student might call me slurs or make threatening comments. In any case, I hope that whatever the decision is, it helps the future of MSMS.

Darla Hammons

From: Donna Boone
Sent: Tuesday, March 4, 2025 5:27 PM
To: Darla Hammons
Subject: Fw: Strong Opposition to Moving MSMS from The W Campus

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From: valentin bogdan <valybogdan@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 4, 2025 2:16:17 PM
To: Donna Boone <dboone@mdek12.org>
Subject: Strong Opposition to Moving MSMS from The W Campus

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone,

My name is Mihai Bogdan, I live in Columbus, MS.

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed relocation of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) from The W campus to Mississippi State University (MSU). MSU is simply not a suitable campus for high school students. As an open campus, it poses significant safety concerns and lacks the structured environment necessary for a residential high school. MSMS has thrived for nearly 40 years at The W, providing an academically rigorous and secure setting that fosters student success. There is no justifiable reason to disrupt this well-established model.

I have reviewed The W's proposal, and it is clear that their plan is concrete, feasible, and in the best interest of MSMS students. It also costs taxpayers 50 million dollars less than the MSU one. The W proposal outlines specific ideas and demonstrates a commitment to maintaining the high standards that have made MSMS one of the most successful institutions of its kind. In contrast, MSU's proposal lacks substance, it's very general, reads more like a wish list without concrete plan on how to accomplish all these ideas, and it fails to specify what kind of academic opportunities MSMS students would have. It reads more like a plan to merge MSMS with Starkville High School rather than a legitimate effort to improve the educational experience of these gifted students.

Furthermore, it is both unheard of and unacceptable for the state and taxpayers like myself to foot the bill for a new high school in Starkville. As a Lowndes County resident, I strongly oppose my tax

dollars being used to support a school district outside of my own. This sets a dangerous precedent and creates a slippery slope that the state should not pursue.

Additionally, MDE has a de facto binding contract with Lowndes County, which contributed \$1 million to help build MSMS. The MSMS charter document explicitly states that the school is to be located in Columbus. While relocation is possible, only the legislature has the authority to initiate that process—not MDE. By attempting this move unilaterally, MDE is breaching this contract.

I urge you to reject this hasty and inappropriate move to Starkville and recognize the clear value and stability offered by The W's proposal. MSMS has flourished at The W for decades, and disrupting that success for an ill-conceived alternative would be a disservice to the students, faculty, and the state of Mississippi as a whole.

Sincerely,

**Mihai Bogdan
Columbus, MS**

MSMS

From Shannon Bowen <shannonjonesbowen@gmail.com>

Date Fri 2/28/2025 1:55 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Ms. Boone,

I am writing to voice my concerns regarding the moving of Mississippi School of Math and Science (MSMS) from the Mississippi University for Women (MUW) campus, which as you know has housed this institution since its inception 38 years ago.

I have a son that attends the camps at MSMS each summer. He is academically gifted and would like to apply when it is appropriate, in his case, it will be this time next year, as he is a freshman. So the future of this school is very much a concern for us. We also live in Columbus in the area of the college and wish only the best for MUW and the community that surrounds it as that too affects us personally as well.

When my husband and I first heard of the opportunity for MSMS to grow with the help, resources and financial backing of MSU, we were not opposed to the idea. We have another son that lives in Starkville and attends MSU. I attended MSU as well and find it to be a sound educational institution. The idea of the MSMS students having access to everything MSU has to offer was exciting to think about. However, the proposal put forth by MSU for MSMS has made us completely against the idea. First of all, the proposal isn't for MSMS. It is for Starkville High School with MSMS being earmarked a little corner. Shared facilities with Starkville High is the most unattractive aspect of the whole deal. These children that attend MSMS need to be separated from your average high school aged child. The exposure of being different or special would make them stand out and give them the potential of being bullied or picked on. If throwing them in the mix of average high school kids is the best you can do, then you need to keep them at MUW. Here they are separated and when they do interface with other young adults attending MUW, they are among people that are there by choice for an education, not kids that are required to be at school because they are not old enough to make that decision for themselves. Something just doesn't seem right with the scenario being presented by MSU. This only benefits Starkville High and would bring down the academic and social structure that makes MSMS so special. Whomever is driving this to be this way in Starkville is hiding the true reason of wanting MSMS there. Is it to get more funding into Starkville High disguised as being for MSMS? To me, this is unacceptable and very transparent. Surely the legislation will see this for what it really is and put a stop to it. This is a disservice to the children that have worked so hard to get in and study at MSMS. If I wanted my child to go to Starkville High "Plus", I'd move to Starkville and send him there.

