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## Comment on MSU Proposal from an MSMS Student

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**From** Spencer Goodlett <goodletts26@themsms.org>

**Date** Tue 3/4/2025 12:20 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 Dr. Boone,

My name is Spencer Goodlett, a current student at MSMS. I am emailing to address my concerns with the proposal from MSU of MSMS moving to Starkville. I feel as though the combining of MSMS with Starkville high will damage the quality education that MSMS offers and the school's reputation, leading to less opportunities for students. What makes MSMS so unique is that it is a high school that functions the same as a college. Turning it into a normal high school will take away that charm. If MSMS functioned as a normal high school, I would not have applied because the college aspect of MSMS was one of the main reasons I wanted to get away from my old school. MSMS operates very differently from normal high schools, and forcing the students and faculty to make that drastic change would cause stress and turmoil. When students have tests that they need to study for or essays that need to be written, coaches, band directors, and club leaders understand that they might need to miss practice, games, or meetings to make sure that the student is able to succeed academically. At a normal school, that would not fly as easily. If someone were to tell their coach that they had to miss a game to study for a test, they would be judged. Another key factor that makes it difficult for MSMS students and Starkville High students to integrate would be the fact that MSMS would be residential, while Starkville students would not be. Here at MSMS, if students do not have a class at a certain time, or even the whole day, they would not need to go to school. With little entertainment outside the proposed school, such as a downtown area like the one in Columbus, students would be left to wander off to places they are not allowed to like the existing partnership school. An aspect of MSU's proposal that I thought was lacking was about the dorm life at the proposed new school. The dorms and the educational facilities are separated just by what seems to be a very small residential neighborhood. This would easily allow Starkville students to enter MSMS dorms as long as an MSMS student was able to open the door.

While I do find some pros in merging MSMS with a normal high school, those pros still have their own cons. Starkville high devotes more to sports and extracurriculars than MSMS does, so it would be beneficial for the teams to join. But that would also get rid of any pride MSMS athletes have for their teams because it would not feel as much like their team anymore. I would also be concerned that a lot of the students at MSMS would get bullied on these teams and by other students from Starkville. MSMS prides itself on being diverse and inclusive of everyone. And while many schools would also like to say that they are inclusive, MSMS is one of the few where that is actually true. At my old school, I was afraid to fully express myself because I was scared that if I did, I would be made fun of and called homophobic slurs. At my old school, I would not have had the courage to join cross country like I did at MSMS, or any other sport for that matter. I've never been to Starkville High, but assuming it functions like other high schools in Mississippi, I would have the same concern. That is why I believe MSMS is a school that needs to function on its own to succeed. MSMS is currently its own high school, not a branch of another school, and that is how things should stay.

A large part of the reason I applied to MSMS is because I wanted to get away from my normal high school and to work with other students that were on a similar level of intellect. Allowing SOCS D students to partake in the same classes and be given the same education as us MSMS students would invalidate all the hard work we had to go through to get here, since the Starkville students would be given those opportunities without going through the same struggles that we went through. We had to increase our ACT score, make sure we got good grades, write essays, submit an application similar to that of a college application, and get interviewed, all over the course of many months. This consolidation feels more like a regression of MSMS, not a progression, only really benefitting SOCS D students.

If MSMS were to be located near MSU, I would be scared for my safety. The proposed location of MSMS is located near a field with nowhere interesting to go. Here at Columbus, there is a downtown in walking distance to explore and keep students' minds busy. But with MSU's proposed location, MSMS students have nowhere to go but MSU campus. Unlike the MUW campus, the MSU campus is extremely large and has a student population almost five times that of MUW. It would be so easy for an MSMS student to get lost or ignored in the crowd of people. It would only take one college student to sweep up a high school student and no one would see. This issue gets even worse when you take into account that tenth graders, fifteen or even fourteen-year-olds, would be added to the school. MUW's student population is primarily composed of women while MSU's student population is more evenly split. The unfortunate reality is that men are much more likely to harm others more than women, and with the already increased student population, this drastically raises the chances of an awful act happening to an MSMS student. Upping security around MSMS would not solve this issue either. While Starkville students can go home at the end of the school, MSMS students would still be stuck at their dorms. It would feel like the students were locked up at their school, and no one wants to be stuck at school for weeks on end. This is another reason why I would not be able to attend MSMS if it was placed in this proposed location. My parents and I would both be scared for my safety.

Another part of the MSU proposal that I felt could have gone more into the specifics of is the kind of food that would be served there. It seems as though we MSMS students would only be receiving high school quality food, instead of the college food we have now. That alone would dissuade me from attending the school. While students at a normal high school are able to only put up with bad food for one meal a day for five days of the week, we residential students would have to eat this poor-quality food three times a day for seven days a week, and likely multiple weeks in a row. I told my mom that I would have to make all my meals because I would be scared I would end up malnourished. That is just not something a sixteen-year-old could succeed at, as there would only be a limited number of meals I could make, especially with only one small kitchen for the whole dorm and a minifridge.

There are some things about MSU's proposal that I commend. I appreciate they stated that they would want to upgrade the arts offered at MSMS because as someone who plans to major in animation and enjoys all kinds of art, that department is lacking at MSMS currently. However, a lot of the other pros to the proposal are things MUW already offers here. While I do feel that MUW could improve on MSMS's current position, the university is doing the best it can with what it has. I believe that what is holding MUW back from doing so, is that they are just not being funded enough to do so. Even with the crisis that MUW is going through because of a declining budget, MUW was able to get us a new band hall this year with MSMS only having to pay to get the lights replaced. All this being said, the negatives of the MSU proposal largely outweigh the negatives of MSMS's current standing at MUW.

Overall, I feel that there is no possible way in which the MSU plan could be altered enough to where it would be more beneficial and safer than where MSMS is now. If MSU really wanted MSMS students to succeed and stay in Mississippi, they would offer a full ride, or at least a full tuition scholarship to MSMS graduates like MUW and USM have done. I have heard from many seniors here at MSMS that they were considering going to MSU, but they were not quite sure about it. If they were guaranteed a free ride at MSU, I think that decision could easily be solidified.

Thank you for listening to my thoughts and concerns about the MSU proposal.

Sincerely,

**Spencer Goodlett**

He/Him

MSMS C/O 2026

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## MSMS Proposals

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**From** Mickey Gousset <mickey.gousset@gmail.com>

**Date** Thu 2/27/2025 12:28 PM

**To** SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

**External Email**

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Hi.

I'm Mickey Gousset. I was a member of the first graduating class at MSMS (1990). I attended MSU, and have worked my entire career in the state of Mississippi. I can pinpoint all the success I have had to attending MSMS from 1988-1990.

While I am disappointed in both proposals, I feel the MUW proposal has more merit.

The MSU proposal has several flaws:

1. It takes away from the "special" that is MSMS, by lumping MSMS students together with SHS students
2. It seems to remove the academic focus of MSMS, which is a core institution principle
3. It also seems to allow students to attend who didn't go through the application process

What MSMS needs, and has needed for some time, is more funding for decent facilities. It also bothers me that the process didn't even seem to start with MSMS providing information on what they need. Instead, this looks like a "land grab" from the Starkville Oktibbeha County School System.

I find the MUW campus a better place for the school to be located, if the funds would be allocated for the needed renovations. It is a smaller campus, conducive to protecting high school age kids.

I hope this situation will be considered with extreme care, and that MDE and the state legislation will consider what is best for MSMS. The MSU proposal has too much of a pro-starkville slant to it.

Mickey Gousset

662-322-7550

[mickey.gousset@gmail.com](mailto:mickey.gousset@gmail.com)

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## MSMS Proposals

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**From** JM G <jmg201400@gmail.com>

**Date** Tue 3/4/2025 2:17 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.

My daughter is MSMS class of 2020. I was so happy and anxious for her to be able to attend MSMS because our home school did not offer the courses or excellence in teaching that MSMS offers. My daughter is not the most intelligent person from her home school, but I knew she would rise to meet the challenge of MSMS, even when she was wait-listed. The environment at our home school was rough, with some kids trying to refrain from even going to the bathroom to avoid bullying or violence. One of her classmates was shot outside of school hours and learning was beyond challenging when stuck in a classroom surrounded by peers who did not want to be there, let alone explore scholarly endeavors.

MSMS gave my daughter a chance to improve her ACT 10 points, meet others from all over the state and a myriad of backgrounds, and still be a teen. I struggle to imagine how integration in Starkville high would give these bright students the safe spaces to be who they can be, and I struggle even more to imagine how the influence of more than 20,000 college students surrounding them would help ensure safe collegiate spaces for them. At the W, MSMS students get the advantages of college environments, but in a much less traversed campus. They rarely interacted with the college students, even walking around campus or going to the cafeteria, and basically had the run of the study rooms at the library. Starkville has too many distractions and many more older students to potentially interact with or be interfered by.

Please continue to provide the excellent exchanges in multiple universities that the MSMS students have, but keep them in the Columbus bubble at the W.

Sincerely,  
Julie Grady  
MSMS parent

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## Comments on the MSMS Proposals

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From Edith Marie Green <edith.m.green@gmail.com>

Date Sun 3/2/2025 6:57 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.

To whom it may concern:

My name is Edith-Marie Green and I am a 2019 graduate of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science. I am currently a PhD student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health. My time at MSMS fundamentally shaped my future and helped me become the person I am today; thus, I am deeply invested in the future of the school.

When comparing the proposals submitted by MUW and MSU, the MUW proposal is evidently the better of the two. Their proposal emphasizes not only the long-term relationship that the university has had with the school, but also various mechanisms and plans through which that relationship could be strengthened. Additionally, the location of MUW is ideal. The smaller size of the university means that MSMS students get some independence without being overwhelmed; the campus is easy to traverse and get around. Where MUW is situated in town means that students can quickly and easily walk downtown for a variety of reasons; during my time as a student, I walked to church every Sunday and also went to coffee shops and bookstores with my friends. MSMS being at MUW helps support both MUW and the overall city of Columbus as well. Overall, the MUW proposal emphasizes the benefits to MSMS that could happen if the school remains where it is and is focused on making MSMS an even better school than it already is.

The MSU proposal, on the other hand, falls short. The main issue is the emphasis on how MSMS will benefit the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District (SOCSD). Students at MSMS are already offered more varied and advanced courses than students at other high schools, especially those in SOCSD. For example, when I was a student at MSMS, I took interesting classes not often offered to high school students like Russian, African-American history, Shakespeare I and II, astrophysics, and epidemiology. MSMS also already has its own vibrant extracurriculars and school spirit (yes, there are even sports teams). A large portion of the introduction of this proposal is focused on the nature of the SOCSD. MSMS has never offered classes to students enrolled in high schools in Columbus for two key reasons. First, MSMS is a difficult school with a rigorous curriculum, and the college-like application process is key to ensuring that students who take classes there are prepared. Second, the residential aspect of the school is absolutely vital to the experience. Even now, students who live in Columbus who attend MSMS cannot live at home and have to live at the school. It would also be unfair for SOCSD students to benefit from MSMS simply because they happen to live where the school is. Furthermore, many of the details that MSU proposes are the same as those proposed by MUW. We already have access to the town via MUW's prime location in Columbus; the proposed location at MSU is distant from many things. MSMS has its own shuttle system and already has access to state-of-the-art facilities like the library and gym at MUW.

I also have some concerns about the MSU campus environment. Although I went to UM for my bachelor's degree, my entire family, immediate and extended, works at MSU (and therefore live in Starkville), most of them went to MSU, and my sister-in-law is currently a PhD student there. I know that MSU is a much bigger university with a much larger student population and a significant party culture, including large fraternities on campus. I do not think that is a safe environment for high schoolers to be in, even if the complex will be on the edge of campus. And speaking of the edge of campus, the MSU campus is much larger than the MUW campus, making it more difficult to get around. I will also mention here that my entire family is also opposed to the MSU proposal.

**Most importantly of all, the constant referrals to the "the SOCSD high school/MSMS:E complex" indicate that this proposal is focused on how the move will benefit Starkville and MSU, NOT how it will benefit MSMS. The focus of the proposals should be on MSMS and its future.**

All in all, I feel strongly that the MSU proposal, which should really be called the MSU/SOCSD proposal, is deeply flawed, and as it stands, the MUW proposal is much better. Although I am not completely opposed to a move, I think that the move should have MSMS's best interests at heart, and not be focused on other parties. Additionally, more funding should be provided to MSMS generally. The school is an important asset for our state and at the moment, MSMS students annually go to the Capitol

simply to advocate for getting an education. They have been doing this since I was a student there; I attended a Capitol Day, as we call them, myself.

I hope that my comments are useful and taken into consideration when determining the future of MSMS. As an alum, I have a vested interest in the school's future and other students getting to experience the amazing benefits I did.

Best,  
Edith-Marie Green

Edith-Marie Green  
PhD Student, Population Health Sciences  
Project Assistant, Wisconsin Sleep Cohort Study  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
School of Medicine and Public Health

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**Msms**

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**From** Creek Griffin <riversorchard@gmail.com>  
**Date** Mon 3/3/2025 10:56 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.

Dear Dr. Boone,

I am writing to express my full support for keeping MSMS on the MUW campus.

As A father of a 2024 alumni and two daughters one who's currently in the application process and one who hopes to go in 2027.

I have seen first hand what an amazing place MSMS is,MUW provides the perfect location for our kids to learn the responsibilities of being away from home. The community that Columbus offers to the school is one of a deep history with the MSMS. My daughter got to be a part of Tales From The Crypt being able to walk to the Columbus library and study the history for the class and then to perform in the cemetery for hundreds of people is an amazing experience.MSMS being on MUW provides the perfect incubator for our kids to learn and grow without being overwhelmed. The MSMS faculty and staff do an amazing job of preparing them for life and college. The msu proposal just sounds like a plan to swallow MSMS and turn it into something else entirely.It's already one of the top schools in the country, just imagine what it could be if it's funded properly! But I think it's imperative that it stays on MUW campus! As a parent I have real concerns about it being in close proximity to that size of college. I work in Starkville and on MSU campus and I don't see any way they will be able to keep the students separate from the college students.They do a great job of this at MUW I've seen it first hand.

I believe that sharing spaces with Starkville high school will no doubt ruin the unique experience that makes MSMS the successful school that it is. I hope that MDE can put the politics aside and do what's best for MSMS.

And properly funded MSMS on MUW's campus!

Thanks, Rivers Griffin

March 4, 2025

Dr. Donna Boone  
Chief Academic Officer  
MS Department of Education  
359 North West Street  
P. O. Box 771  
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Re: The future of MSMS

Dear Dr. Boone,

I wish to offer my humble opinion on the future location of MSMS. After reading both the Proposal from MUW to Continue, and to Grow, the Partnership with the MS School for Mathematics and Science on the MUW Campus and the Proposal for MSMS Expansion submitted by MSU, it is my feeling that continuing to operate on the campus of MUW is in the best interest of the students chosen to attend MSMS.

Although I have lived in Alabama for the last 40+ years, I feel that the Golden Triangle area is my life-long home. Born and raised in West Point; grew up visiting family in Oktibbeha County; shopping in Columbus, it seemed natural when the Golden Triangle was formed, although I do not believe there has been the collaboration that was envisioned. I am a graduate of Starkville Academy and Mississippi State University. My home in AL is only 3 miles across the state line, so when we leave home going to town, we are headed into Columbus, MS.

As a parent of 6 adult children (ages 36-50) and Granny to 15 grandchildren (ages 2-23), education has always been of the utmost importance in our family. We followed closely the development and creation of the Alabama School of Math and Science; two of our children and one grandchild are graduates, and also the creation of the MS School of Math and Science, which was at our back door step, on the MUW campus in Columbus. We have one grandchild that has graduated from MSMS and is attending Davidson College on a full scholarship, and another grandchild who has applied to attend MSMS starting next year.

I feel that building on the infrastructure already in place is wiser than starting from the ground up. It also preserves part of Mississippi's heritage in the buildings on the campus of MUW. I also feel like Columbus offers more of a small town atmosphere to the students; many who are away from home and family for the first time.

I do not share the opinion that it would be beneficial to MSMS students to be on a campus with middle school and high school students on the MSU campus. I believe, as much as possible, the MSMS students need to be their own community, functioning within the greater community. It appears to me that MSMS already has the advantage and benefit of research opportunities at MSU and will soon also have partnerships with other universities across the state.

I agree with the statement from MUW's proposal . . . The partnership between MSMS and MUW is a proven success; the decision to keep MSMS at MUW rather than start over in another location is both fiscally responsible and academically sound and will continue to provide a safe, supportive environment in which these students can thrive and prepare themselves for lives of influence and service.

Respectfully submitted by a concerned grandparent,



Kathleen Y. Griffin  
[kathleenygriffin@gmail.com](mailto:kathleenygriffin@gmail.com)  
601-826-5656  
189 County Road 89  
Ethelsville, AL 35461

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## MSMS Alumni's Opinion on MUW and MSU

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From Maple Griffin <maplegriffin05@gmail.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 10:49 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 Dr. Boone,

My name is Maple Griffin, I have lived in Columbus the majority of my life and graduated as Vice President from The Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science last year. I am writing to you about the recent legislative actions concerning MSMS to share my perspective as a recent student and to express my belief that it is imperative for MSMS to stay on the campus of MUW and not move to MSU.

