
Thoughts on MSMS proposals from a parent of a current MSMS Junior

From Jennifer Kasselmann <jenniferkasselmann@gmail.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 11:36 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

Cc tsmith@house.ms.gov <tsmith@house.ms.gov>; JTate@senate.ms.gov <JTate@senate.ms.gov>;
ddebar@senate.ms.gov <ddebar@senate.ms.gov>; dblount@senate.ms.gov <dblount@senate.ms.gov>;
rroberson@house.ms.gov <rroberson@house.ms.gov>; kmccarty@house.ms.gov <kmccarty@house.ms.gov>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone,

My name is Dr. Jennifer Kasselmann, and I am the mother of a current MSMS Junior. I live in Enterprise in Clarke County. My older 2 children attended our local high school through graduation and now attend Mississippi State University and the University of Southern Mississippi respectively. Our local school district is consistently ranked near the top of state rankings, and my children were able to complete all requirements for graduation in the state of Mississippi, but they were not challenged academically. The small size of the district meant that there were insufficient high-level classes offered to even allow them to take a full course load their senior year.

My youngest child wanted more. She began preparing to apply to MSMS while in 8th grade, ensuring that she would have all prerequisite classes for admission. She took complete responsibility for completing the application, obtaining letters of recommendation, and writing her admission essays. The prospect of attending high school with other academically focused students from diverse backgrounds was very exciting to her.

MSMS has surpassed even our high expectations. Classes are challenging, professors are extremely engaged in the students' learning, and the support of the staff and other students is overwhelming. The campus environment is quiet, and the MSMS students have access to an incredible library at MUW as well as the Public Library in Columbus. They are able to easily walk into Columbus to visit coffee shops, bakeries, and restaurants. My daughter is thriving in an environment where students encourage each other to reach their highest potential.

I have read the proposals from Mississippi State and from MUW regarding the future of MSMS. I am solidly in favor of keeping MSMS at MUW for the following reasons:

1. Students at MSMS want to attend the school because it is different from a traditional high school. These students are academically focused and thrive with other academically focused individuals. They wanted to leave their local high school to get away from kids who disrupted class, bullied them for being different, and resented their academic ability. MSU's choice to place this special school on the campus with a traditional high school places these students back into that same environment that stole the joy they have in learning. "Dual enrollment" in the SOCS D would not benefit the students of MSMS — the only beneficiary would be the test scores for the SOCS D.

2. MSU's proposed location for the dorms and academic buildings is very isolated. My daughter and her friends love to walk to the coffee shops and bakeries in Columbus on weekends or free afternoons. At MUW, the college library is directly across the street from my daughter's dorm, and the health center is less than a 5-minute walk. MSMS students already have the opportunity to participate in research projects with faculty at MSU, and the distance between the current campus and MSU is minimal. MSU's proposal tries to highlight the separation of the campus from the University, when proximity to the campus would be the only possible benefit to be gained. The library at MSU would be a 2 mile walk each way from the proposed campus. This does not sound like improving access for students.
3. I see no benefits in the proposal from MSU that could not be gained in less time and with less financial investment by appropriately funding the current campus. The current dorms at MSMS, while serviceable, are not as inviting or modern as they could be. Investment by the state as outlined in the MUW proposal would bring the MSMS physical facilities to a level that would match the quality of the academic instruction. MUW's proposal for new dormitory space is estimated at less than half the money requested by MSU. The SOCSO is obviously well-funded by their local tax base and ability to issue bonds for \$86 million in funding. MSMS relies on direct funding from the legislature only. I find it difficult to believe that the \$85 million requested from the legislature by MSU and SOCSO is needed solely for the MSMS facility. Funding meant to benefit MSMS should be allocated only for MSMS.

The proposal from MUW is detailed and thoughtfully considered. The faculty and staff do an incredible job utilizing the funding they receive. I am confident that those same individuals would carefully steward the funding that would be designated for physical campus improvements. The proposal from MSU offers no benefit to MSMS students and would only serve to finance the SOCSO construction costs with money that should go to MSMS.

I discussed the proposals with my daughter while preparing to write this letter. She loves MSMS and cannot imagine going to any other high school, but she said that she would have been much less likely to apply for admission if her campus tour were held on a campus like that proposed by MSU. A separate classroom building and dorms on a traditional high school campus do not have the same special feeling as the MSMS campus on the grounds of MUW. MSMS has provided a welcoming home to many academically gifted students that do not fit the stereotypical high school student mold. MSMS allows them to be their most authentic selves and be surrounded by other students that are welcoming and tolerant of differences. The worst possible choice for these students would be placing them back into an environment that they worked so hard to escape.

Please decide in favor of the MUW proposal for the future of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Kasselmann, Pharm.D., RPh

MSMS proposals

From ksearcyk@bellsouth.net <ksearcyk@bellsouth.net>
Date Sat 3/1/2025 1:28 PM
To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

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Dear Sirs and Madames:

My name is Katherine Kerby. I am from Columbus and have been a supporter and observer of MSMS since inception. I have interacted with so many faculty members and students there. I have even donated my expertise to MSMS at various times as a civil defense attorney . Something about a cell phone. Very minor matter. I am much experienced in public entity legal defense having been appointed and paid legal counsel over 42 years to public entities, school districts, and universities including both the City of Columbus and the City of Starkville as well as defending a Plymouth Bluff fallen refrigerator case for MUW and more so MSU(mostly tenure denial cases for MSU but a wide variety). I do not remember representing MDE but have worked with at least two school districts the State had taken over defending school premises safety liability lawsuits. Mostly campus rape lawsuits. The Conservators were refreshing to work with and eventually resurrected their assigned school districts.