We realize that MUW is struggling and cannot compare with MSU. However, it still produces and

provides a quality education to its students. MUW is less funded, overlooked and isn't as "shiny" as the other universities in Mississippi. But that isn't MUW's fault, it is Mississippi's fault for allowing it to get in this shape. MUW still has a purpose, it is in the middle of beautiful downtown Columbus, and it shouldn't be penalized because the State of Mississippi has ignored it over the years. And I'm not sure if you have ever visited the dorms at MSMS where we house arguably the brightest and best high school children in the state of Mississippi, but they truly are atrocious. They are outdated, they don't have modern conveniences. They are unfit to live in. You would not kennel your dog in these rooms to be honest and these poor children are expected to live there for 4 semesters of some of the most formidable years of their lives. Do better. Provide these children with the best, not the worst. But if you are going to build new facilities, do it on the campus of MUW. Make up for all of the years you have neglected this beautiful university. Give MUW a chance and give the MSMS students something that is truly for them (not Starkville High) and something they for which they can be proud.

Thank you for your time. I am hoping you will make the right and smart decision to keep MSMS at MUW and also to provide these special children what they need to succeed.

Sincerely,
Shannon Jones Bowen

MSMS

From dssms <bowleyjames@gmail.com>

Date Thu 2/27/2025 11:45 AM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Leaders,

It is very surprising to me that there is now an argument about the location of Mississippi's finest school, MSMS.

MSMS benefits tremendously from being in the middle of the W's safe campus--dorms and academic buildings are never more than a 5 min walk from anything students need (cafeteria, health center, library, gym, mental health services, etc.). The MSU proposal puts our High School students technically off campus and far away from many needed things.

MSMS does not belong to any school district and that fact has allowed it to flourish all these years. Additionally, this partnership with one school district would be unfair to ALL THE OTHER TAX PAYERS whose kids don't go to school anywhere near Starkville. It is the state of Mississippi's burden to fund MSMS, and it sure sounds like they're trying to offload their responsibility for the best school in the state. The W has saved the state on upkeep since 1988--90% of what MSMS would pay to operate. The W has been a blessing to the entire tax base of Mississippi in this respect, and MDE should be grateful.

Don't mess with what isn't broken; MSMS is one of the few things that we do really well in MS. Let's not change it now for the sake of greed.

Sincerely,

Dr James E Bowley

Resident, Jackson

Fwd: MS School for Mathematics and Science

From theboyds@mail.com <theboyds@mail.com>

Date Fri 2/28/2025 3:03 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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To: Mississippi State Board of Education

Below is an email that I sent to Jason White, Speaker of the House and Delbert Hosemann, Lieutenant Governor back on February 13, 2025. It appears that the Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE) is rushing this decision concerning the relocation of MSMS by first of all allowing such a short time frame to get the proposals from the proposed universities and second by allowing only (5) days for stakeholder feedback. I personally have a job so SBE is not allowing proper time to get informative feedback, and I'm sure most of the other interested parties do not feel like there is appropriate time to respond. It appears that the SBE has already made a decision and this whole proposal and stakeholder feedback project is just going through the motions. I would ask that more time be allowed for feedback, if there is a desire to get it.

In a time where our state is many facing challenges with the underfunding of PERS, a push to eliminate our state income tax for economic reasons, medicaid expansion, reduction of the grocery tax, and underfunding for the Dept of Transportation, it would seem to be a bit irresponsible to spend the additional funds to move MSMS to MSU and spend this additional \$85 million for this project when it could be done so much cheaper at MUW. It wouldn't take nearly as much money to renovate existing buildings and dorms, and everyone on the MUW campus knows that these are high school students. It just fiscally doesn't make any sense, and that's not even touching on the soft issues of what's the best environment for these students to be able to live and thrive. I hope that MDE will take these considerations under advisement. If I had add'l time, I would delve into these proposals. I hope that the Mississippi State Board of Education will! **LET'S KEEP MSMS ON THE MUW CAMPUS! (It means so much more to our town!)**

Sherry Boyd

February 13, 2025

As a member of the **Lowndes County Republican Women**, I would like to address the State Board of Education's **proposed process for determining if the MS School for Math and Science should be moved off of the MUW campus in Columbus to the proposed partnership school at Mississippi State University**. As I understand it, each university is supposed to submit a proposal for plans to house and operate MSMS on their campus, and furthermore **the proposal is due Feb 25th**. Why is there a **great rush** to obtain proposals to possibly move the school? Of course, the great rush **arouses suspicion** as MSU appears to have the upper hand at getting a proposal together very quickly as MUW is a much

smaller campus with less people who would have much less time to dedicate to a project of this magnitude. Also apparently the questions to address in the proposal are **skewed toward MSU** as that appears to be what MDE will be using to evaluate a move.