Not only did MSMS give me the opportunity to attend Davidson College on an all-paid scholarship, but it wasn't until I began college that I fully realized how valuable my experience at MSMS was to my future and success. What makes MSMS so special is that it is not a regular high school, in fact, it is very different from New Hope High School, which I previously attended, and any other high school I've had contact with within the state of Mississippi. Combining MSMS's resources with Starkville High School would damage the unique environment MSMS has, which is ultimately the reason it has for the past 36 years - and continues to - shape extremely successful, compassionate, and driven individuals. It is these people who in turn help shape the state of Mississippi, from within the state and outside of it.

MSMS taught me how to collaborate, care for, and empathize with people from different backgrounds. It taught me how to balance my own schedule of rigorous academics, demanding extracurriculars, and building meaningful relationships all while taking care of my own space and chores. Apart from all the knowledge I gained, these skills are what prepare the students to be successful in university as well as in everyday life afterward, which is MSMS's mission. I believe that for the future of Mississippi, as well as the country, the state should be extremely dedicated to continuing these resources for students, as well as continuing to invest in improving the current campus on MUW, not attempting to move it. While from an outside perspective it may seem that MSU would in fact support or improve this community and future students, I hope to reassure you that it would not.

I lived on the MUW campus for 2 years and I have lived in Columbus my whole life. I have also been to Starkville and MSU countless times. For MSMS to create and foster the unique and enriched community that it does, it needs to be focused on solely that. MUW provides a safe and focused campus to achieve this. Student facilities are close together and not shared with another high school. MUW is not as overwhelming as MSU is, and arguably, safer. The faculty is solely concerned with the success of MSMS students, not the collaboration of Starkville High School students. There is no reason these two facilities should be combined. If this happens, it defeats the purpose of MSMS – there would be no distinction. Each Starkville High School student has the equal opportunity to apply and attend MSMS just as every other student in the state does.

On the subject of resources, I believe there would be virtually no difference between staying on the campus of MUW vs. moving to MSU. Students still have the opportunity to use MSU resources such as research or mentorship at MUW; these resources are already available while being at MUW. If it is a concern to provide more MSU resources to MSMS students, I believe anything could be possible while keeping MSMS on the MUW campus. I would also point out that while rigorous, MSMS is still a high school and does not necessarily need all the resources MSU may provide and that MUW also provides many resources for the students.

I greatly hope that you take these points into account when considering moving MSMS to MSU. As a recent student, I feel that my perspective reflects the same sentiment many MSMS faculty, staff, students, and alums also share. MSMS is truly a unique experience that has forever changed my life and something I will be eternally grateful for. It is a unique and individual school that I hope will continue to shape many more students' lives in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Maple Griffin



**LUDDY**  
SCHOOL OF INFORMATICS,  
COMPUTING, AND ENGINEERING

Indiana University  
Luddy School of Informatics, Computing and Engineering  
919 E. 10th Street  
Bloomington, IN 47408  
Dana M. Habeeb  
Assistant Professor in Informatics  
dhabeeb@iu.edu

March 4, 2025

Dr. Donna Boone  
Chief Academic Officer  
Mississippi Department of Education

Dear Dr. Boone,

I am writing to express my strong support for keeping the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) at its current location on the campus of the Mississippi University for Women (MUW) in Columbus. As a native Mississippian, born and raised in Pascagoula, and a proud 1997 graduate of MSMS, I feel deeply invested in the school's continued success and its role in shaping the future of young Mississippians. Furthermore, as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Informatics at Indiana University, I can directly attest to the long-lasting impact MSMS has had on my academic and professional journey.

MSMS has consistently ranked among the top ten academic high schools, not just in Mississippi or the South, but in the nation. Its rigorous curriculum and commitment to excellence have provided students with unparalleled educational opportunities, and its impact extends far beyond STEM education. While MSMS has always had a strong focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, its commitment to the humanities, arts, and social sciences has been equally instrumental in shaping well-rounded, thoughtful leaders. The school's location in Columbus is an integral part of this experience. Students benefit from unique experiential learning opportunities such as the annual Pilgrimage and Tales from the Crypt, which provide invaluable insight into Mississippi's rich and complex history. These experiences foster a deeper understanding of our state's past, its cultural significance, and its role in shaping the broader American narrative.

The proposal to relocate MSMS and shift its primary focus almost entirely to STEM represents a significant weakness. My own experience at MSMS exemplifies why a comprehensive education—including the arts, humanities, and social sciences—is essential. The balance of STEM and humanities at MSMS provided me with a robust educational foundation that shaped my career and my identity. More importantly, it was my time at MSMS that instilled in me an unwavering pride for the state of Mississippi. The school's curriculum did more than prepare me academically; it provided me with a deep understanding of our state's unique history, culture, and contributions to the world. If MSMS had only focused on STEM education, I would not be the person I am today.

While MSMS does require improvements in infrastructure, relocating the school is not the solution. The dormitories need updates, but they do not require entirely new facilities. Instead of investing in relocation,

funds should be used to modernize current academic facilities, particularly in areas such as laboratory spaces, technology, cloud computing, and software resources. This targeted investment would ensure that MSMS remains a top-tier academic institution while preserving the valuable interdisciplinary education it provides.

Relocating MSMS to Mississippi State University (MSU) would introduce several significant challenges. First, it would expose high school students—many of whom are away from home for the first time—to a university setting that is not designed for 16-year-olds. MSU's campus does not provide the structured and secure environment necessary for high school students, potentially making their transition to independent living more difficult. Additionally, placing MSMS at MSU would likely result in students being housed on the outskirts of campus, creating a non-walkable experience that forces them to rely on cars or other forms of transportation—an unnecessary and burdensome complication.

Another critical concern is the current proposal's suggestion that MSMS facilities would be shared with Starkville High School students. This arrangement raises multiple logistical and academic concerns, potentially diminishing the unique environment that has made MSMS so successful. MSMS thrives as a dedicated space for Mississippi's most talented students to immerse themselves in a challenging academic setting, and sharing resources with a traditional high school could compromise that mission.

Keeping MSMS at MUW ensures that future generations of students will continue to benefit from the holistic, interdisciplinary approach that has made the school such a success. I strongly urge you to maintain MSMS in its current location and uphold the integrity of its comprehensive educational mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dana Habeeb". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Dr. Dana Habeeb

1997 Graduate, MSMS  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Informatics  
Indiana University

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## MSMS Resolution from the Lowndes County Board of Supervisors

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**From** Trip Hairston <thairston@lowndescountymys.com>

**Date** Tue 3/4/2025 1:55 PM

**To** SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

**Cc** Ronnie McGehee <rmcgehee@mdek12.org>; Bill Jacobs <bjacobs@mdek12.org>; Matt Mayo <mmayo@mdek12.org>; Wendi Barrett <wbarrett@mdek12.org>; Glen East <geast@mdek12.org>; Matt Miller <mmiller@mdek12.org>; Mike Pruitt <mpruitt@mdek12.org>; Billye Jean Stroud <bstroud@mdek12.org>; Mary Werner <mwerner@mdek12.org>; Matt Furnari <mfurnari@lowndescountymys.com>; Andy Williamson <awilliamson@lowndescountymys.com>; Jeff Smith <jsmith@lowndescountymys.com>; Leroy Brooks <lbrooks@lowndescountymys.com>; thudson.simsandsims@yahoo.com <thudson.simsandsims@yahoo.com>; Jay Fisher <jfisher@lowndescountymys.com>; Cindy Goode <cgoode@lowndescountymys.com>; Dana McLean <dmclean@house.ms.gov>; andy.boyd1957@gmail.com <andy.boyd1957@gmail.com>; kkarriem19@yahoo.com <kkarriem19@yahoo.com>; Chuck Younger <cyounger@senate.ms.gov>

 1 attachment (1 MB)

RESO.MSMS.pdf;

### External Email

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Dr. Boone,


Please see the attached resolution from the Lowndes County Board of Supervisors to be recorded with other stakeholder comments in regards to the disposition of the Mississippi School of Mathematics and Science.

Please note that in 1987, the Lowndes County Board of Supervisors allocated \$1,000,000 as seed money for MSMS to begin serving Mississippi's best and brightest on MUW's campus. It is unfathomable for us to imagine the Mississippi State Board of Education recommending the removal of MSMS from the MUW campus and ignoring that original investment.

The resolution stands on its own without any further explanation.

With regards,

Trip Hairston

 lowndes co color



**Trip Hairston, President**



Serving District 2

1121 Main Street

P.O. Box 1364

Columbus, MS 39703

(662) 251-5006 Cell

**RESOLUTION OF THE LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
DECLARING THEIR SUPPORT FOR KEEPING  
THE MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE  
AT THE MISSISSIPPI UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN**

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors of Lowndes County, Mississippi, did meet for a regularly scheduled board meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of March, 2025, with the following Resolution being offered:

**WHEREAS**, in 1987 the Mississippi Legislature passed into law a bill that created the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science to be situated at the campus of MUW; and

**WHEREAS**, thirty-eight years later, MSMS continues to outperform expectations at MUW, with the MSMS Class of 2024 being offered \$32M in scholarships and being ranked by NICHE as the best school in the State with 80% of MSMS students feeling safe at the school and 82% being happy there and with the graduating class of 2024 turning out 24 National Merit Scholarship semifinalists; and

**WHEREAS**, MSMS has regularly been ranked as one of the best public high schools in the country by Newsweek Magazine and MSMS students consistently outpace every other public & private school of learning system in Mississippi for awards in national competitions; and

**WHEREAS**, MSMS students and parents consistently credit the success of MSMS to the close, supportive mentorship they receive working with faculty focused on MSMS Ideals of scholarship, community, creativity and service; and

**WHEREAS**, MSMS students regularly acknowledge that the academic opportunities they receive at MSMS are not available at home schools and that the small close-knit community at MSMS is more supportive of their success than their home schools; and

**WHEREAS**, MSMS has outperformed in competitions at the International Science and Engineering Fair, the Louisiana/Mississippi Mathematical Association of America College competition, beating out MSU and others; and

**WHEREAS**, MSMS was awarded the Mississippi Governor's award for Excellence in the Arts for the Tales from the Crypt research/performance project; and regularly wins competitions for Student Teacher Achievement Recognition known as the STAR teacher award; and

**WHEREAS**, MSMS has won numerous awards for History projects, including the MS Historical Society Award of Merit in 2024, numerous scholastic writing awards including three National Scholarship Medal winners in 2024, the Young Arts award in 2025, two Scholastic Art medal winners in 2025, and in World languages has won the Young Orator prize at the International Olympiada of Spoken Russian in Moscow, Russia; and

**WHEREAS**, with MSMS having such a consistent and ever improving record of success at its current location on the campus of MUW, the risks of jeopardizing such success by relocation far outweigh any small chance that moving MSMS to a SEC campus with 24,000 students would generate any small increase in performance;

**WHEREAS**, Lowndes County has previously invested one million dollars in support of MSMS at the Mississippi University for Women, and

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Lowndes County Board of Supervisors hereby emphatically call upon the Mississippi Legislature to reject any proposed legislation that would attempt to relocate MSMS to MSU or any other location other than where it is outperforming expectations on a limited budget.

**RESOLVED FURTHER**, that the Lowndes County Board of Supervisors call upon the Mississippi Department of Education and/or the Legislature, to provide sufficient funding to fully support the most significant education creations in Mississippi history and further that the Resolution be delivered to The Mississippi Board of Education, Members of the Mississippi Legislature Education and Colleges and Universities Committees, the Governor, House Speaker, the Lieutenant Governor and that all Lowndes County citizens and MSMS students and alumni are encourage to likewise petition the Government to leave MSMS where it is—on the campus of the Mississippi University for Women.

After much discussion, President Hairston made a motion to adopt the Resolution. Said motion was seconded by Supervisor Brooks and after reading the Resolution in whole and in part, the President asked for a vote on same. The Resolution received the following vote of all Supervisors then and there voting:

Supervisor Hairston	Voted Aye
Supervisor Furnari	Voted Aye
Supervisor Williamson	Voted Aye
Supervisor Smith	Voted Aye
Supervisor Brooks	Voted Aye

The President announced the motion passed and a duly adopted Resolution of the Board of Supervisors of Lowndes County, Mississippi, with a copy spread on the minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

WITNESS THE SIGNATURE OF THE UNDERSIGNED OFFICERS, on this the 3rd

day of March, 2025.



LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

BY: Triq Hairston  
TRIP HAIRSTON, PRESIDENT

ATTEST:

Cindy Goode  
CINDY GOODE, CHANCERY CLERK

---

**\*\*\*PLEASE READ\*\*\* MSMS move to MSU from MUW Newspaper Articles**

---

**From** Trip Hairston <thairston@lowndescountymys.com>

**Date** Tue 3/4/2025 4:34 PM

**To** SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

**Cc** Ronnie McGehee <rmcgehee@mdek12.org>; Bill Jacobs <bjacobs@mdek12.org>; Matt Mayo <mmayo@mdek12.org>; Wendi Barrett <wbarrett@mdek12.org>; Glen East <geast@mdek12.org>; Matt Miller <mmiller@mdek12.org>; Mike Pruitt <mpruitt@mdek12.org>; Billye Jean Stroud <bstroud@mdek12.org>; Mary Werner <mwerner@mdek12.org>; Matt Furnari <mfurnari@lowndescountymys.com>; Andy Williamson <awilliamson@lowndescountymys.com>; Jeff Smith <jsmith@lowndescountymys.com>; Leroy Brooks <lbrooks@lowndescountymys.com>

 8 attachments (12 MB)

02-08-25+CD.pdf; 02-11-25+CD Opinion Page.pdf; 02-13-25 Crime Stats.pdf; 02-13-25 Opinion Page.pdf; 02-15-25 Opinion.pdf; 02-25-25 Press Conference Article.pdf; 02-28-25+CD MSMS Article and Opinion.pdf; 03-01-25 CD Legislators Blame MDE.pdf;

**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.

Dr. Boone,

MDE only gave MUW and MSU 18 days to develop RFPs. Now, MDE has allowed only 6 days for stakeholder comment.

**I encourage you and the members of the Board to read the attached articles from the Commercial Dispatch. It will not take too much of your or their time. The opinion articles sum up well the local sentiment surrounding this issue and are important for you and the Board to consider.**

In light of the expedited and unprecedented timelines, I have attached the following articles that I believe should be placed in the stakeholder comment record and would be in addition to the Board of Supervisors Resolution and my comments I sent earlier.

02/08/2025 article "MUW, MSU asked for proposals to house MSMS"

2/11/2025 Opinion page where the RFP from MDE was written in "maroon ink"

...also read the letter below the opinion editorial from Becky Scott. Her daughter currently attends MSMS.

02/13/2025 Article comparing crime statistics MSU vs. MUW

02/13/2025 Opinion page

02/15/2025 Opinion

02/25/2025 Press Conference Article

02/28/2025 Article \$50m More to Relocate MSMS to MSU and Subsequent Opinion Piece

03/01/2025 Legislators Blame MDE

Thank you!

Trip Hairston



**Trip Hairston, President**



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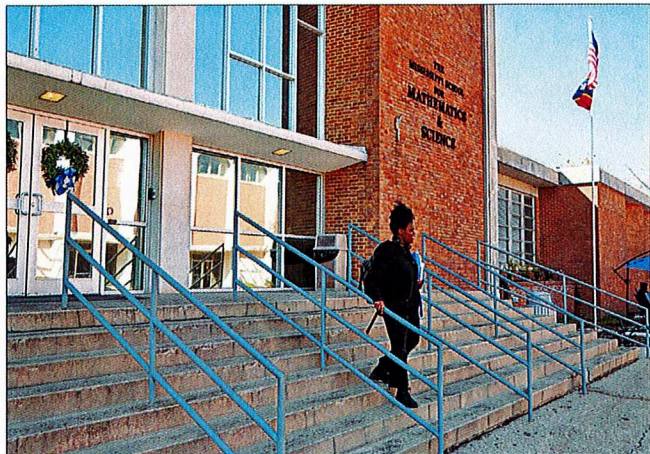


# THE COMMERCIAL DISPATCH

SI 25 NEWSSTAND

SATURDAY & SUNDAY | MARCH 1-2, 2025

## Legislators criticize MSU proposal, blame MDE for underfunding MSMS



Emma McElroy/Dispatch Staff

Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science Junior Breyal Joseph walks out of the Hooper Academic Building Friday on the Mississippi University for Women campus in Columbus. As MUW and Mississippi State University await the state's decision on which will house and operate the residential high school, Lowndes County lawmakers argue the effort isn't intended to benefit MSMS students as much as it is the Starkville-Oktibbeha Consolidated School District.

### 'They're saying it's for MSMS, but really it's to make a bigger and better school district for them in Starkville'

BY EMMA MCRAY  
emcray@dispatch.com

As Mississippi State University and Mississippi University for Women await the state's decision about which will house the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science, some local lawmakers worry the effort is an attempt to secure state funding for a new Starkville High School.

"I think that it's a money grab for the (Starkville-Oktibbeha Consolidated School District)," District 39 Rep. Dana McLean, R-Columbus, told The Dispatch

on Friday. "They're saying it's for MSMS, but really it's to make a bigger and better school district for them in Starkville."