MSMS is one of the best things this state has ever created and it has been a tremendous success right where it is. Its sole and only problem is that it has been underfunded for so long that the living quarters are now unsatisfactory. I am on the MUW campus every week as a community member and see first hand the care and caution provided the MSMS students on the MUW campus. My law office and my home are a few blocks from MSMS and I see those students as they travel the 3-4 blocks in the Columbus area to downtown stores and restaurants.

I understand that Starkville wants or needs a new high school and MSU wants the best and brightest to enroll at MSU when they get out of high school. Normal college competition . I do not understand how an institution of higher learning supported by state wide taxes and a statewide tax base can make a five million donation(land asset) donation to a local unit of government.

Closing the best public school in the country, yes,ranked in the top in the USA right where it is sited now , and a proven track record of success and combining same with the consolidated city/county high school in Starkville and Oktibbeha County with MSMS is wrong from every angle. Wrong even for Starkville and Oktibbeha County as the deal is based on a strange reported donation of state wide tax dollars(5 million in land) (clearly not surplus property) to a unit of local government and that house of cards is subject to collapse. This is also an incredibly concerning precedent for other school districts and tax payers of the related local governments. Why should my taxes be taken away from the related local school district jurisdiction where I paid the taxes and the attendant due process of exacting the taxes and spent on a local school district elsewhere in the state? Tax money is not play money.

As it stands at present, MSMS has turned out more national merit scholars than the surrounding states' STEM schools by more than double, while receiving only half of the monetary support from this State. So, the proposal to place MSMS in Starkville is not only more dangerous physically to the MSMS students but a potential wrecking ball to the MSMS current decades of success right where it is now. MSMS is for the gifted statewide. It was not chartered as a custom built feeder school for MSU or to lessen the local tax burden of Starkville and Oktibbeha County.

Why would a parent of a gifted child in a local school district Mississippi take him or her out of a public or private school at home to send him or her across the state to put the child back into a school where there are a bunch of typical children just like the typical students he was in school with at home? Not much allure there. Not so long ago the Starkville /Oktibbeha School District was a failing district that I recall the State took over. Not very inviting at all to a parent looking for an encouraging environment for their gifted child. In other words, Starkville /Oktibbeha County failed as a learning environment and the new proposal is part of the attempted local school district resurrection.

As a tax payer in Columbus and Lowndes County, I have seen my ad valorem taxes go up to support our City and County school districts' improve the public facilities here in Columbus and Lowndes County. I have a real issue with taking my tax dollars and supporting the Starkville/Oktibbeha Consolidated school district. Where is my due process in having my tax dollars jerked away to elsewhere? Not with the City of Starkville tax office? I don't live there. I suppose MDE has a due process mechanism in place for the proposal to move MSMS to another location based on the type of tax dollars involved but that process is hidden from view.

The MSU proposal says they need the State to appropriate \$85M to help build the school in Starkville. How are MSU and Starkville, which City limit goes through part of the MSU campus, going to police the proposed new MSMS? Got a budget on that yet? Liability defense? IHL Board volunteering to accept liability? Costs of new insurance? Bet those items not yet in the 85 million. They will be enhanced costs yearly going forward. If the State is going to put that much money into MSMS, it could give \$50M to the W and achieve a guaranteed even better result than the current record of decades of success. I understand the political pressure.. That is part of the democratic process. The MUW campus is safe for these MSMS students. I am not citing statistics but using my decades of close personal observation of all of the involved current and proposed environments. Example: MSMS students at MUW walk about 150 yards to get to the main campus cafeteria. They pass by a library and a coffee shop and the MSMS academic buildings to get there. At MSU with the new site on the very north end of campus the MSMS students are remote from the main cafeteria and food court at the Student Union. They would have to walk four times the distance at all hours just to eat and pass through heavy parking lot facilities, the festive SEC events of at least 3 different sports facilities, and the main dorms on the MSU north campus to get to the main food courts/cafeteria. Bad stuff for such young people.

Please keep MSMS on the MUW campus.

Thank you

Katherine S Kerby

Miss Bar License #3584

Kerby Law Firm

722 College Street

Columbus,MS 39701

MSMS Comments

From Cynthia W Kittrell <cfkittrell@aol.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 3:02 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dr. Boone:

I want to comment on the MUW/MSU proposals about the Mississippi School of Math and Science.

As an alum of MUW and current member of the MUW Alumni Association board, I take much pride in the fact that the MSMS has been housed at my alma mater since its inception in 1987. Academic excellence has always been a hallmark of MUW, so it made perfect sense to locate the school there.

As state support has diminished through the years, another thing the W is known for is creating favorable outcomes for less and less money. In fact, MUW is one of the most cost-effective organizations in Mississippi and has for years managed the financial and administrative services for MSMS despite state funding not keeping up with costs. MSMS alums who remain in Mississippi become teachers, doctors, nurses, and business leaders, all of which the state sorely needs.

MUW proposes an investment of \$60 million to expand and upgrade MSMS facilities, as opposed to the \$85 million that MSU has proposed. Since most of that \$85 million will go to upgrading Starkville High School, state funds will be used to upgrade a local school in a local school district.

MSMS at MUW must be doing something right if MSU and the Starkville Public School District are so anxious to get their hands on it and the taxpayer dollars that support it. I hope that the IHL and the Legislature will do the fiscally responsible thing and leave MSMS where it is, and then properly fund it with the dollars it needs and deserves.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Kind regards,

Cynthia Williams Kittrell
Class of 1976

MSMS Stakeholder Comments

From Michael K. <meekey@gmail.com>

Date Thu 2/27/2025 11:12 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

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Dr. Boone,

I am an alumnus of MSMS (class of 2004), and my preference is that the school remain at MUW, albeit with increased funding for renovations. This is not a preference rooted in the belief that changing the location of the campus is inherently bad; it is instead a preference rooted in how residential students interact with the community outside the campus. MSMS in its current location at MUW is located downtown in a very walkable part of Columbus, and that has allowed the students to integrate more organically with the surrounding community. Additionally, the smaller population and campus size at MUW provides a much more controlled environment for students to foster relationships as they approach adulthood and eventual independence.