Why is MDE even seeking to explore this strategy? Has MSU and/or Starkville reached out to MDE wanting to move MSMS to them? **Is money the supposed driver here?** Housing costs should be about the same. It would **cost the same to build a dormitory in Columbus or Starkville** (or if you look at the cost of buying a house, they are much higher in Starkville than Columbus). **What about the well-being of the students of MSMS?**

I am a mother of 3 and I can tell you that I would not have wanted my teenaged high school students to be boarded at a large university. They are at a **very formative time in their lives** and don't need to be on or close to a campus with **"persuasions" that they can't handle as a boarding student (StarkVegas!)** They are much better off on a smaller campus where they are **recognized as "high school" students**. Columbus and Mississippi University for Women welcomes the MS School for Math and Science, and I can tell you that this would be met with a hailstorm of opposition should a move be proposed.

I state my opposition to any relocation of the MS School for Math and Science.

Sherry Boyd

MSMS proposals

From Marchelle Brain <marchellebrain@yahoo.com>

Date Sun 3/2/2025 11:44 AM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

Cc Rob@RobRoberson.com <rob@robroberson.com>

External Email

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Dr. Donna Boone
Chief Academic Officer
Mississippi Department of Education

Dear Dr. Boone,

As a Starkville parent of an MSMS alumna and a potential MSMS student currently in the 9th grade, I would like to encourage legislators to consider the whole life experience of these young students when making the decision of where to locate the MSMS campus and planning for its future.

First, I would like to applaud the MS legislature for recognizing the importance of MSMS to our state and our future and recognizing the need for updating the facilities and providing better funding for this important and nationally recognized institution. It is a Mississippi treasure and is currently woefully underfunded, especially given its special mission and track record. Thank you!

We live in Starkville, so I am well aware of the many benefits of locating MSMS to our town, school district, and university. The MSMS-E proposal sounds *very* appealing and inspiring, but there are

some realities of residential life for young students that may not be best addressed by this plan. Therefore, even given the advantages to my own community, I question whether MSMS-E would truly be in the interests of the MSMS students or its mission, even when on the surface it may appear so.

My main concerns are the concerns many parents have when considering sending their children to live away from home at such a young age: Will this be the best thing for them? Will they be safe? Who will be watching after them? Many of the academic opportunities will be unparalleled, but what about the rest of their experience away from home? Who and what influences will be guiding them to grow during these formative years? Can or should I entrust them to this institution?

Of course, on paper it sounds wonderful to have the excellent resources and capabilities of MSU at hand, but please consider the reality of housing very smart and creative 10th-12th graders so close to an SEC university. Putting MSMS students in a dorm on campus while waiting for the new campus to be built might prove particularly challenging. Are MSU and SOCSU truly positioned to take on the inherent in-loco parentis responsibilities?

MUW is able to provide a self-contained living community for MSMS that simply cannot be duplicated at MSU. Because the MSMS and MUW campuses are so small, everyone knows each other, enabling a true community that is one of the most valuable aspects of the MSMS experience. The students feel and are *known*. This is important for social and personal development.

The self-contained location on a small college campus also enables the school to provide and ensure a more physically secure and sheltered environment for these kids to grow. MUW is much smaller and quieter with fewer beckoning distractions and hazards next door. The security officers, staff, dorm residents, and faculty know the students and know where they are and where they should or

should not be, and this is important. These qualities could not be preserved or duplicated at MSU, especially if merged into the SOCSO school district, which is already very large (and frankly a bit unwieldy).

Similarly, while it's also wonderful these students could access MSU's counseling and health services, could the current system simply absorb this new population with no commitments to hire new staff, especially if the MSMS enrollment were to grow to 450 students? Would these students receive the individualized care they need? I have heard that it is already difficult for current MSU students to receive proper counseling care, and such needs are growing. MSMS students are not college students and often require more and different kinds of support. If MSU is chosen, please consider expanding the plan to **guarantee** expanded services, perhaps with specifically designated personnel, to help meet such needs of these young students.

Adolescence is known to be a difficult developmental stage, but it is particularly confusing and challenging right now. Please carefully weigh what kind of environment would be best for these students to thrive and develop into healthy adults during these crucial formative years. I, for one, would recommend the smaller community environment—properly funded, of course—at MUW as the best choice.