McLean

The State Board of Education asked both MSU and MUW to submit proposals to house and operate the high school, which the universities made public Wednesday. After reviewing the proposals, the board will make a recommendation to the legislature. Any changes

the state prescribes will go into effect in the 2026-2027 school year.

MUW proposes building a new \$35 million residential hall on its campus for MSMS and possibly requesting an additional \$25 million in state funding to update existing classroom and administrative facilities.

MSU's proposal hinges on a partnership with SOCSO that would include a new high school and an expanded MSMS. The university would require \$85 million from the state legislature for MSMS facilities and those that would be shared with SHS stu-

dents, like a cafeteria. Other facilities intended only for SHS students in the plan would be funded by up to \$87 million in bonds, which would be paid for by Oktibbeha County residents.

MSMS is a residential high school for academically gifted juniors and seniors that has been located on The W campus since opening in 1987.

McLean is hopeful the House has no appetite for a relocation, especially due to the plan of using state funds for facilities used by SOCSO. MSMS is funded by the legislature through the Mississippi Department of Education rather than by ad valorem tax revenue like SOCSO. See MSMS, 8A

## 'Cultural diversity' no longer in name of MSU's Holmes Center

### University looks to comply with federal guidelines that threaten funding

BY ABIGAIL SIPE ROCHESTER  
arochester@dispatch.com

STARKVILLE

Mississippi State University is changing the name of the Holmes Center, pending approval by the state board of trustees of the Institutions of Higher Learning.



Keenum

Holmes Cultural Diversity Center will now be known as the Holmes Center for Student Success, focusing on "comprehensively supporting all students," the university announced in a Friday press release.

The change comes as the university aligns with a Dear Colleague See HOLMES CENTER, 8A

## Caledonia native and former podcaster joins Pentagon

DISPATCH STAFF REPORT

Graham Allen, a conservative podcaster and Army veteran from Caledonia, has been appointed as the director of digital media at the Department of Defense.



Allen

The announcement was made earlier this week, marking a transition from Allen's media career See ALLEN, 3A

## otesters speak out against 'hypocrisy' in reported FAA-Starlink contract

### Weekly protests to call on officials to h back against Trump, Musk

BY DENCE HARVEY  
dharvey@dispatch.com

nted in the grass le of Congressman Kelly's Columbus district office are signs. One has the text "SAY NO TO K GETTING FAA FRACT" sprawled s in red ink. The reads "Who will be p's next Oligarch?"

Sitting behind the signs on Friday were Columbus residents Annis Cox, Fred Kinder and Jennifer Bailey. Others drifted in and out. Cox organized the protest with the goal of drawing attention to what she deems "hypocrisy" in the government, specifically opposing businessman and presidential advisor

Elon Musk.

"We've been mad for a while that we haven't had elected representatives who stood up and said no to Trump and said no to Musk, and it's just time we start letting other people know what we feel, and maybe Representative Kelly can understand a different point of view," Cox told The Dispatch at the protest.

The group was protesting in response to See PROTEST, 8A



Cadence Harvey/Dispatch Staff

From left, Fred Kinder, Annis Cox and Jennifer Bailey sit outside of Congressman Trent Kelly's Columbus district office Friday afternoon in protest against "hypocrisy" within the government. Cox organized the protest in the wake of reports speculating a potential contract between the Federal Aviation Administration and Elon Musk's company, SpaceX.

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& Seen 8B

### FIVE QUESTIONS

- 1 She was a self-taught African American artist who captured national attention.
- 2 A famous poet who wrote about the struggles and joys of African American life.
- 3 She was the first Black woman to show at the Whitney Museum of American Art and have work acquired by the White House.
- 4 Wrote "Bars Fight," the first known poem by an African American in 1746.
- 5 Who was the first African American to publish the novel "Clotel: The President's Daughter" in 1853?

Answers, 1C

### CALENDAR

#### Saturday

■ **The Paul Thorn Band Concert:** Presented by The Barn Concert Series, The Paul Thorn Band will be performing two album release concerts, one at 5 p.m. and the other at 8 p.m., at Cromwell Theater on the MUW Campus. More info: barnconcertseries.com

#### Saturday and Sunday

■ **Medea:** TheatricalMSU is staging this classic Greek tale about betrayal and a powerful woman's vengeance. Evening performances are at 7:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. There will also be a matinee at 2 p.m. Sunday. All performances will be held at McComas Hall Theater.

■ **The Lightning Thief:** Golden Triangle Theatre is performing a production of

"The Lightning Thief," a musical based on the 2005 novel of the same name, at the Lyceum at Lee. Performances will start at 7 p.m. Saturday, with matinees starting at 2 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, respectively. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$8 for children.

#### Sunday

■ **Impact Award Announcement Celebration:** 100+ Women Who Care Columbus will be announcing the recipient of its 13th impact award at 4 p.m. at Zachary's, 205 North Fifth St.

#### Monday, March 3

■ **Book Sale:** Friends of the Starkville Library will be hosting its monthly book sale from 11:45 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. at the Starkville Public Library.

### LOCAL FOLKS



**Makayla Wright**, of Columbus, loves to read romance dramas and crime thrillers. She also likes to shop at local stores.

### PUBLIC MEETINGS

- March 3:** Lowndes County Board of Supervisors, 9 a.m., courthouse.
- March 4:** Columbus City Council, 5 p.m., Municipal Complex.
- March 10:** Columbus Municipal School District, 5 p.m., Brandon Central Services.
- March 14:** Lowndes County School District, 12:30 p.m., Central Office.

# SMS

ued from Page 1A

every other school in the state.

They are very hopeful that colleagues would be stewards of taxpayer money and see that their constituents all over the state would be indirectly contributing toward school district that is in their district," she said. "It would be like the years in Lowndes or bus sending money off Gulf Coast school dis-

McLean said The W's deal is an adequate for the facility issues MSMS, which included updates inside initial halls and academic buildings. Those in McLean said, fall under McLean's responsibility, the problem is not quality of education here's getting there nothing like that over," she said. problem is their real halls, and we've not that for years, has not stepped

## 'It would be like the taxpayers in Lowndes or Columbus sending money to a Gulf Coast school district.'

District 39 Rep. Dana McLean, R-Columbus

up to rectify those problems.

For District 37 Rep. Andy Boyd, R-Columbus, fixing facilities for The W's estimated cost of \$35 to \$60 million is preferred to MSU's \$85 million request.

"I just can't believe \$85 million is even something considered," he said. "The (MSMS) dorms I saw were in rough shape, but to just shutter something and then help fund a local school district with state money smells bad."

Boyd said, after years of underfunding MSMS,

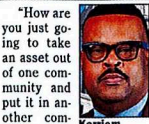


Boyd

the state has a responsibility to address the school's needs, especially when it has been so successful. The MSMS Class of 2023 accepted \$8.2 million in scholarships and included 15 National Merit semifinalists.

"We should be talking about MSMS and their funding, which has not been enough forever. ... The school itself is not broken," he said. "I think we're responsible for taking care of what we've got instead of leaving it vacant or moving on to something new."

District 41 Rep. Kabir Karriem, D-Columbus, told The Dispatch he is disappointed relocating MSMS is even a conversation.



Karriem

"How are you just going to take an asset out of one community and put it in another community for the benefit of that community?" he said. "We don't do stuff like that, especially when we're supposed to be partners in economic development. We have a regional approach in economic development, and you don't start doing that because that can infringe on other partnerships."

Karriem said he has heard conversations in the House about MSMS being relocated. His concern is that a move could trigger the downfall of The W and eventually the state's historically Black colleges and universities.

Stakeholders in Lowndes County have to keep advocating for MSMS to remain at The W until the

session is over, Karriem said.

"We need to send a clear message to these committee chairs - to the leadership at the capitol - that Columbus and Lowndes County are united," he said. "We want The W to stay put, and we want MSMS to stay put on The W's campus. Don't go infringing on our assets. Respect our request when we ask for the resources that they need to be vibrant institutions in our community."

Sen. Chuck Younger, R-Lowndes County, who represents District 17, said there doesn't seem to be any appetite for relocation on the Senate side. But he agreed funding for MSMS from MDE is an ongoing concern.

"MSMS has never been funded correctly, nor has MUW, and what little bit of funding that MUW has been getting, they have been sharing, and trying to help out MSMS

as much as possible," he said.

Younger suggested transferring property on The W campus to MSMS as a way to ensure the school remains a permanent part of the community.

"If they're going to do that dorm for them, they ought to give them the property," he said. "Put some property in their name so it will be an anchor in Columbus and on the MUW campus."

The state board is currently seeking input from education stakeholders on the merit of the two proposals. Written comments can be emailed to Chief Academic Officer Donna Boone at secondaryeducation@mdek12.org. The deadline for public input is 5 p.m. Tuesday.



Younger

# otest

ued from Page 1A

reports of a political contract between the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Musk's company, SpaceX.

Revelation of the contract Wednesday after Washington Post revealed the FAA was in the verge of canceling 2.4 billion contract Verizon and giving Starlink, a division of SpaceX, Musk's satellite rocket company. contract, awarded rizon in 2023, aims

to improve ground-based communication systems. However, no official confirmation of a proposed FAA-Starlink contract has emerged.

While Musk owns SpaceX, Tesla and Twitter, he was also tasked by President Donald Trump with overseeing the Department of Government Efficiency.

Fellow protester Kinder added the protest's aim is simple: "to make people aware." He echoed Cox's concerns,

questioning the fairness of the reported contract.

"Musk is cleaning house in every agency, and then he gets a contract for (terminals) for the FAA," Kinder said. "What's wrong with that picture?"

In the wake of these reports, Bailey, who said she had never protested before, suddenly felt the urgency to make her voice heard.

"This just seems the time to take a stand," Bailey said.

Kelly represents the first district of Mississippi in Congress. While the protest is located outside of Kelly's North Seventh Street district office, Cox emphasized she hopes to reach more elected officials than just him.

"He is an elected representative, and this is his office," she said. "Hopefully, the other elected officials will get the message too."

Cox believes one protest alone won't bring about change, but contin-

ued efforts across multiple locations send a powerful message.

She also hopes the protest will be the beginning of other conversations.

"The goal is not to be confrontational or in your face about anything," she explained. "I would love for somebody to come and explain why they think the way they think, and maybe we could

explain why we think the way we do. Maybe that's the beginning of a bridge - that first plank."

Cox has committed to sitting outside Kelly's office every Friday from noon to 1 p.m., inviting anyone who shares her concerns to join her.

"Who knows what will come from it," Cox said. "We're just planting the seed," Kinder added.

# lmes Center

ued from Page 1A

sent to the university from the U.S. Department of Education earlier month.

Mississippi State has been a practitioner of student success as a model of how we operate," MSU President E. Keenum said in a release. "Our goal has and will remain to our students - all students - with a quality education will afford them a more productive life. This structure is who we are and we've been at this for a long time."

The Dear Colleague letter sent to all educational institutions receiving federal funding, Assistant Secretary Civil Rights Craig Salter said the DOE is assessing university compliance Friday.

etter specifically detailed all educational institutions receiving federal funds "cease illegal use" in admissions, compensation, scholarships, sanctions and discipline. policies and practices not comply with the Department's directive, practices like Mississippi State and Mississippi University for Women lose federal fund-

e Holmes Center named after Dr. Richard Holmes - the Black student to enter the university in 1991, MSU re-

named the university's Multicultural Center to include Holmes, honoring his campus achievements and medical career.

"I think the most erroneous conclusion that one could draw from what's going on in the country and the state right now is that we're going to somehow forget who Richard Holmes was and what he did, and that's just not true," Vice President for Strategic Communications and Director of Public Affairs Sid Salter told The Dispatch on Thursday. "But we are going to make our student success efforts comply with federal and state law. And as the Dear Colleague letter suggests, we will make sure that the benefits that extend to our minority students extend to all students."

The Holmes Center falls under the university's Division of Access, Opportunity and Success, formerly known as the Office of Access, Diversity and Inclusion. That division was renamed in 2023, though there were no changes to the department or programs at that time, the division's Vice President Ra'Sheda Boddie-Forbes told The Dispatch in September.

"Changing the name and focus of the Holmes Center is one of a series

of strategies that reflects a comprehensive approach to our student success efforts," Boddie-Forbes said in the release. "As we await additional guidance from multiple branches of government, we are evaluating new organizational structures that are better fits for how we intend to operate moving forward."

The release emphasizes that the rebranded center will meet the "diverse needs of the entire student body." This includes specialized programs for first-generation students, limited-income students, students from the foster care system and others.

Programs will include resources, mentorship and guidance, along with expanded resources like career readiness initiatives, experiential learning opportunities and students success workshops and exercises, the release said.

Salter said the university's review of its compliance to the Dear Colleague letter is "ongoing." He also anticipated further direction on diversity, equity and inclusion coming from the state legislature following the end of the legislative session in April, which he said may impact programming at the center in the future.

"As Dr. Keenum has



Boddie-Forbes

consistently said on all of these issues, it's a mistake to look at these types of issues and see these simply as matters of race," Salter said. "Our programming is directed at helping veterans, helping students who come out of the foster system, first generation students, students that have any disabilities that require additional assistance - whether those are physical or learning disabilities. ... These programs reach out to a myriad of students who have legitimate needs, and our interest lies in the overall success of all of our students."

JoHelen "Joey" Walker  
 Oktibbeha County  
 Tax Assessor & Collector  
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 (662) 323-1273

HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION  
 DEADLINE IS APRIL 1, 2025

- REASONS YOU MAY NEED TO FILE OR REFILE HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION
- Built or purchased a new home
  - Purchased or sold property that affected your current homestead property
  - Married, divorced or widowed
  - Turned 65 on or before January 1, 2025
  - Became 100% disabled on or before January 1, 2025
- YOU WILL NEED THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WHEN APPLYING FOR HOMESTEAD
- Most recent deed for the property that was signed on or before December 31,
  - 2024 and recorded in the Chancery Clerks office by January 7, 2025
  - Settlement Statement with the contract sales price and down payment
  - Social Security number for you and your spouse
  - Tag numbers for all privately owned vehicles in yours and/or spouses' name
  - If 65 years or older, you will need to bring a drivers license, identification card, or birth certificate
  - If 100% disabled, you MUST bring a copy of the award letter obtained from the social security administration or copy of TPQY
  - If 100% disabled Veteran receiving VA SERVICES-CONNECTED benefits, you
  - MUST have a letter from the Department of Veteran Affairs that certifies
  - VETERAN should receive VA SERVICES CONNECTED COMPENSATION at the 100% permanently and totally disabled
- \*\*\* HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION LAW ALLOWS YOU TO FILE ON ONE RESIDENT ONLY \*\*\*

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# THE COMMERCIAL DISPATCH

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75¢ NEWSSTAND

FRIDAY | FEBRUARY 28, 2025

## Proposals show MSMS would cost \$50M more to relocate to MSU

### State board seeking stakeholder input on where the school should be

IMA MCRAE  
@cdspatch.com

The state set to determine the Mississippi School for Mathematics Science will be located. Proposals use the school from Mississippi State University and Mississippi Uni-

versity for Women reveal at least a \$50 million price difference, with Starkville emerging as the more expensive option.

The State Board of Education asked both MUW and MSU to submit proposals to operate and house the high school as it expands operations. Af-



Donna Boone

ter reviewing the proposals, the board will make a recommendation to the legislature. Any changes the state prescribes will go into effect in the 2026-2027 school year.

Both universities made their proposals public Wednesday.

### INSIDE

**OUR VIEW:** To see who benefits from an MSMS move, follow the money. **Page 4A**

for the high school as well as expanded academic offerings.

"The partnership between MSMS and MUW is a proven success," MUW's proposal reads.

"The decision to keep MSMS at MUW rather than start over in another

location is both fiscally responsible and academically sound."

MSU proposes building a new, expanded MSMS campus (MSMS:E) on the north edge of its campus, sharing a campus with a new Starkville High School and the Partnership Middle School.

The MSMS:E facilities on the campus would require \$85 million in state

See MSMS, 6A

## BUTTERFLY GARDEN



Cadence Harvey/Dispatch Staff

Harpole works with Lowndes County Master Gardeners during their annual spring cleanup of the butterfly garden off Highway 82 in bus Thursday morning. Members collected debris and fallen tree limbs from the garden in anticipation of placing two Zinnia flower next week.

## Amphitheater bids provide little clarity on way forward

### Jones suggests borrowing, using reserves to finish; Gaskin and Greene oppose

BY ZACK PLAIR  
zplair@cdspatch.com

A way forward on the Sen. Terry Brown Amphitheater at the Island is no clearer after the latest rounds of bids came back.



Kevin Stafford

City Engineer Kevin Stafford presented those bids during a city council works session Thursday at City Hall, bringing with him "good news and bad news."

The good: Bids came back only about 20% higher than 2016. Stafford expected closer to a 30-to-35% inflation bump.

The bad: Only two companies submitted bids.