Unfortunately, the site chosen for the MSU proposal does not look like it is integrated with the community; it looks like it is an urbanized island that is surrounded by a green space barrier that keeps it from interacting with Starkville via walking. A large part of the reason that I enjoyed MSMS so much and wanted to stay in Mississippi after I graduated was because I didn't need a car or a shuttle to do a lot of things on the weekends. Yes, I still needed the shuttle to get to Walmart and the mall, but the gradual independence I developed by signing out to walk to church or to go to Harvey's to eat was what motivated me to stay in Mississippi instead of leaving the state to attend college and not coming back.

If a campus is isolated from the larger community except by motor vehicle (like the MSMS that MSU proposes), I worry that students will feel trapped (or perhaps feel that academic campuses are merely interchangeable) and seek to leave the state in higher numbers because they haven't cultivated relationships with the local community outside the campus confines.

MSMS does a fair amount of partnering with MSU, and I would like to see that continue. But I would prefer that the state of Mississippi fully fund a school instead of relying on a single school district. There is already such a wonderful community in Columbus filled with decades of goodwill; Mississippi just needs to increase the funding to allow MUW and MSMS to renovate their facilities beyond the shoestring budget they currently have. And although the proposal from MSU provides an intriguing possibility of increasing enrollment by expanding the school to include 10th grade, I believe renovating the existing residence halls at MUW would allow the same level of enrollment increase. The facilities are already there at MUW, and I hope the state sees the value in adequately funding a continued presence for MSMS on the MUW campus.

Thank you for your time,

Michael Koehler

MUW

From Anna Koshenina <almkoshenina@gmail.com>
Date Tue 3/4/2025 7:36 AM
To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

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My daughter is a 2016 graduate. I cannot imaging mixing high schoolers on an SEC campus. I fully support the MUW proposal. The high school experience will be much more meaningful on a campus with classrooms dedicated to only MSMS students. I do not agree with with sharing seats at Starkville high school- this murders the MSMS experience. Please do not leave MUW campus. --

MSMS proposal feedback

From Joshua maksi <joshmaks@hotmail.com>
Date Mon 3/3/2025 10:56 PM
To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

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Dr. Donna Boone,

I am a parent of a current junior student at Mississippi School of Math and Science. I had heard rumors in the fall about some plans of moving the school to the campus of Mississippi State University. I was very interested about the proposal. The idea of a "new campus" on MSU's campus seemed to be very appealing. This was before I realized a couple of important factors. The first was how unique the experience of MSMS is to the students. They are located in a section of MUW campus that allows an autonomy that seems to me to be essential to the school's purpose. These kids are chosen by a very ardent process to get the students who will not only strive in the academic structure but also the environment of the school. The school has a rich history that has been grown by the pride of the faculty and the opportunities afforded to the students. The area that the school occupies is limited but this allows the students to easily get access to classes, after hour study sessions with professors, access to gym, and college level library until 10 pm at night. All of this is within a block of their dorms. The campus is secured and patrolled by security. The students at the college are aware of the MSMS students and give them space. There are only about 550 college students who live on campus with approximately 2100 total enrollment. This is a controlled environment that allows MSMS students freedom and a place that is their own. I have been blown away by the experience my son has had during his first semester and a half. He has been pushed and challenged in his academic setting but also has grown as a young individual.

The second factor was actually reading the proposals for both MUW and MSU. This was quite a surprise to read the proposal of MSU which seems to be basically putting MSMS on the campus with a high school. Granted it may have new buildings and be near MSU but will be on a high school campus. If I read the proposal correctly, it appears it will be part of a new magnet high school for Oktibbeha County and Starkville. To be honest, this is not very appealing. The students it seems will lose their unique autonomy and identity as a school and students. The students will be part of the bigger high school campus and per the proposal will be able to have more experiences. Part of my son's experience is being surrounded by like-minded people who share his purpose for being in this school. Everyone at the school is there for a purpose whether it is in math, science or even art and English. They have the ability to join clubs and teams that may not be available to them if they were in a regular high school with 500 or more students in a class. There is a focus for MSMS students to participate and have outdoor activities as part of their curriculum so that they become well rounded. They are given the opportunity to explore new area of interest and have the ability to start a new program. Students this year started a wrestling team that has produced state finalists. If they were in a regular high school, these students may not have had the change with so many other students or may have been reluctant to try something new. They also would not have been encouraged to start a new program and learn how to achieve things that people before them have not done. This is the experience of MSMS. The idea of having to get buses at night to get to a college level campus library is not comforting, especially when

your child is 3 hours away. There are more than 20,000 students in and out of Mississippi State University campus. It is harder to monitor and control the interactions of MSMS students and MSU students. How would the new high school students interact with MSMS students. Will the MSMS students be the strange kids that live on campus? To me, the MSMS students will lose their autonomy and identity.

When my wife and I made our decision to allow our son to attend MSMS, the academic challenge and environment are the important factors that help us make the decision. It is very difficult to send our 16-year-old away to school. If he was to be living on a high school campus, we probably would have not sent him. He was attending Petal High School which is a very good school. We would love to have him home every night. The MSU proposal falls short in my eyes of improving MSMS but rather gives a reason for Oktibbeha County and Starkville to get funding for a magnet high school. I would much rather see the funding, which has been lacking in the past, funneled to improve the campus and opportunities of the students where they currently live on the campus of MUW. This is why I would favor the MUW proposal. Thanks for the opportunity to express my thoughts on this matter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joshua Maksi

Mississippi Math and Science

From Mandi Maksi <amanda.maksi@petalschools.com>
Date Tue 3/4/2025 12:37 PM
To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

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Dr. Boone,

I would like to take a moment to express my concerns regarding the two proposals for the future of MSMS. My son is currently a junior at MSMS, having previously attended Petal High School, which he loved and which provided an excellent education that was preparing him for the future. It was my son who pursued MSMS independently, applied on his own, and ultimately convinced us to support his decision to attend. Petal has consistently ranked as the top school in the state and is regularly in the top 10, so it was not an easy decision for us to send him to a boarding school at 16. The thought of missing out on important moments during his last two years of high school was something we never anticipated, and we did not come to this decision lightly.