Thank you for supporting the future of MSMS and all of Mississippi's students and schools. I hope you will consider these perhaps less obvious concerns when evaluating the current proposals.

Sincerely,
Marchelle Brain
Starkville, MS

Support for MSMS at MUW

From Quinn Brislin <quinn@brislininc.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 2:36 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

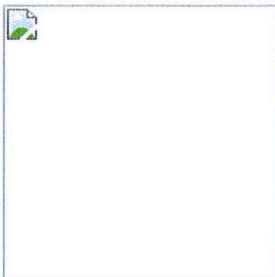
CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the MDE organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

I'm in support of MSMS staying on campus at MUW here in Columbus, MS. The students and their families have chosen to relocate to a facility on a college campus and receive upper education without the interference (or noise) of traditional K-12 campuses. MUW provides this space for learning with very little assistance from IHL. In fact, IHL is most to blame for facility issues at MUW by not providing for current enrollees. IHL should consider these students as their own and provide the same experience as other college students enjoy. The MSMS students currently enjoy a one block walk from the dorms to the Hooper Science building, a one block walk to the Stark Recreation Center, and a two block walk to the Goose (Cafeteria). They are introduced to life of a college student at an early age and IHL is missing an opportunity in retention.

The MSU proposal simply places the MSMS students in the corner lot of the existing Partnership School with the promise of brand new facilities. What experience will that be for MSMS students? It's a far, uphill walk to the center of campus. These kids don't want to be housed at a middle school....c'mon MSU/SSD!

Sincerely,
Quinn





Quinn Brislin

Vice President | Brislin, Inc.

p: 662-328-5814 | m: 662-386-0634

a: 4051 Military Road | Columbus, MS 39705

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 [Image result for microsoft email logo](#)

The Future of MSMS

From Betty Bryan <bbryan9017@gmail.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 10:50 AM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the MDE organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Dr. Boone,

I would like to add my comments to the MUW proposal for continuing to house MSMS on the MUW campus. As the mother of an MSMS graduate who received an excellent education there and went on to earn a BS from MSU, an MD from Harvard, and a PhD from MIT, I feel well qualified to address this matter.

1. Safety: My husband and I were very pleased by the safety and nurturing qualities of MSMS on the W campus. Classes, and he was afforded classes at MUW as well as MSMS, were within a short walking distance. Many of the MUW entrance points are blocked at night, so that campus must be accessed via a manned security checkpoint. In this day and age, a secure campus relieves the anxiety of having a sixteen year old live away from home, especially true for a female student. If MSMS were to be moved to MSU, protecting young teens on such a sprawling campus with a wide variety of older students could become a real problem. An attractive female would be vulnerable to older male students. Why create a problem when the solution of staying at MUW is so obvious.

2. The MSMS Mission: Some students attend MSMS as a way of connecting with other students who value academic excellence, learning from one another, and not facing intimidation by students who do not. I have heard time and again from MSMS students that they had finally found a place where they belonged. If MSMS were moved to MSU, the academic mission would be compromised. Of necessity, MSMS would no longer have the autonomy mandated by the Mississippi Legislature, probably not be able to continue to follow a college-type schedule of class meetings, and would be required to compromise as a co-school with Starkville High School. Why create such problems when the MSMS model has been wildly successful for the past 37 years?

3. MSMS Success: The award-winning MSMS faculty is nurturing, hardworking, and very competent. A number of them hold the PhD degree. Several of the faculty are MSMS graduates. All are dedicated to the mission of the school in providing a true Excellence for Opportunity. The high number of National Merit Finalists and competition winners among the student body validates the work of the faculty and administration. It is my opinion that MSMS staff and programs should in no way be connected with Starkville High School.

4. Most Affordable Location for the State of Mississippi: Even with updating MSMS facilities, long overdue, the price tag would be \$25 million less than the proposed construction at MSU. Why should

the State of Mississippi pay so much extra money? Twenty-five million dollars would go a long way to address urgent problems in our state, particularly if the amount of federal dollars we normally receive is slashed.

Conclusion: Keeping MSMS on the MUW campus is best for the safety of the students, best for continuing the academic model that is the recipient of countless awards, and best for being eminently affordable. Campus renovations are badly needed, but even so, the price tag is significantly less than the proposed construction at MSU. I strongly urge the MDE to endorse keeping MSMS at MUW.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Betty S. Bryan

662-425-7351

Sent from my iPad