Weathers Construction, at \$3.5 million, was the sole bidder to in-  
See AMPHITHEATER, 3A

## Mickens takes residency challenges to MS Supreme Court

### After losing challenge to local Democratic committee, case will be heard by special judge

WILLEN PARADIS  
wparadis@cdspatch.com



Mickens O'Neal Smith

residency requirement. A civil complaint represents only one side of a legal argument.

Chief Justice Michael Randolph took up the matter the next day, assigning Senior Status Judge Jeff Weill Sr., retired from the Seventh Circuit Court, as a special judge in the case.

Mickens already challenged the residency of his opponents before the City of Columbus Democratic Executive Committee earlier this month, but the committee ruled Feb. 10 that O'Neal

and Smith qualify to run for the seat. A separate complaint in that hearing alleged that Mickens hadn't submitted a proper campaign finance report, but Kabir Karriem, chairperson for the Lowndes County Democratic Party, said he had filed on time and cleared him to run as well.

In his complaint, Mickens asks the courts to overturn the committee's decision regarding his opponents.

"(The) petitioner prays that, following a non-jury trial ... the court reverse the decision of the Democratic Executive Committee to allow Smith and O'Neal to remain on the ballot and render a judgment in favor of this petition, that neither Smith nor O'Neal are bona fide residents of Ward 2 ... and do not meet the minimum residency requirements to be placed on the primary bal-

See MICKENS, 3A

## Voter registration deadline is tomorrow

DISPATCH STAFF REPORT

Mississippi residents have one more day to register to vote in the upcoming municipal primary election.

Municipal clerks' offices across the state will be open from 8 a.m. to noon Saturday to accommodate in-person voter registration. Residents who register in person at their local municipal or circuit clerk's office  
See REGISTRATION, 6A

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8 Year, No. 247

### FIVE QUESTIONS

- Who invented the traffic signal and developed a gas mask that helped firefighters?
- This female was the inventor of the home security system.
- Who was the first African American to hold a patent for dry cleaning fabric?
- Who invented the ice cream scooper?
- Who built America's first clock, which was made entirely of wood in 1753?

Answers, 6B

### CALENDAR

#### Today through Sunday

**Monday:** TheatreMSU is staging this classic Greek tale about betrayal and a powerful woman's vengeance. Performances will begin at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, with a 2 p.m. matinee Sunday, at McComas Hall Theater.

**The Lightning Thief:** Golden Tigris Theatre is performing a production of "The Lightning Thief," a musical based on the 2005 novel of the same name, at the Lyceum at Lee. Performances will start at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, with matinees running at 2 p.m. and 12:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, respectively.

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$8 for children.

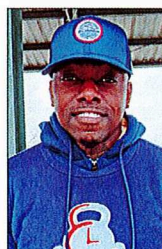
#### Saturday

**The Paul Thorn Band**  
**Concert:** Presented by The Barn Concert Series, The Paul Thorn Band will be performing two album release concerts, one at 5 p.m. and the other at 8 p.m., at Cromwell Theater on the MUW Campus.

#### Sunday, March 2

**Impact Award Announcement Celebration:** 100+ Women Who Care Columbus will be announcing the recipient of its 13th impact award at 4 p.m. at Zachary's, 205 North Fifth St.

### LOCAL FOLKS



Jahbu T. James, of Columbus, runs a 24-hour fitness facility called Fitness Time.

### PUBLIC MEETINGS

- March 2:** Lowndes County Board of Supervisors, 9 a.m., courthouse
- March 4:** Columbus City Council, 5 p.m., Municipal Complex
- March 10:** Columbus Municipal School District, 5 p.m., Brandon Central Services
- March 14:** Lowndes County School District, 12:30 p.m., Central Office

### VIEW

## see who benefits from an MSMS move, follow the money

he Starkville-Oktibbeha dilated School District has plans to build a new school, it's possible the of relocating the Missis-School for Mathematics science to the MSU campus might never have moved id conjecture. at idea is confirmed by g MSU's proposal to the sissippi Department of Edu- I, which asked both MSU IUW to submit proposals sting the state's residen- h school for academical- and students. e genesis of the idea is ht to have emerged in hen then-MSMS Direc- onnie Cook had secretive rations with MSU and D Superintendent Tony e to discuss the possible t the seed of that idea ave been planted much r - in 2016 when the D and MSU agreed on a o build the Partnership il for grades 6 and 7 on

property owned by the university. Through that arrange- ment, SOSCD was able to move into a \$30-million facility without having to raise taxes, instead extending a bond set to expire to cover its \$16 million share of the cost. The state leg- islature kicked in \$10 million for the project. MSU donated the land, valued at \$5 million. Now, SOSCD's board has passed a resolution to borrow as much as \$87 million for a new high school, but surely the idea of asking voters to approve anything close to \$87 million in bonds is a fool's er- rand. This time around, taxes will have to be raised to pay that debt. You can see the dilemma. So now it's back to the legislative trough, so SOSCD can seek much more money for a much bigger high school project adjacent to the Partnership School on the MSU campus. But some have seen even more opportunity: the state could be leaned on for more

money if a joint Starkville High School and MSMS campus was built. MSMS and MSU are both funded by the legislature, which opens a large new revenue stream for funding a new Starkville High School that is intrinsically connected to both. Suddenly, the cost of building a high school cafeteria disappears by calling it a joint-MSMS cafeteria. It's a pretty nifty sleight of hand. Estimates for that joint MSMS/SHS campus run anywhere from \$170 million to \$200 million. Since SOSCD is approved to borrow up to \$87 million, that would put the state on the hook for around \$100 million. That's a big ask. We know of no other Missis- sippi school district that has succeeded in getting the legislature to fund one new school, let alone two. Every other school district has to rely on local taxpayers to pay for their schools. In reality, there can be no

new Starkville High School without considerable funding from the state. We know that by reading the proposal MSU submitted to the Mississippi Department of Education to make its case for becoming the new home of MSMS. It is a plan that relies heavily on the presence of a new Starkville High School. In fact, there is no scenario provided in its proposal that doesn't include the new high school. Perhaps MSU could make a case for why it would be the best home for MSMS independent of a partnership with the SOSCD. All we know is that it did not. We believe that is intentional. There is an old saying that goes if you want to know the real motives in politics, follow the money. Moving MSMS to MSU isn't a decision made with the taxpayer in mind since it is far, far more affordable to build and renovate MSMS facilities

on the MUW campus than it would be to start from scratch at MSU. Moving MSMS to MSU and Starkville has little impact on either the university or the city. With a maximum of 240 students, MSMS has no impact on a university with 23,000 stu- dents while the economic im- pact of MSMS would scarcely move the needle in Starkville, which reaps enormous econom- ic benefits from those thou- sands of college students. The plan to move MSMS is not about the kids, either, who lose the esprit de corps created on a small campus while becoming co-mingled with Starkville High on a large campus. Much of what makes MSMS work so well is lost in the process. So who benefits the most from MSU's plan? The answer: SOSCD, which will profit at the expense of MSMS, Columbus and MUW, all of whom deserve to be treat- ed better.

### OF THE PEOPLE

## Letter to the editor

will be good for America in the long term. I slept at a Holiday Inn Express once or twice so I make me an expert on many things and some ledge of all things. With these credentials I like to expound on the political landscape of

CE is the word of today. President Trump lectio to "drain the swamp," stop govern- ment, streamline government, secure the r and bring back patriotism to this country, ch has been accomplished to this end, in his mouth, that it makes one's head spin. e biggest obstacle to accomplishing this is beral Democrats, most of which have been g themselves off the backs of the tax payer er. Most have never had a real job, made a ll or paid for their health insurance. Trump is g the pork and the "pigs" are squealing. Most ns are shocked over the number of federal yees working from home. A lot of federal rs can not tell five things they accomplished rday. No wonder we are \$36 trillion in debt ounting. That is \$106,131 for every person n, February 25, 2025. The "pigs" are squealing e cuts for the biggest part have not gone into . It might be tough for a while but America t continue the path we're on financially. st of the ones screaming the loudest, are ing, "the cuts are just going to benefit the aires." How many of those politicians com- ing have become millionaires in office feeding he trough in D.C.? Every day is a new day s and the firing of some of the incompetent ucrats that have put us in such debts. r those who want to divide us are the same that called the Trump supporters deplorable, t, racist and Walmart shoppers. I have one ion: "Who won the election by the largest n in history?" Who is going to be indicted

e Trump Train is rolling on!  
d Bless America!  
Lee Roy Lollar  
Columbus

blisher's note: I always appreciate Mr. Lollar's but some fact checking is in order here. Presi- Trump's 2024 victory was not the largest margin y in either popular vote or electoral vote. He won with a 1.5% popular vote victory margin. Recent ents who have exceeded Trump's margin of y include Reagan (both terms), Bush I, Clinton terms), Bush II (one term), Obama (both terms), den also won by a larger percentage of the popu- te margin.

etter to the editor is an excellent way to partici- n your community. We request the tone of your e constructive and respectful and the length ed to 450 words. Political endorsements are d to one per letter-writer. We reserve the right to tters for clarity, grammar and length. Letters e emailed to [voice@dispatch.com](mailto:voice@dispatch.com) or mailed to ispatch, Attn: Letters to the Editor, PO Box 511, bus, MS 39703-0511.

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### THE NATION

## Why is Trump sabotaging the U.S. auto industry?

If Chinese leader Xi Jinping wanted to take down the U.S. auto industry — and he probably does — he couldn't have a better helper than Donald Trump. The American president's tireless efforts to slow America's shift to electricity-run transportation is a dream come true for China as it leads the world in that transition.



Froma Harrop

Electric vehicles are the cars and trucks of the future. In some parts of the world, that future is here. Norway now has more fully electric cars on its roads than the gas-powered kind. China has put enormous resources behind the development and manufacture of EVs. The U.S. was on the case when Joe Biden was president. Trump is taking away those subsidies, thus messing with U.S. automakers' big plans to compete in this growing market.

The politics of it are also wild. About 80% of the Biden-era clean energy investments are in red states (or if they are rescinded, were).

In North Carolina, Toyota just unveiled a \$13.9 billion battery plant in the small town of Liberty. Another maker of cutting-edge batteries will soon open near Raleigh, not far from a factory that builds charging infrastructure. Trump also wants to take away

appears to be illegal, but Republicans in Congress seem more afraid of Trump than voters who could lose jobs.

But one Republican, Alabama's Gov. Kay Ivey, defends that funding. "Having strategic electric vehicle charging stations across Alabama not only benefits EV drivers, but it also benefits those companies that produce electric vehicles, including many of them right here in Alabama, resulting in more high-paying jobs for Alabamians."

All true. Some observers surmise that Elon Musk sees a personal gain in slowing down the growth of charging stations. His Tesla currently has the largest network of fast chargers in the country. Adding chargers could help sales of EVs other than Elon's.

Potentially hurting the American automakers are the 25% tariffs Trump wants to slap on the parts they get from Canada and Mexico. This shared production arrangement makes U.S. cars more price-competitive on world markets, thus protecting the jobs of American workers.

But get this: Musk is now suing the European Union over its decision to put hefty tariffs on EVs made in China. Tesla, you see, makes more than half its EVs in China.

American drivers away from fossil fuels. As a self-pitying Arizonan told The Wall Street Journal, EVs are "being pushed down our throats."

A Morning Consult poll taken last spring found that 4 in 10 Americans have unfavorable views of EVs. And 38% of those respondents said their political views were a factor.

One must ask: What mean man is forcing Americans to buy electric vehicles? No one is stopping you or me from going to an auto showroom or used car lot and driving off with a 100% gas-powered machine.

Having the U.S. government help a new domestic industry is what we call economic policy. When Henry Ford's first Model T rolled out of the factory in 1908, America had almost no paved roads beyond the cities.

Ford was a strong advocate for the kinds of roads his new cars needed to run on. He became the first chairman of the Wayne County Road Commission. The Federal-Aid Road Act was passed in 1916 and the Federal-Aid Highway Act in 1921.

Back to the present, sales of Chinese-made EVs rose 40% last year alone. China also has the world's largest network of charging stations.

Something tells us President Xi Jinping likes the way things are going in the age of Trump. Froma Harrop, a syndicated columnist, writes for the Providence

**SMS**

ued from Page 1A

g, according to the sal. addition to a high school for kville-Oktibbeha idated School DIS- MSU and SOCSD to be on the fore- of secondary edu- by partnering to a new MSMS:E ntial magnet school ed on science, tech- , engineering, arts mathematics," the sal reads.

MS opened in 1987 e W and occupies er and Shackelford ic buildings for ooms and Goen and r halls for dormitory , all of which are in of updates or have into disrepair.

s proposal cated at the cor- f Highway 182 and e Perry Drive, the MSMS:E campus l consist of a dor- y and an academic ng. Other facilities by MSMS:E stu- , including a library, ria and perform- ts center, would be d with SOCSD stu-

e facilities at MSU l have capacity for uniors and seniors, oom for a potential ion of 150 sopho-

rently, MSMS is a ntial high school for iuniors and seniors. e new MSMS:E l also have a heavier ore development . The proposal said ans of study for the nts will be geared d career paths that the state's work- development needs, health sciences, de- industry, cybersecu- and others.

hey will also have ortunity to be dual ed in the SOCSD. ill allow MSMS:E nts to take advanced ment and other sped courses with D students, experi- extracurricular ac- s with SOCSD and relationships and erty with SOCSD nts and faculty," the sal reads. CSD students would e allowed to enroll dvanced academic es at MSMS:E.

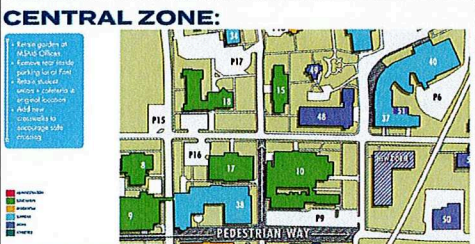
e proposal also ons exploring op- nities for MSMS:E nts to participate on D teams for Missis- High School Athletic ation competition s. ile the proposal SOCSD has commit- 86 million toward ruction of new fa- s, the district has eured those funds. board of trustees ved a resolution of : to borrow those in June 2023, but ince only issued \$1 n of that total. te law allows the ct to periodically bonds to improve ct facilities between 015 and July 2024. passed during the legislative session ded that window to 2027. The decision e subject to a refer- if 20% of voters school district peti-

gistration ued from Page 1A is well as those who t mail-in applications rked by Monday, 13, will be eligible to n the municipal rlection on April 1. Columbus, the cir-

cut clerk's office is in the Lowndes County Court- house, located at 505 Sec- ond Ave. N. In Starkville, the circuit clerk's office is located in the Oktibe- ha County Circuit Court-



The graphic shows the proposed complex on the edge of Mississippi State University's campus that would house Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science and a new Starkville High School. In its proposal to the state board, MSU estimates it would require \$85 million in state funding to build the new MSMS facilities.



The potential location of a new residence hall for Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science students on the south side of The W's campus is shown. In its proposal to house the residential high school, MUW estimates a new dorm could be built for \$35 million.

tion for an election. MSMS:E students would also have access to the main MSU campus and its research facilities. "We can significantly expand access for many more students to experience innovative basic and applied research in the fields of mathematics, science, engineering, social sciences and more," the proposal reads. "This hands-on experience will prepare students for future academic and professional success."

If MSU is selected, the goal is to complete the facility by the beginning of the 2027-2028 school year. But if MDE intends to stick to its 2026-2027 goal, the proposal said MSU and SOCSD are prepared to temporarily take the students before the facility is finished "by utilizing available space on both MSU and SOCSD campuses for housing and classrooms."

**MUW's proposal** Citing 37 years of partnership, The W's proposal argues keeping MSMS on the campus is cost-effective and would cause less disruption to the high school.

The proposal includes an expansion of academic support and learning opportunities for MSMS students should the school stay at The W. The university would increase dual credit course offerings available to MSMS students. MUW is also proposing a joint honors experience with the Ida E. Gordy Honors College, opportunities for MSMS students to earn academic certificates, more research opportunities and "expanded joint education experiences in the fine and performing arts."

The W is proposing building a new residence hall for MSMS estimated

at \$35 million. The new building, which would be located on the southeast side of the campus, would have capacity for 400 if MSMS were to increase enrollment to include sophomores. MUW President Nora Miller said the university has worked on identifying areas for new buildings or existing buildings to renovate for MSMS as a part of the university's master plan. Originally, that included possibly renovating Pant and Peyton halls, but MSMS decided a new building would be more suitable for a higher enrollment.

"We think that for an additional \$25 million, we could update Hooper Science, which is their main building, Shackelford and the Mary Wilson Home, where their administration is," Miller told The Dispatch on Thursday, although that work isn't in the proposal.

With the additional renovations and construction of a new dorm, MUW proposes the high school's facilities could be updated for \$60 million, which is \$25 million short of MSU's estimate for new facilities.

The proposal calls on the state board and the legislature to adequately fund MSMS, a point Miller made clear in a press conference earlier this week. "MUW does not have funding sources for MSMS outside of legislative sources and funding through (MDE), although the discounted services that MUW provides to MSMS should be considered as a 'funding source,'" the proposal reads.