After touring MSMS and speaking with current students and teachers, as well as seeing the facilities, we decided to give him the opportunity to pursue this incredible adventure. Eight months later, it has been an amazing experience for him. While he misses out on some of the typical high school experiences, the enrichment and intellectually stimulating opportunities have proven invaluable for both him and for us. He is working harder than he ever did, even in AP classes at Petal, and has truly thrived at MSMS.

Before reading the two proposals, I didn't feel strongly about whether the school should move or remain. However, after reviewing them, I strongly believe that MSMS should stay on the MUW campus and receive the funding it rightfully deserves.

The proposal to move to MSU raises several concerns, particularly regarding the idea of housing MSMS on a high school campus. My son chose MSMS because he wanted to be surrounded by peers who share his goals and work ethic. If the school were to move, I worry that this unique community would be lost, and the students would lose their sense of identity as part of MSMS. Currently, they see themselves as part of MSMS, not as part of "The W."

I urge you to consider the students currently at MSMS and what is truly best for their future. After discussing this matter with my son, who commutes to MSU for research and then back to the W, we both firmly believe that keeping MSMS at the W is the best decision for the students and staff.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,
Amanda Maksi

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Amanda Maksi, MCD CCC-SLP
Speech Pathologist

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MSMS

From Kyle McConnell <kylemc0921@gmail.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 10:27 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

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The push to move MSMS is an obvious attempt to get The State of Mississippi to fund a new high school for Starkville. This is political. MSMS has never been adequately funded. It can be funded along with the improvements needed at MUW much cheaper than moving the school. MSMS should be left where it is.

Kyle McConnell
Sent from my iPad

Appeal to keep MSMS at The W

From Andrew McLarty <andrew@stpaulscolumbus.com>
Date Sat 3/1/2025 9:06 AM
To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

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Dr. Boone,

I am writing again to share thoughts on the proposed relocation of MSMS. I think it is a terrible idea.

The problem is not the quality of the education the students receive. They have consistently showed academic excellence, a disproportionately high rate of National Merit scholars, and have done more with less funding than comparative math and science public schools in the region. Simply put, MSMS has taken the underfunding they have received each year and have made Mississippi proud with their achievements.

The issue is their facilities, which The W can rectify with their \$35 million plan for new facilities and dorms. To try and move MSMS to Starkville as a bargaining chip to build a larger \$85 million facility for Starkville/Oktibbeha's benefit is ridiculous.

Keep MSMS in Columbus. I know these students, faculty, staff, and community members. Columbus is important to them, and the school is important to Columbus.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Andrew+

The Rev. Andrew McLarty
Rector
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
318 College St. Columbus, MS 39701
(662) 328-6673 Office
(662) 352-8287 Cell



Outlook

Move to MSU

From Noel Mcmichael <mcmichaeln26@themsms.org>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 1:28 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

 1 attachment (23 KB)

MSU vs. MUW.pdf;

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After having read the proposals, I believe that staying on the W is the best option right now. They have indeed offered many services and consistent support for this school. One of the biggest differences I noticed was the distance between us and the crucial facilities. Here, we are less than 5 minutes on foot from any of the facilities we use. But at MSU, many of the facilities will be on campus, which we would separate from by a whole neighborhood. And the general location is better here as well. Unlike other high school students, it is a bit more difficult for us to just leave and go places. So having downtown Columbus so close is much better than a cow pasture.

I do understand, however, that we need better facilities and that MSU can offer that. The plan of the W to renovate Fant and Peyton is simply not as good as MSU's. Despite this, I am still against moving. I do not believe that MSMS should merge with Starkville Oktibbeha County School District in any way academically. Starkville students should not get special access to our nationally acclaimed teachers because of their location. Being in such close proximity and/or merging with SOCSO would both remove MSMS's autonomy and cheapen what it means to be here. On a more personal note, I simply would not want to share an academic setting with normal high school students. That is the reason I have not returned to my previous school.

Overall, I feel that moving to MSU under the current proposal would harm if not destroy the culture of MSMS. Many of the things that make MSMS special to its students would go away. Being located on a college campus and being within walking distance of every facility you need is a unique experience that few high schools share. A student body solely filled with students you live and eat with is another that helps to build such long-lasting bonds in just two years. Interacting with "normal" students would dampen that.

MSMS Proposals

From Bet McNeel <betmcneel@gmail.com>
Date Mon 3/3/2025 5:04 PM
To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Hi Dr. Boon,

I am a MSMS alumn and I have some opinions on the MUW and MSU proposals. While I understand that the MSU proposal is attempting to provide additional opportunities for enrollment and other pros, I don't believe it will be successful.

According to the proposals it would be tied to Starkville high school with a lot of overlap and a lack of boundaries between the schools. I believe this is an attempt for Starkville to pass on costs to the state level for their education system rather than an actual attempt to improve MSMS and its students. I firmly believe that tying MSMS to a non Math and Science school will result

Based on these two options, MSMS staying at MUW will result in higher quality education and will provide more benefits for the current and future students.