MDE is responsible for creating a budget for MSMS each year, which includes several service fees to The W. In total, the high school pays just more than \$271,000 to op-

erate on MUW's campus. According to the proposal, that is almost a 90% discount on the overall cost of hosting the school. "MSMS has 164,519 dedicated square footage; the maintenance fee calculates to 69 cents per square foot, well short of the \$6 per square foot recommended by the Association of Physical Plant Administrators standards," the proposal reads. "... Not one of the other fees covers the cost of a full-time person in any of the areas."

Lowndes County Imagination Library says a special thank you to our Sponsor of the Month Robin V. Pieray

Monthly sponsorship of Lowndes County Imagination Library provides a free book a month through the mail to every enrolled child under the age of 5 in the county. Children can be registered as newborns and can build a library of up to 60 books by the time they graduate!

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Diana Neault  
Donnie Cook  
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# THE COMMERCIAL DISPATCH

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TUESDAY | FEBRUARY 25, 2025

## IUW details plans for expanding, housing MSMS

### Leaders call for MDE to be more supportive of residential high school

EMMA MCRAE  
emcrae@edispatch.com

The proposals to Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science today, Mississippi University for Women king its claim on the vital high school the announcement of to build new facilities on The W campus. President Nora Miller announced components of the proposal during a morning press conference at City Hall, outlining plans to build facilities on campus

specifically for MSMS students.

But proposals aside, Miller said it is imperative that the state invest in MSMS operations facilities at a higher, more adequate level.

"With adequate, reasonable funding and intentional planning, the state of Mississippi will save money by investing in the current infrastructure of MSMS on The W campus," she told a standing-room-only crowd of about 70 who attended the press conference.

"Although there is political pressure to relocate MSMS to Starkville with connections to (Mississippi State University) and possibly the Starkville-Oktibbeha schools, we urge the State Board of Education to move beyond narrowly focused politics and act in the best interests of MSMS students."

The State Board of Education asked both NIUW and MSU to submit proposals by today to operate and house the school as it expands. After reviewing the proposals, the board will make a recommendation to the legislature. Any changes the state See MSMS, 3A



Emma McRae/Dispatch Staff

Mayor Keith Gaskin, left, and Mississippi University for Women President Nora Miller stand in front of a standing-room only crowd Monday at City Hall in Columbus. Miller, Gaskin and Lowndes County Board of Supervisors President Trip Hairston discussed the importance of keeping Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science at The W campus, and Miller also presented plans for expansions outlined in the university's proposal to house and operate the residential high school.

### COMMUNITY PROFILE

## Visual arts teacher pushing SHS students toward national recognition

'I wanted to see our kids be the best in the country, to compete and get scholarships anywhere in the world'

BY EMMA MCRAE  
emcrae@edispatch.com

Nestled on the Starkville High School campus, the White House Studio where Andrew Lark teaches visual arts feels like it is in a different world.

From the rows of paintings alongside the staircase in the front hallway to the galleries of first-time sketches from freshman students and the signatures of alumni lining its white walls, the house is a space for students to find their artistic voice.

For Lark, the house is where he fulfills his mission of empowering young artists by helping them develop professional skills across multiple mediums, ranging from film photography to fashion design to sketching and even building instruments.

"Being here 28 years, I've poured myself into this community," he



Emma McRae/Dispatch Staff

Andrew Lark, who teaches visual arts and photography, admires a student's work Monday in the front hallway of the White House Studio on the Starkville High School campus. After teaching at SHS for the last 28 years, Lark has seen several students go on to receive numerous national and international awards and go on to study visual arts.

said. "I wanted to see our kids be the best in the country, to compete and get scholarships anywhere in the world, and God has blessed that to happen."

Raised in Clarksdale, Lark graduated from Mississippi Valley State University and began teaching at

SHS in 1997. He remembers easily picking up different art media as a child, though sometimes it was difficult for others to see the value in his passion.

"Even in kindergarten, I was doing these huge coloring crayon See LARK, 3A

## Two applicants vie for city CVB board seat

Patel reapplies for seat he has held since 2022; former Columbus COO also interested in post

CADENCE HARVEY  
ch Harvey@edispatch.com

Two applicants have emerged for a vacant seat on the board of Columbus-Lowndes Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Current board member Jay Patel is seeking reappointment and is contested by former Columbus Chief Operations Officer David Armstrong. Columbus City Council will appoint an applicant March 4 to a three-year term.

CVB works to boost tourism in Columbus and Lowndes County by promoting the city and county as a destination area. The nine-member board includes four appointments each from the city and county, as well as one appointment made by the Columbus mayor and Lowndes County Board See APPLICANTS, 6A



Patel



Armstrong

### THE DISPATCH

## How did Edwina Williams become Mother Goose?

ANGEL SIPE ROCHESTER  
arsipe@edispatch.com

While Mother Goose is a known worldwide as imaginary author of nursery rhymes like "Jack and Jill" and "Hickory Dickory Dock," she has a unique claim to character in the Columbus-Lowndes Public Library's

children's librarian.

Edwina Williams has become synonymous with the character in the Golden Triangle. Whether she is in the library or on the street, Williams is often referred to as "Mother Goose" more often than her own name. And she can often be seen wearing

her "uniform," a straw hat covered in flowers, a blue dress and a white apron.

But how did the local Mother Goose become the character? How did she end up at the library? And how does Mother Goose help children learn?

See ASK THE DISPATCH, 6A



Abigail Sipe Rochester/Dispatch Staff

Mother Goose

(Edwina Williams) plays the piano at the Columbus-Lowndes Public Library Thursday morning. Williams has embodied Mother Goose at the library for about 40 years, and she has played the character for even longer.

### DE

teds 6B  
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ion 5B

### FIVE QUESTIONS

- 1 Who was the first African American to compete in the U.S. National Championship and win a Grand Slam title at the 1956 French Open?
- 2 Who held the Olympic record in the 200-meter dash in 1936?
- 3 Who was the first African American to publish a book of poetry?
- 4 Who was the first African American lawyer in the state of Ohio?
- 5 Who was the first African American woman to earn a four-year college degree?

Answers, 6B

### CALENDAR

- Today**  
New Music at the W: Mississippi University for Women's Department of Music presents this concert of modern and contemporary concert music in a fusion of genres. The event begins at 7:30 p.m. in Poindester Hall and is free and open to the public.
- Wednesday through Sunday**  
Medea: TheatreMSU is staging this classic Greek tale about betrayal and a powerful woman's vengeance. Performances will begin at 7:30 p.m. Wednes-

- day through Saturday, with a 2 p.m. matinee Sunday, at McComas Hall Theater.
- Friday through Sunday**  
The Lightning Thief: Golden Triangle Theatre is performing a production of "The Lightning Thief," a musical based on the 2005 novel of the same name, at the Lyceum at Lee. Performances will start at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, with matinees running at 2 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, respectively. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$8 for children.

- Saturday**  
The Paul Thorn Band Concert: Presented by The Barn Concert Series, The Paul Thorn Band will be performing two album release concerts, one at 5 p.m. and the other at 8 p.m., at Gonnell Theater on the NIUW Campus.
- Sunday, March 2**  
Impact Award Announcement Celebration: 100+ Women Who Care Columbus will be announcing the recipient of its 13th impact award at 4 p.m. at Zachary's, 205 North Fifth St.

### LOCAL FOLKS



Anderson Christopher G. of Sturgis, loves to draw and play on the monkey bars.

### PUBLIC MEETINGS

**Today:** Columbus-Lowndes Convention and Visitors Bureau Board, 4 p.m., CVB board room  
**Feb. 27:** Columbus City Council work session, 10:30 a.m., City Hall  
**March 3:** Lowndes County Board of Supervisors, 9 a.m., courthouse

ESTABLISHED 1879



#Year, No. 244

AREA ARRESTS

The following arrests made by the Lowndes County Sheriff's Office:

Antonio Weston, 31, charged with possession of burglary tools and to appear.

Brian Gartman, 38, charged with grand larceny more than \$1000.

Chasty Spangler, 36, charged with child abuse.

Lamorris Lang, 38, charged with possession of a weapon by a felon exceeding 21.30 mph limit, possession of a handgun and possession of a paraffin.

Tajh Bush, 32, was charged with possession of a controlled substance.

The following arrests made by the Oktibbeha County Sheriff's Office:

Roshelle Murry, 55, charged with shoplifting.



Weston, Gartman, Spangler, Lang, Bush, Murry, Hinton, Nickey, Gatlin, Turnipseed, Lowery, Boyd, McCloud, McEwing, Davis III, Kennedy, Franks, Wise, Stevenson

Charmina Nickey, 28, was charged with bench warrant and DUI 3rd offense. Henry Lowery, 66, was charged with possession of a weapon by a felon, two counts of no insurance, two counts of expired tag and expired drivers license. Desmond Boyd, 42, was charged with possession of a weapon by a felon, possession of marijuana in a vehicle and possession of paraphernalia. Nicholas McCloud, 33, was charged with MDOC hold, receiving stolen property and contempt of court. Travell McEwing, 33, was charged with possession of a weapon by a felon, possession of marijuana in a vehicle and possession of paraphernalia. Alvin Davis III, 36, was charged with MDOC. Zyria Kennedy, 24, was charged with simple assault, MDOC hold, two counts of child restraint, no insurance and no seat belt. Bradley Franks, 34, was charged with disturbing the peace and possession of paraphernalia. Raymond Wise, 33, was charged with burglary other than dwelling and possession of marijuana more than 30 grams. Dlaisha Stevenson, 21, was charged with false pretense.

SMS

Continued from Page 1A

ribes will go into in the 2026-2027 year.

for how the proposal will be assessed, Millid the Mississippi Department of Education led no guidance.

asked for the rubric will be in evaluating the proposals as told after proposal she



ller, joined by Mayor Gaskin and Lowndes County Board of Supervisors Trip Hairston, led MSMS's relocation and its goal to grow on The W. The high school 65,000 square feet located space across buildings with an addi-

tional 242,000 square feet of shared space.

For the last two years, Miller said the university has worked on its master plan in collaboration with MSMS administration to ensure the school's current and future needs are addressed, most notably, the need for updated facilities.

"During the master planning process, in coordination with MSMS, two spaces were identified for potential new facilities with the option of one or both to be residential spaces," Miller said.

"Additionally, two vacant residential facilities, Fant and Peyton Hall, could be renovated and designated for MSMS."

Miller said the estimated price for renovating one of those buildings is about \$22 million. She did not provide cost estimates for new facilities

Monday.

The proposal also includes plans to expand dual enrollment offerings for MSMS students at The W. The university currently offers 14 dual-credit courses for the students, but the planned expansion would increase offerings to 41 courses, Miller said.

Miller said MUW will still be campaigning for MDE to increase funding to MSMS, both for facility issues to be addressed and for administrative costs to be adequately covered.

"The W has long served as the fiscal agent for MSMS, overseeing accounts payable, accounts receivable, public procurement processes, payroll benefits, processing, grant financial transactions and other business services," she said. "The administrative fees that

MSMS pays have not kept up with the actual cost of providing these services."

Hairston agreed with Miller, calling for the department to be more supportive of the high school instead of trying to "fix something that's not broken."

"The budget for MSMS comes from MDE ... and it's funded by the state legislature as a line item during the appropriations process, but it's up to MDE to be an advocate for MSMS and to request that funding," Hairston said.

The university receives an annual allocation of \$113,000 to cover routine maintenance issues, which often leaves MUW footing the bill for major

upgrades and improvements. Gaskin echoed calls for more financial investment in MSMS at the state level and also encouraged community members to support the school individually.

"The W has long experienced more on maintenance and upgrades than has been covered by the annual fee as part of the shared mission and service to the state," he said. "For example, recently replacing an air handling unit that cost \$768,000. You see that educating the state's best and brightest is a won-

derful opportunity for all, but it takes support from all. Not just the state, but from all of us."

MSU Vice President for Strategic Communications and Director of Public Affairs Sid Salter told The Dispatch he did not feel like there were any surprises in The W's press conference.

"As they have, we are putting the final touches on our (proposal) and we will be submitting that in a timely fashion," he said,

though he offered no specifics to MSU's proposal.



Gaskin



Salter

Lark

Continued from Page 1A

ngs, and people something was sent about me then," d. "In a Black environment, people didn't stand the value of I was doing."

sees teaching as ng and art as an tunity for students cover their potential use it to build a . hat's my whole trying to give our ... a feeling that, 'We Mississippians, and n compete against dy in the world.' d. "I want them to at you can make it ere in the world. ville is a place that s allowing us to : a foundation here an get what they here and go any- ."

rt of that mission ating opportunities idents to showcase work. Lark routinely s his students in vide and national etitions. e expected to lose st). We expected to

come in and to finish not always on the top," he said. "I grew up in that, and I want to make sure that my kids never experience that. I want them to experience positive things - that we are somebody and God has made us special and we're winners."

To date, Lark said the White House Studio has amassed more than 70 national awards and even several international awards. Many of his former students continued studying visual arts at Savannah College of Art and Design, University of Columbia and even Harvard University.

Teaching art requires a lot of materials, and for Lark, support is accepted wherever it is offered, even if he doesn't know the person, company or organization offering it. He just calls someone who can help and follows the line from there.

Need \$10,000 worth of photography film? Lark knows a guy. Looking for \$3,500 of sculpting clay? He knows someone who

knows someone else.

"Some of these people I've never met," he said.

"They saw what I was doing and said, 'We are going to invest in this thing because it's bigger than your ... I called whoever I could to help my kids. I live that way because I know there's resources out there.'"

Students have earned 12 Overall Best of Show awards at the national Congressional Art Competition during Lark's tenure, allowing them to exhibit their work in the U.S. Capitol for the last 12 years.

Lark has received his fair share of awards as well, including teacher of the year on the school district, region and state level. He received Rotary International's Excellence in Education Award and is a member of the Starkville Area Education Hall of Fame.

Lark hopes to expand his teaching to offer students, from seventh-graders to seniors, from other schools a chance

to find their voice in visual arts. He is in the process of planning a free after-school program to teach students across the region before and after school.

"I'm trying to reach out and find every kid," he said. "If they come from Columbus, great. If they come from West Point, great. I just want to give kids that opportunity because what they're going to face out there in the world talking about being an artist in Mississippi."

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Mississippi sheriff's deputy is shot and killed while responding to a call

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ERRY - A Mississippi sheriff's deputy was shot and killed while responding to a call outside the state's capital city of Montgomery, Ala., authorities said.

Martin Jr., 37, of the county Sheriff's Office died after the Sunning shooting, the sheriff's office said in a statement.

a home on Midway Road in Terry, Mississippi, southwest of Jackson, authorities said. Few other details on the circumstances were immediately released.

Hinds County Sheriff Tyree Jones said he heard the police radio traffic that sent Shields and another deputy to the residence. Then, "I heard the distress call from a deputy on the

"shots fired, shots fired."

The sheriff said he and dispatchers tried to reach Shields over the radio, but got no answer. "My heart sank as I rushed to the scene, not getting a response from the fallen deputy," he posted on social media.

"Deputy Shields died a hero, embodying the courage and commitment we all share in serving and protecting our com-

WGBH 7 News at 7

SUMMARY: An above average way to end the month. Temperatures are looking warmer than last week. Slight rain chance on Thursday.

TUE NIGHT	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Mostly Clear	Partly Cloudy	Rain Chance	Mostly Clear	Mostly Clear
LOW 42	HIGH 77 LOW 52	HIGH 62 LOW 38	HIGH 64 LOW 39	HIGH 70 LOW 43

ALMANAC DATA  
 Sunday in Columbus  
 Temperature High 66 Low 38  
 Normal 64 42  
 Record 89 18  
 Precipitation (inches) 0.00  
 Sunday Month to date 2.12  
 Normal month to date 4.74  
 Year to date 8.48  
 Normal year to date 10.10

FORECAST FOR SELECTED CITIES  
 City High/Low  
 Atlanta 69/42  
 Boston 52/28  
 Chicago 48/34  
 Dallas 75/53  
 Los Angeles 79/53  
 Nashville 65/39  
 New York 55/38  
 Orlando 73/54  
 Phoenix 73/43  
 Seattle 62/39

TOMBIGBEE RIVER STAGES  
 Station Name Stage Stage Chg.  
 Fulton 20 10.29 -2.04  
 Bigbee 14 5.18 -2.93  
 Albany 20 11.55 -0.96  
 Columbus 161 138.80 -1.47  
 Bevil 152 109.90 -1.35

LAKE LEVELS  
 Station Name Stage Stage Chg.  
 Aberdeen 190.36 -0.09  
 Columbus 162.22 -0.37  
 Bevil 136.30 -0.03

MOON PHASES  
 New First Full Last  
 Feb. 27th Mar. 6th Mar. 14th Mar. 22nd

SUN AND MOON  
 Sun Mon Tue  
 Sunrise 6:26 AM 6:25 AM 6:24 AM  
 Sunset 5:47 PM 5:48 PM 5:49 PM  
 Moonrise 5:05 AM 5:44 AM 6:28 PM  
 Moonset 3:17 PM 4:28 PM

SOLUNAR TABLE  
 Major 10:11 11:05a  
 Minor 5:05a 5:42a  
 Major 10:30a 11:20a  
 Minor 3:17p 4:20p

THE DISPATCH

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### AL VOICES

## ction needed to fight for MSMS

ould like to commend the dispatch's "Our opinion" in Tuesday's and agree heartedly everything in. I especially appreciate the on ink quip. ant! I would let your rs know how a few things from the hes regarding this issue. st of all, I am very proud at we are accomplishing ms of growth and eco- development not only rades County but in the r region. We have in the n Triangle LINK the envy sissippi and arguably outheast. Remarkably, we an economic development oration between three ies and our respective ipalities and have seen success. I hear from areas in the state who they had the collaboration ir communities that we here. It is extremely timate that two of our unities and the respec- niversities therein are



Trip Hairston

now pitted against each other. MSMS is woven in the very fabric of who we are in Columbus and Lowndes County. If the legislature decides to pry MSMS from us, I believe they will do more harm to MUW and Columbus than they will do good for MSU and Starkville.

More importantly, I have heard from many former students, former parents, and current parents who believe the legislature will do way more harm than good to MSMS by moving it to MSU. They believe this for all the same reasons we have been yelling from the top of our lungs for over a year now and have been articulated so well by this paper.

The only consistent complaint is the condition of the residence halls and the need for updated academic and lab spaces. MSMS students deserve better facilities and appropriate increased funding. The same increased funding that the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) has neglected to send and lobby

for in the legislature all these years. The same increased funding that will have to be spent regardless of whether it stays at MUW or goes to MSU. The same increased funding that needs to be spent in the location where MSMS was born and raised. MUW did not create this problem, MDE did through their lack of action and advocacy.

Obviously, I believe the whole process by which the MDE is gathering information from MUW and MSU is flawed, and I was even quoted in last weekend's edition stating that I do not believe it is a serious inquiry because the fix is already in. Years ago, I spent five years working in the Capitol for the Legislative Budget Office (LBO). During that time, I was able to see firsthand the legislative process. I became well versed in the committee structures and their relationships with the various state agencies. When I read the request for proposal issued by MDE, I was immediately struck by what I learned all those years ago. Representative Rob Roberson from Starkville serves as the Chairman of the House Education Committee. MDE

is beholden to the Education Chairman and his committee, because they make decisions and determine the disposition of various legislative actions wanted or unwanted by the department. Because of that relationship, MDE has every incentive to keep the Chairman happy. MDE is certainly aware that Chairman Roberson has been very vocal about his wishes for MSMS to leave MUW and move to MSU. He also made it clear that he expects there to be collaboration if not an outright merger of MSMS with the combined Starkville Oktibeha County School District. I can't help but believe he sees this as a perfect opportunity for the state coffers to fund a significant portion of the new Starkville High School proposed to be built on the campus of MSU by effectively using MSMS as a means to an end. I certainly don't blame him for trying, and I would assume the people living in his district are applauding his efforts.

I need to reiterate the point that the final decision is not made by the foregone conclusion and recommendation by the MDE but is ultimately

made by the legislature. The various legislators will eventually have to weigh in with their vote even though some will try and hide behind MDE's recommendation.

Unfortunately, it looks like we will have to decide if we are willing to fight a fight we did not provoke. In the early days of World War II, Britain had a decision to make. They could take the Neville Chamberlain approach of appeasement or the Winston Churchill approach of resilience and resistance. The irony is not lost on me that the first letter in the name Winston is "W." Obviously, I am choosing the latter. I visited my old stomping grounds, the state Capitol, on Wednesday. I made a few strategic visits in the House and Senate thanks to our local delegation. However, members of the legislature could care less what a lowly county supervisor thinks, so they need to hear from you. Please take a few minutes from your day and reach out per the appeal from Thursday's opinion article. Hearing from you is what could make a difference.

Trip Hairston is the president of the Lowndes County Board of Supervisors.

### VIEW

## ses and thorns

A rose to Mississippi State baseball players Hunter Hines and Stone Simmons and Simmons Erosion Control for putting together a NIL package for the benefit of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Mississippi. 54 career home runs in his Bulldog career enters his senior season this spring 13 home runs of the record set by Rafael Palmeiro in his teammate, pitcher Stone Simmons, was ached while doing volunteer work for Make-A-Wish for a way to create a fund-raising mechanism with the MSU baseball program. Simmons donated a donation to Make-A-Wish for every homer Hunter hits as he chases the record Simmons Erosion Control signed the NIL deal will donate \$1,000 for every homer Hines hits this season. Additionally, one donor has agreed to make a donation to the campaign for every Stone Simmons strikes out this season. Campaign hopes to inspire MSU baseball to contribute to the Home Runs For Wishes campaign. We applaud all involved for teaming up to help every Hunter homer a step in fulfilling a Make-A-Wish child's dream.

A thorn to Columbus City Council, which seems less than enthusiastic about allowing the incomplete Terry Brown Amphitheater to be used by the Golden Triangle Theatre's summer camp. GTT Executive Director Garrett Torbert made the pitch to the Thursday's work session. While Ward 6 councilwoman Jacqueline DiCicco said she liked the idea, Ward 5 Councilman Stephen Jones voted to using the facility before it is entirely ready. Mayor Keith Gaskin seemed neutral on the issue. The first phase of the project, including construction on the stage, electrical/water/sewer and concrete work, was completed in 2017. Officials said then that the facility could host concerts and other non-ticketed events. There has been no additional work done at the site in five years as the city looks for the additional \$1 million needed to complete the project. As it stands now, the amphitheater sits unused and is an embarrassment to the city. The idea of getting some use out of the facility while supporting local kids in the program should be a no-brainer. It could also serve as proof of concept, which could potentially be used for additional funding. It appears that ideas aren't always welcomed by the city council. That, too, is an embarrassment.

A rose to the Mississippi University for Women nursing program, which continues to be the gold standard for nursing education in the state. The latest rankings of nursing schools by Nursing Process firms that status, ranking MUW's Associate Degree in Nursing, Bachelor of Science in Nursing RN to BSN programs as the state's best. Y's ASN program was the No. 1 program in the Southeast Region. Meanwhile the Vandergriff College of Nursing and Health Sciences has been ranked the best school in the state for nursing and 39th nationally, according to Niche.com. In More than 98% of students who completed Y's registered nursing programs in spring obtained licenses in Mississippi, and 83% of graduates accepted a position within the state. Y's outstanding programs are a boon to both

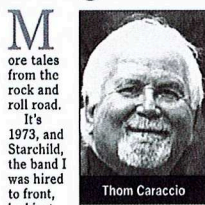
### NOTES FROM EXILE



Band members of Starchild.

Courtesy photo

## A night at Neal's



Thom Caraccio

More tales from the rock and roll road. It's 1973 and Starchild, the band I was hired to front, had just recently played the Button South in Ft. Lauderdale. At the time, this was THE big venue in South Florida for bands like us: long haired rock in the time of Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd. Many big names at the time were launched there and even those who had already "made it" would occasionally come back for an appearance. A big stage kind of place. Our manager Angie had used her considerable contacts to get us booked there, so we were under great pressure to do well. Mike Pina's Blues Image ("Ride Captain Ride") had just been there the week before. Later into the 80's you could see the Kinks, Foghat, the Ramones, Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, Motorhead...the list goes on. It was a good night. A step up the ladder. So Angie took it up a notch and booked us at the biggest nightclub in West Palm Beach. It was harder to get on the schedule there than it is to get a job at USAID today. Neal's was a large two story building right on the main street cutting through downtown West Palm. I heard that it had been

There was a large ballroom on the top floor with a substantial stage. Downstairs was a smaller version. Being the new kids, we of course had the bottom floor and stage. But it was prestigious nonetheless. The headliners, a prominent local band called Dalas Star featuring Charles Cook, would play a 45 minute set, then we would play the same below. Dalas Star had opened numerous shows at the West Palm Beach Auditorium and were very popular up and down the Florida coast. They were a really great band, but it didn't hurt that they had a girl backup singer who wore skimpy tight-fitting outfits and who had been blessed with rather voluminous body parts which were difficult to ignore. Starchild had... ME. Nowhere near that kind of crowd pleaser. I wouldn't have looked too good in Spandex shorts. Luckily, our band's performances made up for that. So, jealousy tainted our conversations about Dalas Star every time we were on break. The big topic that night was the fact that it was Charlie Cook's birthday. He was turning 30 years old. Now, I was 24 and the rest of Starchild was even a bit younger. It amazes me looking back just how stupid and silly guys at that age can really be. We were howling, making every joke possible. "He'll be in a nursing home before they come back here!" "No! They don't allow wheelchairs on stage!"

And on and on. If you wait long enough, karma will catch up with you. Charles Cook is STILL playing, though in small venues. (Unfortunately the band name is the Fog) Starchild? There are only two of us still alive. And I have shoes I still wear that are 30 years old. The night went pretty well except when we were loading out to leave. Our bass player decided to pillage their liquor storage room in the basement. That was a typical exercise in those days by bands who felt that they weren't being compensated enough. (The pay today in 2025 is in the same dollar amount. But they lock the booze up much better.) The slit of a window in this old building was at ground level, but Joe managed to squeeze cases of whiskey out to our waiting sound tech. Thinking he heard someone about to come in (but weren't), he decided to escape through the window opening. We were mighty skinny in those days, but not skinny enough. Joe was stuck halfway through. Someone found a screwdriver and quickly freed him by taking the window frame out. We were in a hurry and didn't put the window back, so some wandering bum probably got lucky later. And we hauled butt out of there. Thom Caraccio (caraccio@juno.com) is a retired musician and retired motion picture scenic artist living in West Palm Beach, Florida who hails from Columbus. He graduated from S.D. Lee High in

### VIEW

## Do you have opinions on MSMS? Here's who to call

The success of acupuncture depends on knowing where to place the pressure. Tuesday's edition, a tech editorial challenged the process that might be decided heavily on whether the School for Mathematics and Science remains on campus in Columbus versus to a new home on the campus of Mississippi State University in Starkville. The interest that has generated, we want to hear your voices heard on this. That means knowing how to apply the pressure. You want to make your heard, here's who to contact. Phone calls are most effective, but emails are also

**Board of Education** is the most important people that are the members of the State Board of Education, and will make a critical

recommendation to the legislature. The state board is made up of nine members appointed by the governor, lieutenant governor and speaker of the House. None of the current members are from the Golden Triangle.

Board members' phone numbers aren't listed, but there is the main switchboard number and individual email addresses.

- MDE Board main switchboard: (601) 359-3513.
- Mike Miller: mmiller@mdekl2.org
- Glen East: geast@mdekl2.org
- Wendi Barrett: wbarrett@mdekl2.org
- Matt Mayo: mmayo@mdekl2.org
- Bill Jacobs: bjacobs@mdekl2.org
- Ronnie McGehee: rmgehee@mdekl2.org
- Mike Pruitt: mpruitt@mdekl2.org

- Bill Jean Stroud: bstroud@mdekl2.org
- Mary Werner: werner@mdekl2.org

**State Legislature** Funding for MSMS ultimately comes from the Legislature. MUW has been at times unfairly criticized for the deterioration of MSMS facilities, including dormitories. So if you want to address that matter, asking the legislature to provide funds for adequate facilities is the place to start.

- Rob Roberson (Starkville); chair of the House education committee; (601) 359-3359; rroberson@house.ms.gov
- Dana McLean (Columbus); member of House universities and college committee; (662) 328-0607; dmclean@house.ms.gov
- Donnie Scoggin (Ellisville); chair of House universities and college committee; (601) 477-8553; rscoggin@house.ms.gov
- Nicole Boyd (Oxford); chair of Senate universities and college committee; (601) 395-2886; nboyd@senate.ms.gov
- Dennis DeBar (Waynesboro); chair of Senate education committee; (601) 359-

3250; ddebar@senate.ms.gov

**Legislative Leadership:** You can also take your argument to the top of each chamber. The Lt. Governor and Speaker of the House set the agenda for each chamber and have massive influence on legislation.

- Lieutenant Governor Delbert Hosemann; (601) 359-3200; ltgov@senate.ms.gov
- House Speaker Jason White; (601) 359-3300; jwhite@house.ms.gov

**Talking points to consider:**

- MSMS has thrived in Columbus, becoming one of the top high schools in the country. Why fix something that isn't broken?
- Funding for MSMS has not increased significantly since it was established in 1987. That needs to change regardless of where the school is located.
- There are numerous safety concerns with residential high school students living in

close proximity to college students. The Dispatch has done a story comparing crime rates between MUW to MSU.

- Nationally-recognized MSMS programs such as Tales from the Crypt and Eighth of May Emancipation Celebration are built around Columbus' rich history.
- Columbus and Lowndes provided seed money to help start MSMS.

At this point, Mississippi State has not publicly advocated to become the new home of MSMS. Nothing requires MSU to submit a proposal, so it might be worth a call to MSU President Mark Keenum at (662) 325-3221; president@msstate.edu

Finally, there is a Bible parable about a poor widow who kept going to an indifferent judge with a complaint until he gave in to her request, not on merit, but exhaustion.

The moral of the story: Persistent pressure pays off.

Make calls, send emails. Rinse and repeat.

### IER EDITORS

## America risks its place in the world

The Trump administration's deployment to Latin America in recent days offered a nugget of insight into the president's global worldview.

Panama City, Secretary of State Marco Rubio sternly told José Raúl Mulino that the United States would take "no for an answer" if Panama did not reduce Chinese influence over the Panama Canal — an ominous warning, given President Trump's avowed interest in taking over the canal.

Over 100 miles to the east, in Caracas, meanwhile, a rift between Trump's special envoy Richard Grenell and Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro was congenial. The United States got something from it: Maduro released six Americans in Venezuelan prisons and agreed to take back Venezuelans held from the United States. In exchange, Maduro got priceless pats in Miraflores Palace smiling alongside the American diplomat. Granting an image of legitimate respectability offered the Venezuelan a future of promise.

The contrast here is alarming. Panama is a close ally of Washington. It has offered its help to stop migrants on their way to the United States. And Mulino is a self-wounded friend. Maduro, on the other hand, has a \$25 million U.S. bounty on his head. What's more troubling is that this asymmetry in treatment and favor seems to be Washington's new norm. From his move to take Greenland from Denmark and make Canada the target, to his warning to Panama and his (postponed) tariffs on Mexico and Canada, Trump has dished out his bullying to America's allies. Next in line for the tariff treatment is the European Union.

China — a geopolitical rival and Trump's personal bête noire — hit with tariffs for real, though lower than those threatened against Canada and Mexico. Russia, like Venezuela, is sitting on Trump's softer side. Although the president has the prospect of unspecified new sanctions against Moscow, it doesn't negotiate a settlement with Kyiv, he has also positions that Russian President Vladimir Putin tends to with, including his opposition to Ukraine's joining NATO. He will be speaking, Trump said of Putin, "and I think will do something that'll be significant" toward ending the

relationship with allies worse than adversaries is not in the standard diplomatic playbook, but it fits Trump's transactional approach. Diplomacy has no place for alliances based on shared values and upheld by international conventions and legal frameworks. He pursues what he wants to achieve narrow goals. Trump applies threats to breach the United States-Mexico-Canada agreement that he himself reached with those countries in his first term, in the interest of any short-term win.

It is a way of operating that tends to suit the autocratic governments of America's foes. Rulers such as Putin, Maduro and Xi Jinping of China prefer to govern in the same way — unimpeded by human rights treaties, laws of war or other obstacles. They speak in Trump's language. But they will never become trustworthy allies of the United States.

In contrast, America's erstwhile friends, the co-signers of the liberal democratic order that Washington once took pride in — are recoiling from Trump's strategy. And this bodes the world's stability and security. As the Trump administration transforms the nature of diplomacy, it risks isolating the United States.

As the European Council on Foreign Relations in the November election found that only 22 percent of people in a sampling of nine E.U. countries consider America to be a "friend" that shares our interests and values. This is down from 40 percent two years ago.

President Joe Biden might have been seen as keen as Trump to isolate China and to withdraw from the world economy into protectionist crouch, but he also understood that taking on China as a powerful and resourceful as China requires strengthening a country's most significant friendships, not dismantling them. Driven by disdain for the alliances, norms and institutions that shaped the West after World War II, Trump seems to be what America is strong enough to bully its partners. Every

### THE NATION

## What kind of a populist is Elon Musk?

Can the world's richest man be a populist? Elon Musk has plenty of enemies on the left who say the Tesla CEO is too rich to be a champion of working Americans.



Daniel McCarthy

He has opponents on the right who say the same, notably Steve Bannon, the mastermind of the 2016 Trump campaign's anti-establishment messaging.

There's rumbling about a clash between the "tech right" and populist right in conservative as well as liberal media.

Vivek Ramaswamy, who was supposed to be Musk's partner in heading the Department of Government Efficiency, fell from grace with MAGA activists after he criticized Americans' work ethic and defended the H1B visa program.

DOGE aims to drastically cut the size of government, by as much as \$2 trillion in Musk's most optimistic scenario.

Yet there are some conservatives who join progressives in insisting that slashing spending is what libertarians do, not populists.

President Donald Trump has taken the GOP a long way toward becoming a working-class party.

Is Musk undoing that — turning the clock back to the days of Ronald Reagan?

If he is, Musk is really advancing populism, not betraying it.

Reagan wasn't just elected by Wall Street, whatever Democrats may think.

Blue-collar voters were the backbone of his electoral coalition, including working-class Americans who had voted Democratic for decades.