Thank you,
Bet McNeel

March 4, 2025

Dr. Donna Boone
Chief Academic Officer
Mississippi Department of Education

Dear Dr. Donna Boone and the Members of the Mississippi State Board of Education,

As a parent deeply invested in the success of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS), with both an alumnus and a current student, I write to express my concerns regarding the proposed relocation of MSMS to Mississippi State University (MSU). While I appreciate the efforts to explore new opportunities for MSMS, I believe a critical analysis of the MSU proposal is necessary to ensure that any decision serves the best interests of MSMS students and its unique mission.

What does MSMS gain from the MSU proposal?

The MSU proposal highlights several potential benefits, including:

- **New facilities:** While new facilities are undoubtedly appealing, it's crucial to assess whether the proposed facilities truly address the specific needs of MSMS students and faculty.
- **Expanded research opportunities:** While access to MSU's research facilities is a potential advantage, MSMS students already utilize these opportunities by traveling to MSU. Relocating wouldn't significantly change this access, and the demanding MSMS curriculum leaves limited time for research regardless of location. Therefore, while expanded research is important, it shouldn't be the sole factor in considering relocation.
- **Increased enrollment:** Increasing enrollment is a laudable goal that could be achieved without compromising the unique learning environment that MSMS provides. **Rebuilding and upgrading the outdated dorm situation at MUW would naturally lead to increased enrollment** without the disruption and potential risks of relocation. I personally know several families that chose not send their children to MSMS only because of outdated living conditions.

Analyzing the Implications of the MSU Proposal :

- **Established practices:** Many of the benefits touted in the MSU proposal, such as dual enrollment and advanced coursework, are already available to MSMS students through

MUW, which has a long history of providing comprehensive academic support and waiving tuition for MSMS students who take dual-enrollment courses.

- **Hidden costs:** The proposal does not adequately address the potential **financial implications of the relocation**, including construction, renovation, and ongoing operational expenses.
- **Disruption to MSMS culture:** Moving MSMS to a new environment could disrupt the close-knit community and unique culture that has been fostered over decades. This move would undermine the development of independence that is fostered at MUW, where students can safely navigate a smaller, more manageable environment, which is a key component of the residential, college-oriented environment that MSMS provides.
- **Safety concerns:** Placing minor residential students within a large university environment like MSU raises serious supervision and safety issues. The open nature of a major university campus presents challenges in providing appropriate oversight for high school-aged students. This fundamentally compromises the safe and small campus environment that MSMS currently provides at MUW.
- **Logistical challenges:** The proposed location at MSU may present logistical challenges for MSMS students, such as difficult access (via shuttle or personal car) to essential facilities like the library, tennis courts or wellness center. In contrast, MUW offers a compact campus where all essential facilities are conveniently located within a short walking distance from the dorms.

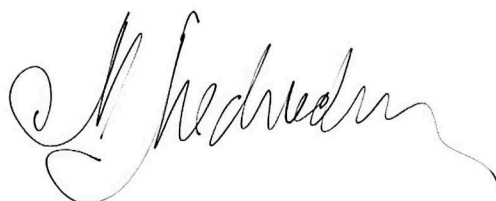
Alternative Solution:

Instead of a costly and potentially disruptive relocation, **I urge the Board to prioritize investing in MSMS's current facilities at MUW**, particularly the outdated residence halls. **Building new, modern dorms would immediately improve student recruitment**, enhance the learning environment, and ensure that MSMS can continue to serve talented students across Mississippi and contribute to developing the state's future leaders.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this vital matter. I sincerely hope you will choose to **invest in MSMS's future at MUW**, its proven and most effective home.

Sincerely,

Masha Medvedeva
Pass Christian, MS
12282222904



Comments about MSU_MSMS proposal (sent before 5pm march 4)

From Meng, Alan <afm209@msstate.edu>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 2:32 AM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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I strongly do not support the proposal for MSU to expand MSMS. I strongly do not support any proposal for any educational institution, public or private, (except for MUW) to partner with MSMS.

The budget for the proposal is 86 million. The cost of eliminating MSMS school fees is 700usd/year/student times 200student is less than 200000 usd per year. There are many such cost-efficient (and equitable at the same time) ways to improve the quality of education for MSMS and Mississippi rather than MSU proposal. It is mentioned in the MSU proposal that MSU had improved SOCSO, but that does not mean that other school districts got improved.

Dual enrollment and Advanced Placement can be expanded without the MSU proposal. The tuition waivers offered by MSU are unnecessary because tuition itself should not have been required in the first place. MSU can breakeven without tuition, yet it still collects tuition because it can, and there are no competitors nearby with similar ability to practice such credentialism. MSU has a large administrative overhead which eats up money that could have been used to bring down tuition for everyone. An alternative is to offer dual enrollment from MUW which would cost less for the same quality. An expensive administrative overhead does not improve quality.

MSU assets in sports which may negatively impact future MSMS:E. Sports attracts more administrative overhead which can increase future school fees. Sports causes traffic congestions around the MSU campus during weekends. Many MSMS students live far from Northeast Mississippi, and traffic congestion may make it unfeasible to visit home during the weekends. Traffic congestion is not student friendly. There is far lower traffic in MUW which prevents deterioration in mental health.

Access to professors, network support, research labs, and library are already at a quality where there cannot be any noticeable improvements that could be implemented. If there is a way to improve such services, it can already be easily done at MSMS.

MSU is a bad location for a high school campus. All the buildings are spread out which would cause long travel time. Even if the buildings [that are far away] do not have classes or essentials in them, the students will still be pressured to travel there because of the vast amounts of sports fields, library passes, in-person career center events, campus events, wellness centers, meeting spaces, ect. Even though SMART is the best transportation system in Mississippi, it regularly takes waiting (at the bus station) of more than 20 minutes (or almost an hour if going back and forth) to ride to another place. MSMS students have strict schedules and should not rely on SMART. SMART is proposed to improve, however a SMART system on

MUW campus would cost significantly cheaper for the same quality due to the compact design of MUW.