Reagan didn't win them over with promises of greater government benefits — he did it by attacking a government that was bloated and burdensome to the ordinary taxpayer.

Trump voters, like Reagan voters, want less of a government that works against them.

Steve Bannon himself traces the origins of the Trump

movement to the Tea Party revolt against government bailouts of financial institutions and other corporations "too big to fail" during the Great Recession.

The programs and agencies Musk is dismantling prop up an elite ecosystem in Washington that takes billions of dollars from taxpayers' pockets.

Take the foreign-aid agency USAID: According to its own reporting, last year only 12.1% of its spending went directly to providing aid in foreign countries.

The other nearly 88% of its budget went to "non-government organizations" in America that serve as conduits for the aid — and take a cut of the money.

United Aid, an organization calling for reform of foreign-aid programs, estimates "nearly nine out of every ten dollars that USAID spent" in 2022 "went to its international contracting partners, most of which are based in or around the Washington, DC area."

Four of the six counties in the United States with the highest household income — including the one with the highest of all, Loudoun County, Virginia — are in the D.C. region.

The nation's capital grows rich from the money its networks extract from taxpayers. NGOs receiving USAID money do not, of course, keep it all for themselves — only a slice.

But when tens of billions of dollars are flowing through the system every year, even a taste is a feast.

Not coincidentally, Washington, D.C. and its suburbs are deep blue on the electoral map, which helps keep Maryland and Virginia in the Democratic column in presidential contests.

And a certain portion of the aid money that stays with American NGOs, in the form of employees' salaries, gets passed on to the Democratic Party and progressive causes in the form of campaign con-

tributions and other political donations.

That's what makes the system so hard to fight from within.

Republican officeholders are easily tempted into thinking they could run the machine for their own advantage, and indeed, there are plenty of NGOs in Washington that function as professional retirement homes for influential Republicans who have played the game.

The only way to get rid of the corruption is to bring in outsiders who can't be enticed by what Washington can offer.

Trump himself is one such outsider, and Musk is another.

Populism isn't about rejecting wealthy individuals like Trump or Musk, whose personal fortunes pale beside the kind of money government spends.

The point of populism is to curtail the self-dealing of an insider class that feeds off everyone's taxes.

Smaller government means government more focused on the limited number of things that are truly in the public's interest.

When DOGE cuts waste, fraud, abuse and self-dealing, it frees up funds that can go to better uses.

And when government doesn't take such a big bite out of American's paychecks in the first place, they have more money to spend taking care of their families and communities — and to give to the international charities that they decide are best suited to help the needy abroad.

Not a cent that Musk and his team cuts disappears from circulation.

Instead the money is taken away from the elite and given back to uses the people approve of — or it goes back to the people themselves, to be used the way they think best.

That's populism, and yes, Elon Musk, the richest man on earth, is a populist.

Daniel McCarthy is editor-at-large of The American Conservative. A recognized expert on conservative thought, he has appeared in an array of print and broadcast media. Follow him on X at @ToryArchivist.

# THE COMMERCIAL DISPATCH

THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 13, 2025

## ata shows higher crime rate at MSU compared to MUW as schools vie to house MSMS

U Dean of Students: Security changes can be made for new student population

IMARA MCRAE  
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Mississippi University for Women and Mississippi State University prepare to pitch their plans to the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science, crime

rates on each campus could play a role in shaping their proposals. On Friday, the Mississippi Department of Education requested the two universities submit a proposal to house and operate MSMS by Feb. 25, adding that a specific ob-

jective is to "provide a structured and supportive residential experience for high school students while ensuring safety and integration within the college setting." MSMS, a residential school for gifted juniors and seniors, opened at MUW in 1987. Lowndes County Board of Supervisors President Trip Hairston, who also serves on a Columbus commit-

Crime reports from 2021-2023 per 1,000 students

Crime	MSU	MUW
Rape	2.63	0.45
Fondling	1.51	0
Robbery	0.08	0
Agg. Assault	0	0.45
Burglary	0.51	6.38
Stalking	2.33	0
Dating Violence	2.20	0

See CRIME RATES, 6A

## 8th Magnolia Film Fest to feature more 'female-centric' works

its first film festival to show 34 films this year

DENISE HARVEY  
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ARKVILLE - Filmmakers all over are working magic to the big screen and a record number of independent films to the annual Magnolia Film Festival. The festival is returning to UEC Starkville Hollywood Premiere Cinemas 20-22, bringing with it world premieres, 18 Mississippi film debuts and overall 34 films from six states and seven states. Among these films are from Canada, the Netherlands, France, Puerto Rico and Spain.



Writer and producer Jeremy Burgess speaks to a group of about 30 people about the power of collaborating on film projects during the 2023 Magnolia Independent Film Festival. This year's festival is set for Feb. 20-22 at UEC Starkville Hollywood Premiere Cinemas and will feature 34 films.

each about 90 minutes, along with 31 shorts ranging from three to 30 minutes in runtime. The films will be showcased Thursday through Saturday, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday and 6 p.m. Saturday. There will also be a family-friendly showing at 11 a.m. Saturday, which will showcase seven independent films rated PG.

Festival Director Chris Misun said this year's festival will host 30 filmmakers to show and represent their films.

Filmmakers will be available for a brief question and answer session with audience members after each genre's showing. Misun said. Filmmakers will also be featured in a panel discussion Saturday around 1 p.m. at the UEC theater. Panel leaders will discuss the significance of music and sound in film to coincide with this



Misun

year's theme: "Celebrating the Sound of Filmmaking." Misun said this year's film entries are more diverse than previous years. "I think we've got a lot more female-centric stories this year," Misun said. "So several films have very central female characters and female directors and so, we're trying to diversify." Before the films start rolling, the festival will kick off with a "Ladies Night" reception at 6 p.m. Thursday

See FILM FEST, 6A

MARY MEANS BUSINESS

## The Paint Store shuts in Columbus

PLUS: New Mexican restaurant open; Scooter's Coffee announces Columbus location



After 50 years, The Paint Store in Columbus has officially closed. Owner David Richardson confirmed the store's closure at 418 Main St. Richardson's parents first opened the store in July 1974 on Highway 45. He moved the store to Main Street in 2008 but decided it was time to close shop late last year. "I had a job opportunity present itself and I took it," Richardson said in a text message. "It was nice to be able to close on my terms." Richardson still has his former client's paint colors and said customers who have his number can text him and he will give them the names. "I'm thankful and feel blessed to have been in business for so many years," he said. "I had some loyal customers and made a lot of

See BUSINESS, 6A

## Miss graduate facing new charge of hiding Jimmie 'Jay' Lee's body

to remain in jail until his bond hearing next week

MILY MINTA  
@ppi Today

The University of Mississippi graduate accused of hiding Jimmie "Jay" Lee's body was indicted on a new charge that

comes on the heels of the unexpected discovery of Lee's body last week.

Shelton Timothy Herrington Jr. reported to the Lafayette County Circuit Court on Tuesday to face a new indictment that al-

leges he obstructed justice by hiding Lee's body after he killed Lee on July 8, 2022.

Herrington, who pleaded not guilty, was also appointed a public defender. Oxford-based attorney De-

penalty or life in prison in the event Herrington is convicted of capital murder at the next trial, a date for which has yet to be set.

Creekmore did not pursue the death penalty at the trial in December, but he told the Daily Journal that the finding of Lee's

body last week was a "material change in circumstances."

Lee's body was discovered last week at a well-known dumping site in Carroll County, about a half-hour from Herrington's parent's

See HERRINGTON, 6A

### FIVE QUESTIONS

- Alexander Graham Bell filed a patent application for what invention on Feb. 14, 1876?
- In Greek mythology, what is the god of love known as?
- Relative to perfume, this phrase roughly translates into "grooming water."
- Meg Ryan's famous "I'll have what she's having" scene in "When Harry Met Sally" takes place at what New York City deli?
- What element are diamonds made of?

Answers, 6B

### CALENDAR

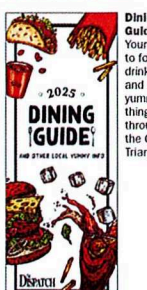
**Today through Sunday**  
**They Promised Her the Moon:** Starkville Community Theatre presents Laurel O'Leary's "They Promised Her the Moon" at SCT's Playhouse on Main. Based on the true story of Jennie Cobb, the first American woman to test for space flight, this drama follows her journey as she steps into an isolation tank for a record-breaking nine hours. Performances will begin at 7 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, with a 2 p.m. matinee performance Sunday.

**Today**  
**TAKE3:** As part of Mississippi State University's Lyceum Series, TAKE3 will perform a concert of classical music infused with pop/

rock charisma. This fusion of genres promises to exhilarate audiences of all ages. The concert begins at 7 p.m. in Bittersworth Auditorium. Tickets are available online at [missstate.universitytickets.com](http://missstate.universitytickets.com), or in person by visiting the Center for Student Activities in the Colvard Student Union.

**Tuesday, Feb. 18**  
**Black History Month Celebration Concert:** Celebrate Black History Month with this concert presented by the Mississippi University for Women's Department of Music. Performers will include W students, ensembles and faculty. The concert begins at 7:30 p.m. in Poindester Hall and is free and open to the public.

### COMING SATURDAY



**Dining Guide:** Your guide to food, drinks and other yummy things throughout the Golden Triangle.

### PUBLIC MEETINGS

- Feb. 14:** Lowndes County School District, 12:30 p.m., Central Office
- Feb. 28:** Columbus-Lowndes Convention and Visitors Bureau Board, 4 p.m., CVB board room
- March 10:** Columbus Municipal School District, 5 p.m., Brandon Central Services
- March 14:** Lowndes County School District, 12:30 p.m., Central Office

## Time rates

Continued from Page 1A

advocating to keep S at The W, told The Tech last week MUW better home for the school when it comes to safety. "We want to maintain that a large institution is not safe ... 11th and 12th grades on campus," said Halston.



Halston

"It's not even clear there may be an issue with how they can do this, but we have to mitigate the issue of having fraternities right within a walk ... from 11th and 12th graders on SEC weekends." MUW reported an enrollment of 23,150 students in fall 2024, more than 10 times the 2,193 students at MUW. Not did MSU post the number of total reports, its rate per student in several categories — such as, stalking and robbery — outpaced that of MUW.

Based on that does not mean Starkville campus is safe, Thomas Bourgeois, associate vice president for student success at MUW, noted the university's open campus has a police force, K-9 and SWAT unit.

When you look at our reports, we're not in the camp in the city," he said. "But Bourgeois does think part of going out years from now or ears from now when graduate and go out the world, learning to exist in an envi-

ronment (and make) good decisions."

In a statement to The Dispatch, MUW President Nora Miller said the university is equipped to continue providing a safe environment for MSMS students. Officers from the campus police department patrol the campus 24 hours a day.

"Our campus's manageable size minimizes social safety risks, and our police are familiar with MSMS and W students, which fosters strong connections on campus," she said.



Miller

### Crime by the numbers

The Cleary Act requires degree-granting postsecondary institutions like MSU and MUW to disclose how often certain crimes — like rape, murder, robbery and others — are reported on campus and in residence halls. Cleary Act data represents reported incidents, not necessarily arrests or convictions.

Based on annual security and fire safety reports, MUW has generally had fewer reports of most Cleary crimes, aside from burglaries and aggravated assaults.

The W had 14 burglaries and one aggravated assault reported on campus from 2021 to 2023 while only 12 instances of burglary and no aggravated assaults were reported at MSU in the same timeframe. The majority of the burglaries were reported in 2022 and attributed to an individual "walking by vehicles and pulling on door handles," according to a safety bulletin from The W Police Department.

That equates to 6.38 burglaries reported for every 1,000 students on The W campus compared

to less than one reported per every 1,000 students on MSU's campus during the three-year period.

MSU reported a higher number of all other crimes classified by the Cleary Act, with rapes and fondling incidents being reported most frequently.

From 2021 to 2023, MSU's annual security and fire safety report showed there were 2.63 rapes and 1.51 fondling incidents reported for every 1,000 students. That rate represents a total of 61 reported rapes over the course of the three year period at MSU. MUW had one rape reported in the same timeframe.

There were 2.33 instances of stalking reported for every 1,000 students at MSU in the 2021 to 2023 timeframe as well as 2.20 reports of dating violence for every 1,000 students. MUW had no on-campus reports of dating violence or stalking from 2021 to 2023.

### Peer comparison for MSU

Among similar-sized universities in Mississippi, MSU's Cleary statistics stack up more favorably.

University of Mississippi, which enrolled 23,981 in fall 2024, disclosed 40 rapes were reported from 2021 to 2023 or 1.66 rapes reported for every 1,000 students.

There were eight incidents of fondling reported in that period or 0.33 reported per every 1,000 students at Ole Miss. The university had 48 stalking incidents reported over the three years, about two reported for every 1,000 students; 15 burglaries reported or 0.62 for every 1,000 students; and two aggravated assault reports or 0.08 for every 1,000 students.

University of Southern Mississippi, with a fall 2024 enrollment of

13,170, disclosed five reported rapes between 2021 and 2023 or 0.37 reported per every 1,000 students. There were no stalking or fondling incidents reported. There were six aggravated assaults reported on the USM campus in that timeframe or 0.45 reported for every 1,000 students. The university disclosed nine reports of burglaries on campus, which is 0.68 reported for every 1,000 students.

### Adjusting security

Making adjustments with security if MSMS was relocated to Starkville would be familiar for the university, which already houses Partnership Middle School on the campus, Bourgeois said.

"Not that we're not concerned when these things happen, because we're always looking at it, but since we already have a school on campus, we're pretty familiar with what we do there," he said. "We're just going to have to scale up that plan to specifically deal with this new population." Bourgeois said changes in patrols could be considered to enhance safety, especially with the added factor of a residential facility for the high schoolers.

"Of course, you have juveniles, which is a whole different ball game," he said. "So we'll do a lot more with parents about how this happens."

Miller said the size of the MUW campus and features like a perimeter gate ensure students are safe on campus, and when there is an emergency, the small size of the campus makes it easy for police to respond quickly and efficiently.

"The W's smaller campus and close-knit environment provide a greater benefit to MSMS, offering students access to a college campus," she said.

## Business

Continued from Page 1A

friends." Good news, a new irant just opened in

queria y Botanas El Tac, 2118 Hwy. 45 in Tac, is opened across street from Baskin's this month. Querias serves breakfast from 6 to 9 Monday through Friday, lunch and dinner from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Fridays Saturdays and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sundays. Owner Mario Hernandez opened the irant with his family serving various dishes including huevos con chilaquiles rojos

o verdes, quesadillas, gorditas, seafood options and more.

"We invite everyone to try our authentic Mexican food made like at home," Morones said. "Thank you for all giving us the opportunity to give you good service and good taste."

We're in the early stages, but it looks like Columbus is getting a Scooter's Coffee some time in the future. Scooter's Coffee, a Midwest drive-thru coffee franchise, announced plans to open an additional 12 coffee kiosks, including one in Columbus. The company first opened in 1998 by Dan and Linda Eckles in Bellevue, Ne-

braska. Scooter's Coffee is a drive-thru only model ranging from kiosks 664 to 1000 square feet. With these new stores, Scooter's will have more than 800 locations throughout 30 states.

"At Scooter's Coffee, we're not just selling coffee; we're creating communities," said Tim Arpin. Scooter's chief product officer in a press release. "These 12 new locations across six states represent our commitment to spreading the joy and connection that a great cup of coffee can bring."

According to the company's press release, Vikas Kumar and Prashant Kumar Patel will be

opening the Columbus location. I could not reach the owners by press time on Wednesday.

A couple of weeks ago we discussed the Starkville and Columbus Bargain Hunt locations closing next month. Hilco Consumer, manager of Bargain Hunt's going-out-of-business sale, announced all Bargain Hunt stores have started its going-out-of-business sales.

See y'all next week. Former Dispatch reporter Mary Pollitz writes weekly about interesting business news. Have a tip? Send it to biz@cdispatch.com.

## Magfest

Continued from Page 1A

UEC theater, sponsored by Costume Party, costume store in ville.

Eastering The event will serve opening reception to 'stival and has been called "Ladies Night" effort to encourage women to attend the al, though anyone a ticket is welcome end.

ere will also be a g night awards party 'ing the final feature of the festival. The

awards party will begin at 10 p.m. Saturday and will be sponsored by McAlester's, complete with a baked potato bar for filmmakers and guests.

Films will be judged across 13 categories, including an Audience Choice category. Winners will be awarded a stained glass Magnolia flower, created by local artisan Alley Kat's Glass.

Misun stated that community support is crucial for The Mag's continued

success.

"We're the first and longest running festival in the state of Mississippi, and we can only continue to be that with community support," Misun said. "Whether that's sponsorships, whether it's donations, whether it's volunteers, or whether it's people coming to the festival."

Audience members are invited to attend both the opening and closing receptions, so long as they

have purchased a ticket to attend that evening's screening.

Tickets for individual screenings will cost \$15 (\$10 for students), festival passes to view each night's screenings will be \$40 (\$30 for students) and a VIP Experience option is available for access to all screenings as well as a VIP room with refreshments for \$100. Tickets are available for purchase in advance online at magfest.com.