MUW has dwindling enrollment, making room for MSMS to expand into MUW. MSMS has lots of existing low-occupancy buildings (that can be repurposed) around it, allowing for a more efficient way to find more floor space for future MSMS students. MSMS is close to downtown, allowing an easier way for MSMS students travel for fun during weekends.

Although MSU wants to prevent a brain drain from Mississippi, the proposed plan would brain drain other parts of Mississippi. A internal brain drain is even worse because it causes colleges to be less competitive which increases prices. The 'us vs them' mentality should be stopped. If MSU wants to focus on making Mississippi better, it should not be taking funds that could have gone to poorer parts of Mississippi. MSU should never focus on consolidating power even if it is for nationalism.

MUW is located more towards the center of Mississippi allowing students to travel less when returning home for holidays. MUW is a 30-minute drive toward the center compared to MSU which may be the difference between being able to visit home for many students.

MSMS graduate (class of 2022),
Computer Science student at MSU,
Alan Meng

Notable credits received from MSMS:

- Russian 2

Notable credits received from MSU:

- Systems Programming CSE3183
- Computer Organization CSE3724

The Future of MSMS

From Sepideh Miller <baghai@gmail.com>
Date Sat 3/1/2025 8:12 AM
To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone,

I am a 1996 graduate of MSMS. Over the past few years, there appear to have been some discussions about relocating the school to MSU. When these discussions first came to light, I discussed them with another MSMS graduate (class of 1997) who lives in the same town that I currently reside in. We discussed how moving away from home at 15 was a challenge, and that we were not sure if our parents would have allowed us, as girls, to move to a larger campus in a larger town.

Even in Columbus, MSMS students were able to creatively find the type of trouble that teenagers find, but the potential access to alcohol and age-inappropriate relationships would be higher in Starkville than it was in Columbus.

From the diagram of the proposal in Starkville, I am concerned about conflicts between Starkville High and MSMS. Even in Columbus, the relationship between Columbus High and MSMS seemed uneasy. Though MSMS had attracted some students from Columbus and some students even had parents working at Columbus High, the relationship between the schools felt uneasy. It felt like a "bully the nerds" dynamic coupled with some jealousy around us having access to high quality teachers.

The dual enrollment possibilities in the MUW proposal are interesting and are being tried at schools around the country to reduce the cost of higher education for lower-income students who might not otherwise be able to afford to complete college.

I would like you to strongly consider keeping MSMS in Columbus.

Sepideh Baghai Miller

Mississippi State Board of Education seeks stakeholder feedback on MSMS proposals

From Lauren Mitchell <laurenmitchell01@icloud.com>

Date Wed 2/26/2025 9:55 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Donna Boone,

I am writing on behalf of the new proposals for MSMS. I was a student at MSMS and have read the proposals for both MSU & MUW. I do not believe that MSU full comprehends the financial responsibility that MUW has faced by being responsible for MSMS. MSU's wish for educational funds to be used to build brand new buildings far exceeds the money that MUW has been asking for. If the educational board does not see fit to increase the budget for MUW why would it be reasonable to completely start over at MSU. MSU is not willing to giving up nearly as much resources as MUW has been for years. It also strips the future MSMS students away from the experience of Mississippi. Columbus is not just a college town like Starkville is. The students will be exposed to a much more adult atmosphere outside of campus that does not go on in Columbus. The students will also not get the historic impact that the W has had on Mississippi. From the stand point of a woman in STEM the W made me feel like I belonged in a college atmosphere.

Sincerely,
Lauren Mitchell

March 4, 2025

Dr. Donna Boone
Chief Academic Officer
Mississippi Department of Education

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express the importance of maintaining the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) on the Mississippi University for Women (MUW) campus. A little background about myself - I graduated from MSMS in 2004. During my time at MSMS, I was provided with a safe educational and residential experience where I was able to excel academically. Before graduating from MSMS, I received a full-paid scholarship to MUW. This scholarship paid for my tuition, dormitory, food, and textbooks for all four years. As a result, I received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and became a registered nurse by 2008 without paying a dime. At the time, MUW was the top-ranked nursing school in Mississippi and still holds that rank today. Since then, I have continued my education, and I now hold a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Nursing Education and Administration. Throughout my career, I have served the state of Mississippi and its population. Currently, I work as a nursing educator training the next generation of nurses in our home state. I am thankful to say that MSMS was the first major step in my academic journey. Without MSMS, I would not be where I am today. I am beyond thankful for the opportunities Mississippi provided to me through MSMS and provided an extraordinary foundation for my continued education and lifelong career.

At a young age, I was familiar with MSMS. My older brother graduated from MSMS in 2000, and he received a full-ride scholarship to MSU upon graduation. Personally, I was drawn to MSMS for two reasons. The first was the advanced academic opportunities, such as the numerous dual-enrollment classes available. The second reason was to be surrounded by students who valued their education as much as I did. MSMS was and is known for providing a safe haven for academically gifted students in our state, which is still true today. My family and I visited the MSMS campus last spring for my 20-year high school reunion. During this time, we toured the campus and spoke with the current students. Yes, the buildings have aged. However, the passion for learning and the energy of the students remains the same today as it was 20 years ago.

In 2002, I was in Fant dormitory when the tornado ripped through campus. I will never forget that experience. Through this devastating event, we came together and grew stronger. Over the years, the conditions of the MSMS facilities have deteriorated; however, the students continue to excel in their educational endeavors and outperform other state-gifted schools. MSMS receives significantly less funding (\$16,000 per student) compared to surrounding state math and science schools in Alabama, Louisiana, and Arkansas. Despite these challenges, MSMS continues to offer high school students a unique, rigorous educational experience and an opportunity for excellence.