## Herrington

Continued from Page 1A

The day Lee went ng, Herrington was on video retrieving g-handle shovel and barrow from his par-

into the back of a box truck that belonged to his moving company, according to evidence released in the case.

ford Police Department pulled from the court's evidence file a partially used roll of duct tape that was discovered in Her-

police brought him in for questioning. Herrington purchased duct tape the morning Lee went missing, according to a receipt

# GARAGE SALE

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### VIEW

## Process for determining MSMS site not fair to MUW

ere's more than one way n a cat. ere is also more than one o skin Mississippi Univer r Women. Friday, the State Board ucation asked, without notice, that Mississippi rsity for Women and Missi pi State University submit sals to house and operate sippi School for Mathe s and Science, the state's .ate-funded residential hool for academically ed students. e possibility of moving S to the MSU campus ar. It was met with a orm of criticism and was y dropped. at happened Friday was a strategy. e proposals are due to mitted in less than weeks (Feb. 25). If MDE d a thorough, thoughtful

presentation, it would have provided months, not merely 18 days, for the universities to compile that information. The rush alone is enough to arouse suspicion. As for the document itself, it might as well have been written in maroon ink, given the document's emphasis on research in the fields of science and engineering. Mississippi State is one of the leading research universities in the nation. It has 74 masters and 44 doctoral programs in the sciences. Mississippi University for Women, a liberal arts school known best for its education and nationally-recognized nursing programs, has no post-graduate degrees in the sciences. It is odd that MDE would stress the host university's programs now. It's not as though MUW focused on the sciences when the decision was made to establish MSMS on its campus.

The school's mission hasn't changed during all the years that MSMS has thrived on the MUW campus. The type of information requested heavily favors MSU. MDE is putting its thumb on the scales here. MDE cynically cites as a considering factor the universities' ability to provide an environment for the growth of MSMS and "a structured and supportive residential experience." These are odd requests since for almost all of its 36 years, MSMS has been approved for more students than the state has provided funds for. Clearly, there's never been much interest in growth until now, but if growth really is a goal, the greatest obstacle to growth is not location, but the legislature, which funds MSMS through MDE. Likewise, the desire to

have modern, well-appointed dormitories doesn't depend on the host, but the state's willingness to fund the construction of those dormitories. Are we to believe that construction is cheaper in Starkville than Columbus? Finally, we find it curious that the sudden interest in relocating MSMS to Starkville just happens to coincide with the plans for building a new Starkville high school. The Starkville school district has a big, big problem with that, though. Taxpayers are already on the hook for a \$16 million bond to build The Partnership School, which opened in 2020 on property donated by MSU adjacent to its campus. Because of its connection to MSU, the school district was able to secure \$10 million in funds from the legislature for that project. Partnering with the univer-

sity to host the state-funded MSMS again gives the school district an avenue to attract considerable state funding for its new high school. It's a neat trick if they can pull it off. How many other school districts can convince the legislature to help fund not just one, but two new schools? Given a fair hearing, we believe MUW can make a convincing case for remaining the home of MSMS. It has been a supportive host since the school's inception despite recent efforts to blame The W for conditions for which the state bears the responsibility. It is obvious from the nature of this request that MDE has no real interest in hearing the W's case. It is all for show. A blind man can see what's happening here. The fix is in. The chance of MUW getting MDE's recommendation is nil.

### SUMHAW

## Man's gotta fish

e fishing was good: it e catching that was . A.K. Best, Pro n fly tyer, fly fisher, g writer (1933-)



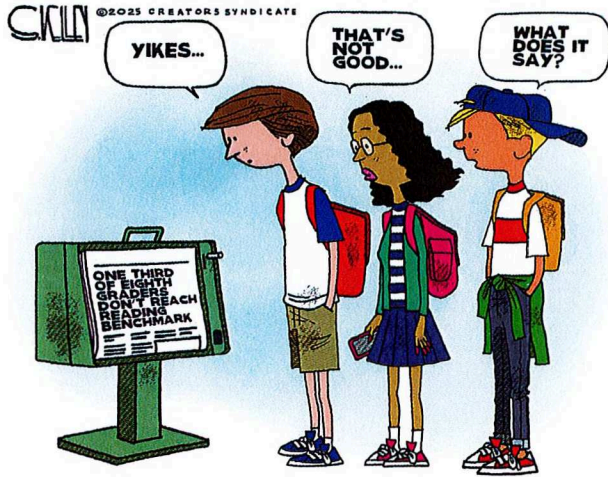
Shannon Bardwell

not tell fish stories the people know you. ularly, don't tell them they know the fish. h Twain, American and humorist (1835-

oked like it was going to be a good day for hing. The temperature felt comfortable; iter levels were right where he wanted it. amp was clear. Sam and his buddy headed enada Lake early in the morning between . and 6 a.m. Takes about two hours to get from here. There had been talk about good g going on at Enid Lake and Sardis Lake. made sense Grenada Lake would be ready. However, it was not to be. The fog was y, and the fish weren't interested. Buddy it one crappie and Sam caught none. That ever happened. After he arrived home, he yed out to our lake to catch and release. That was good to know as we had dug out ke a couple years back and wondered if the urvived, looks like they did. If we need to ck the fish, you're talking about buying bass ream fish about an inch long for fifty cents

t to be outdone Sam decided to fish Luxa- 1 Creek streaming nearby Mississippi and ma. It turned out to be a warm day in the nd there was no fog. Sam left about mid-day g would be a good idea. Momma always said ary was the coldest month of the year, but ed out not to be so this year. When he got , he reported you can't get in the Lux by the area but it's not the only option. urned out to be a really nice fishing expedi- Caught one 14" speck, one 15" female white ie, three two-pound bass, one three-pound bass. He reported he hooked two more keep- pple, that he lost off the hook. There were ore big fish that gave a good pull. ile Sam was fishing, I was at the YMCA. I ran friend who asked about Sam and his fishing. ked if I had heard Brad Paisley's song about g and he laughed. Back in the car I googled it stened. It was dead on. Paisley's wife said she saying him because he was always fishing. said he stays out fishing 'cause he's gotta get ore bite. I couldn't wait to play it for Sam. ill laughing over it. Makes a great YouTube. rsonally, I don't mind Sam fishing as long as I have to go along. Nature is good for the soul e both enjoy being in nature and viewing e daily. It's a great healer, and bringing crappie is good for the freezer and the table. I n't have it any other way.

annon Bardwell is a writer living quietly in the ie. Email reaches her at msdeltachild@msn.com.



### VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

## Letters to the editor

#### Stakeholders need a say in MSMS's future

For over 40 years, the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) has provided exceptional opportunities for our state's most talented students. Mississippi's families and taxpayers have supported this unique institution, entrusting it with their children's futures and investing in its success. MSMS has brought national recognition to Mississippi for its commitment to excellence in education, proving that our state can compete academically at the highest levels. Now, as discussions about its future continue, one critical question must be answered: Will input be solicited from all stakeholders? After last year's legislative session left many of us uncertain about who would lead the conversation on MSMS's future, I am grateful that the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) has stepped forward to take on this responsibility. However, the process now underway raises concerns about transparency, fairness, and the long-term vision for MSMS. First, why are only MSU and MUW being asked to submit proposals? Second, a two-week timeline is a remarkably brief timeframe to develop thoughtful, well-researched proposals (especially when, based on The Dispatch's reporting in 2024, it appears that MSU may have already had a head start in preparing for this possibility). Third, MDE has not indicated what comes next. Will MSMS stu-

these proposals and provide input? Will community members and local leaders be consulted before a final decision is made? MSMS exists because of the commitment of Mississippi taxpayers and families who have supported it for decades. Will they be given a voice in what happens next? The future of MSMS is too important to be decided behind closed doors. This is not just about where the school will be located—it is about what is best for Mississippi's students and families. Thoughtful planning and broad input should guide this process, not rushed deadlines or limited options. To MDE and state leaders: If MSMS's future is truly a priority, Mississippians will give you assurance that all stakeholders will have a say. Slow down the process, provide clear steps for public engagement, and commit to an open, transparent discussion about what is best for Mississippi's students. The future of one of Mississippi's greatest educational achievements depends on it. Becky Scott Columbus

membership of the President's circle, I can only think: But the Sovereign Wealth Fund Was Just Sitting There! Bill Gillmore Columbus

Wants to know where others stand on the grant writing saga I reckon there is such a thing as taking sides in the "grand writer" saga. And after reading the story beginning on page 1A of the Feb. 7 paper, we know now where a few of the candidates stand, and it wasn't a big surprise to see the flip flop by the Ward 2 incumbent. I'd like to hear where some other candidates would side, especially the mayoral candidate, Brooks. After seeing the Beard and Jones pictures side by side and reading their comments underneath, it was clear where they stand. While thinking of Beard's and Jones' behavior in the past, one comment made by Jones stood out like a sore thumb that many in Columbus will probably not agree with, the one that says, "You can't reward bad behavior." Raymond Gross Columbus

#### It was just sitting there!

In 1979, Garry Trudeau published a "Doonesbury" book called, *But the Pension Fund Was Just Sitting There*, in which his Hunter S. Thompson parody, Uncle Duke, stole the fund's money. If there is a fund, he implied, there is someone scheming to misappropriate it. Last week, President Trump declared in an executive order a Sovereign Wealth Fund,

A letter to the editor is an excellent way to participate in your community. We request the tone of your letters be constructive and respectful and the length be limited to 450 words. Political endorsements are limited to one per letter-writer. We reserve the right to edit letters for clarity, grammar and length. Letters may be emailed to voice@dispatch.com or mailed to The Dispatch, Attn:



# THE COMMERCIAL DISPATCH

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\$1.25 NEWSSTAKE

SATURDAY & SUNDAY | FEBRUARY 8-9, 2025

## IUW, MSU asked for proposals to house MSMS

The Board of Education will make a recommendation to legislature based on proposals

EMMA MCRAE

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The future of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science is again up in the air.

The State Board of Education Friday asked Mississippi University for Women and Mississippi State University to submit proposals to house and operate the residen-

tial high school. Based on the proposals received, the SBE will develop a recommendation to the legislature about the future of MSMS. Shandera Minor, public information officer for Mississippi Department of Education, wrote in an email to The Dispatch. Proposals are due by



Miller



Salter

Feb. 25. Any changes the legislature prescribes as a result of the board's recommendation would

### ONLINE

RFP: View request for proposals to house MSMS at [cdspatch.com](https://cdspatch.com)

go into effect in the 2026-2027 school year. Proposals should address the goals of increasing enrollment and enhancing educational programming for students at MSMS, according to

a copy of the request for proposals MDE provided The Dispatch in response to a public records request. Proposals should be based on the universities' expertise in the arts, mathematics, science and engineering research, the document said. Proposals are also required to include details about See *MSMS*, 3A

## Way County men charged with murder, stabbing

Man went missing Monday, found Tuesday in his property

ILLEN PARADIS

iparadis@cdspatch.com

WAY COUNTY

15-year-old has

been arrested for

murder of a man

dead Tuesday

at his residence

in Mississippi

Way 46.

Waynton Walker, of

Way County, was

arrested at about

10 p.m. Thursday. He

is charged with

murder and set to be

tried as it, Sheriff Eddie

Scott told The Dispatch

Friday.

Waynton Kirkwood Jr., 67, went

missing Sunday. Investigators

found his property with a drone

on Monday, found his

body. He had multiple stab

wounds.

Scott said that Walker knew the

man, though he declined to specu-

late on a motive at this point.

Scott said he does not believe

there is further danger to the public

in this case.

An investigation is ongoing.

Scott said he did not know at

the time. See *WALKER*, 3A



Walker

### REACHING FOR THE STARS

## MSU aerospace student to play Mercury 13 pilot barred from space

'Not a lot of people get to portray someone that laid the foundation for what they want to do their whole life'

BY ABIGAIL SIPE  
ROCHESTER  
asipe@cdspatch.com

Jerrie Cobb steps into an isolation tank. For the next nine hours, she will be tested for her mental fitness to go into space - in tests emulating those taken by the astronauts who took off as a part of the Mercury 7.

Already an incredibly seasoned pilot, Cobb passed this test, and all others put in front of her, as they were administered in the early 1960s. Still, she and the other 12 women who passed the same physical examinations as the Mercury 7 astronauts never made it to space.

Now, Cobb's legacy is



Caroline Court, portraying pilot and Mercury 13 testing participant Jerrie Cobb, sits in a prop cockpit while delivering a monologue Friday at Starkville Community Theatre's Playhouse on Main. Court, along with fellow cast members Regan Plunkett, John Gilbert, Pat Wooden, Joe Evans, Louie P. Gallo and Mary Katherine Munn, will be bringing 'They Promised Her the Moon' to life starting Thursday.

being brought into the spotlight, as Starkville Community Theatre prepares to stage the play. 'They Promised Her the Moon,' at 7 p.m. Feb. 13-15 and Feb. 19-21 and at 2 p.m. Feb. 16, starring a woman walking in Cobb's footsteps.

Caroline Court is a senior aerospace engineering major at Mississippi State University, who said Cobb's legacy opened the door for her to pursue her own dreams of one day going to space. Now, she is preparing to step on stage to tell a version

of Cobb's story centered around those record-breaking nine hours Cobb spent in the isolation tank.

"I read through the script and I just felt like (auditioning) was something I needed to do," Court said. "Not a lot to do." See *PILOT*, 8A

## Electrical training program hopes to open doors to jobs, education for men at The Mission



Students in East Mississippi Community College's Construction Engineering Technology class frame walls that will be used for an electrical training program at The Mission in West Point. The program aims to give men at the residential treatment facility the skills they need to enter the career field or continue their education.

EMCC, MSU partner to provide courses on site at the residential treatment facility

BY EMMA MCRAE  
emcrae@cdspatch.com

WEST POINT - For years, a lack of transportation kept the men at The Mission in West Point from accessing technical job training at East Mississippi Community College's Community.

Now a partnership with Mississippi State University is allowing the community college to take the training to them.

A pilot program born from the partnership will provide

free electrical training to men who are participating in the 12-month residential treatment program, so when they finish, they will be prepared to start a career or enroll in a career technical course with EMCC.

"What we're really excited about is the fact that they'll have something that industry can come and look for that would help them find some good employment and move forward in their lives."

See *TRAINING*, 8A

### RECTION

#### Incorrect name spelling

Tuesday's edition, The Dispatch printed the incorrect name of the victim who died in a mobile home fire in Ontario. His name was Gerald Mel Whitney. The coroner led the incorrect spelling.

We regret and apologize for the error in The Commercial Dispatch. We print an error, we will fix it. To report an error, call our newsroom at 662-328-2424, or email [news@cdspatch.com](mailto:news@cdspatch.com).

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### FIVE QUESTIONS

- 1 Simone Biles is the most decorated sportsperson in which sport?
- 2 Who was the first African American actress to be an EGOT recipient (Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, Tony)?
- 3 Who played T'Challa in 'Black Panther'?
- 4 What was Whitney Houston's greatest-selling hit?
- 5 Which singer is remembered as the "queen of jazz"?

Answers, 1C

### CALENDAR

**Saturday**  
 ■ **Rodeo:** Starkville Rotary Club hosts its annual Rotary Classic Rodeo at the Mississippi Horse Park at 869 E. Poor House Road in Starkville. Action will begin at 7 p.m., with a petting zoo and other family-friendly activities starting at 5 p.m. Saturday. Tickets are available at various locations in Columbus and Starkville. More info: [rodeo.starkvillerotary.org](http://rodeo.starkvillerotary.org)

**Sunday**  
 ■ **String Serenade:** Brought to you by the string section of the Starkville Symphony Orchestra, this performance

of chamber favorites includes Grieg's Holberg Suite, the Elgar Serenade for Strings and the Tchaikovsky Serenade for Strings. The orchestra will also perform a Starkville premier of Kilar's *Drawa* with 15 individual string parts. The concert will begin at 2 p.m. at Batesworth Auditorium in Lee Hall of Mississippi State's campus.

**Tuesday, Feb. 11**  
 ■ **Faculty Voice Recital:** Mississippi University for Women's Department of Music presents an evening of vocal works performed by faculty tenor Prof. Zane Lynn. The concert begins at 7:30 p.m. in Foxeinder Hall and is free and

open to the public.

**Thursday, Feb. 13-Sunday, Feb. 16**  
 ■ **They Promised Her the Moon:** Starkville Community Theatre presents Laurel O'Keefe's "They Promised Her the Moon" at SCT's Playhouse on Main. Based on the true story of Jerrie Cobb, the first American woman to test for space flight, this drama follows her journey as she steps into an isolation tank for a record-breaking nine hours. Performances will begin at 7 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, with a 2 p.m. matinee performance Sunday.

### LOCAL FOLKS



Damini Bedi, of Starkville, plans to wear a different pair of heart earrings every day leading up to Valentine's Day.

### PUBLIC MEETINGS

**Feb. 10:** Columbus Municipal School District, 5 p.m., Brandon Central Services

**Feb. 14:** Lumbus-Lowndes County School District, 12:30 p.m., Central Office

**Feb. 25:** Columbus-Lowndes Convention and Visitors Bureau Board, 4 p.m., CVB board room

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