I have reviewed the proposals from MUW and MSU. My primary concern with the MSU proposal is the mixing of MSMS students with Starkville High students. The safe haven feeling

that MSMS provides of being surrounded by other gifted students with the same priorities would no longer exist. Instead, they will be surrounded by typical high-school students and be more prone to bullying and feeling out of place. MUW provides a smaller, more intimate campus setting, which allows for a tight-knit community where everyone knows one another. This environment fosters both physical and emotional security for these students.

I agree that MSU has increased resources for MSMS, but at what price? Financially, 82 million dollars for the MSU proposal is a significant price tag. However, I must ask the question that comes to everyone's mind. Is this proposal to primarily benefit MSMS or Starkville High? If it were to benefit MSMS, the plan would prioritize and value the worth of the MSMS students. Mixing MSMS students with Starkville High students would forever change the uniqueness of the MSMS environment and the ability to focus on the individualized needs of the MSMS students.

The price tag of the MUW proposal is significantly less and allows the MSMS students to be the primary focus of the academic and residential improvements. The MUW campus helps foster a sense of community, mentorship, and collaboration, which is critical to the holistic development of MSMS students. The MSMS theme is "An Opportunity for Excellence." MUW provides MSMS students with all necessary resources such as dining, library, and extracurricular opportunities that are just footsteps away. In addition, in comparison to MSU, there is no need to use public transportation systems to access university resources. The historical connection between MSMS and MUW, with roots that go back decades, cannot be overstated. Over time, this connection has provided the best resources possible within the allotted budget from the state.

The current financial support of MSMS provided by Mississippi does not fully cover the rising costs of modernizing facilities, upgrading classroom technologies, expanding academic programs, or maintaining the residential needs of students. MSMS students require state-of-the-art resources to keep pace with the challenges of an ever-changing world, and this includes everything from lab equipment to extracurricular and residential services.

Will Mississippi please prioritize the MSMS by providing an opportunity for excellence for now and in the years to come for academically gifted students in our state?

Thank you for your time and reading this letter. I am confident that with your help, we can ensure the continued success of MSMS.

Sincerely,



Maegan Montgomery, PhD, RN c/o 2004

18 Hatten Cemetery Rd.
Wiggins, MS 39577
228-861-5717
maeganc@hotmail.com

MSMS proposals

From Michael Morgan <mdek12@michaelmorgan.name>
Date Mon 3/3/2025 10:38 PM
To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone:

I am a 1993 alumnus of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS). My sister Elizabeth Morgan is a 1995 MSMS alumna and a chemistry instructor at MSMS who already wrote you.

Before MSMS, I attended McComb School District from first grade through tenth grade. McComb was named a National Model School when I was in elementary school and was the best of area school districts. Academic challenges in McComb were rare for me, though. I was interested in MSMS immediately after learning about it, and the experience was a durable transformation in my life.

After MSMS, I majored in physics and mathematics at Rice University and graduated cum laude. I decided to pursue a medical career and completed pre-medical coursework at the University of Mississippi before enrolling at Washington University in St. Louis and completing the MD-PhD combined degree program. Today I work as a neurologist and neuro-ophthalmologist. These experiences and this fulfilling life of expertise and service that followed would have been difficult, probably impossible, had I stayed in McComb schools. MSMS provided a rich environment for learning and inquiry in a community of dedicated faculty and students with lifelong benefits.

I am happy that MSMS is receiving your attention and that the two proposals have been advanced. I appreciate the work in them from MUW and MSU. Of the two, the MUW proposal is better in not diluting the MSMS experience with a regular high school, and MSU would be introduce the busy environment of a large college campus that would be difficult for high school students.

Overall, though, I want to see MSMS funded in a secure and serious manner by the State of Mississippi. In 1991 when I started MSMS, all the faculty were at or above my very best McComb teachers. The laboratory and computer facilities were beyond anything I knew. The dormitories were comfortable, and the academic building was only a few years from renovation for MSMS. We even received board, and the experience was provided without tuition although we all provided work service to MSMS. The MSMS faculty remain exemplars, and smart, ambitious teenagers still apply and attend. The other elements have not kept pace. I hope you will take the MUW proposal as a starting point for a plan of renovation that establishes a place for the Mississippi children whose local schools cannot provide the challenges they need to grow.

Thank you for your consideration and for the interest in MSMS, my beloved alma mater.

Yours truly,
Michael Morgan

Support for Keeping MSMS at Mississippi University for Women

From Julia Mortyakova <mortyakova@gmail.com>

Date Fri 2/28/2025 3:59 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

Cc cmickens@house.ms.gov <cmickens@house.ms.gov>; kharriem@house.ms.gov <kharriem@house.ms.gov>; aboyd@house.ms.gov <aboyd@house.ms.gov>; ataylor@house.ms.gov <ataylor@house.ms.gov>; aford@senate.ms.gov <aford@senate.ms.gov>; cyounger@senate.ms.gov <cyounger@senate.ms.gov>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Donna Boone,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Julia Mortyakova, and I am a resident of Columbus, living on College Street. I am writing to express my strong support for keeping the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) at Mississippi University for Women (MUW) rather than relocating it to Mississippi State University (MSU). I believe that keeping MSMS on the MUW campus is not only the most fiscally responsible option but also the best choice for the MSMS students, the university, and the Columbus community.

First, the financial implications of moving MSMS to MSU are concerning. According to the proposal, the cost of relocating would be an additional \$50 million. In times when fiscal responsibility is paramount, this substantial amount could be better spent elsewhere to improve educational opportunities and infrastructure within the state. By remaining at MUW, we can avoid these unnecessary expenses and focus on supporting MSMS students and faculty in a sustainable manner.

Secondly, the unique academic opportunities offered at MUW significantly enhance the learning experience for MSMS students. The proposal from MUW highlights the exceptional educational environment on its campus, which provides MSMS students with specialized programs and a close-knit academic community. These opportunities, including mentorship from MUW faculty, dual enrollment options, and access to specialized resources, are invaluable for the development of MSMS students. MUW also offered expanded opportunities for MSMS students, including specialized areas of concentration, such as music, welcoming MSMS students into MUW courses taught by MUW professors. Moving to MSU, while providing its own set of benefits, would change the dynamics of this personalized educational environment, which could ultimately impact the success and well-being of MSMS students. In the educational realm, it remains unclear what opportunities MSMS students would have regarding taking courses at MSU and being taught by its full-time faculty.

As a longtime resident of Columbus, I am also concerned about the broader implications for the city. The presence of MSMS on the MUW campus is a vital part of our local community, both in terms of the educational value it provides and the economic impact it has. MSMS students contribute to the vibrancy of our city, and the connection to MUW strengthens that bond. The potential loss of MSMS

on the W campus would have significant consequences, not only for the students but also for the local economy and the overall culture of Columbus.

It seems unethical that a representative from Starkville is using his position in the Education Committee in the state legislature to relocate MSMS and fund a high school in his own district at an economic and cultural cost to the city of Columbus. Lowndes county provided substantial funds when MSMS was first started and it does not seem fair that the school would be moved to another county now.

In conclusion, I urge the Mississippi Department of Education to carefully consider the long-term benefits of keeping MSMS at Mississippi University for Women. The financial, academic, and community-based reasons strongly support this decision, and I believe it is in the best interest of the students, the university, and the city of Columbus as a whole.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my input as a stakeholder and for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

--

Julia Mortyakova, DMA

Pianist

Professor and Chair,

Department of Music,

Director, Music by Women Festival

Mississippi University for Women

Chair, National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) Region VIII

Immediate Past President,

College Music Society Southern Region

www.juliamortyakova.com

Comments/Response regarding MDE's RFP to MUW and MSU to address the future of MSMS

From Kristi Mosley <khmosley14@gmail.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 9:23 AM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dr Boone,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on the RFPs issued to MUW and MSU regarding the future of MSMS. I am a 1999 graduate of Mississippi University for Women, a continued stakeholder of The W, a Mississippi resident, the parent to two children in the Mississippi public school system and the spouse of a graduate of Mississippi State University. I certainly see myself as someone who has very strong ties to both areas in consideration and am extremely concerned over the optics and arrogance of the proposed move of MSMS based on the proposals provided, and am hopeful that all points made are considered in their entirety regardless of political pressures.

As a parent of a child considering attending MSMS, I would caution this move for a multitude of reasons: 1) The long historic success rate of MSMS as housed on The W's campus- MSMS produces the highest number of National Merit Semifinalists of any other surrounding state's STEM schools with half of the monetary support from these other schools - the suggestion that this model is broken is a misnomer and the academic outcomes and results suggest otherwise; 2) The long standing support MSMS has received from The W, the City of Columbus, and the county of Lowndes- Upon its inception, these 3 entities were the ONLY academic institution, city and county to request housing MSMS on its campus when William Winter brought the idea before legislation; 3) The nurturing, small, safe and free from distractions campus of The W allows for a more academically focused environment than otherwise proposed by MSU where students would share facilities with Starkville High School, be submersed into a large population of college students and have to be bussed from their dormitories, dining hall and all academic and extracurricular facilities on MSU's large campus; 5) The threat of consolidation into the SOCSO which may be beneficial to Starkville High School, SOCSO and MSU, but most certainly at a cost and direct negative impact to MSMS; 6) The optics this power play provides and suggests to the public: the state of Mississippi's tax payers, the citizens of Columbus and County of Lowndes, All Students and Alumni of MSMS, All Students and Alumni of The W and any prospective students of MSU, The W and MSMS.

I want to first lean into why it would ever be a good idea to take 16 year old kids (15 year olds if they start enrolling Sophomores as MSMS has proposed) and move them to a large SEC campus that has over 23,150 students enrolled, one of the highest assault rates of any campus in the state's IHL system, transient fans that arrive on its campus weekly and an inadequate reporting of on and off campus

incidences of rape and sexual assault, a party atmosphere of fraternities and sororities at their disposal, a proposed bussing to and from any and all academic classes on campus and a history of political grandstanding and power grabs. That is dangerous and problematic in every considered scenario possible.

Why would MDE consider this proposal and interest from MSU in the first place? One legislator in particular (Rob Roberson- R from Starkville) stated, " I think that it (moving MSMS to Starkville) would give those kids that go to MSMS more opportunities to have the picture perfect high school life." He also suggested that they did not have access to any athletics currently. Both are improper and inaccurate assessments. First and foremost, why are we looking for them to have the same high school experience as every other student in the state? The students that apply and are accepted to MSMS are the state's brightest and finest. They are not seeking the same high school experience as every other student in the state, much less those at Starkville High School or SOCS. MSMS students are above average, academically-inclined students that chose to leave their respective high schools (both public and private) within the state of Mississippi to receive a different and more academically focused high school experience. To suggest otherwise or that they need to be meshed in with the same students they previously left is both ignorant and an insult to MSMS students. Additionally, MSMS students DO have access to the same sports facilities as The W students and compete in state-wide, state-sanctioned sporting events. But the greater issue with his statements is WHY would Representative Roberson be suggesting they would want the same experience as other high schoolers OR that they do not have access to sports facilities? Is it because he truly believes he knows what is in their best interest? Or that he believes athletics is the greatest emphasis for MSMS students? Is he not educated on the fact that they do compete in state-wide athletics currently? OR is he trying to help Starkville High School and SOCS and MSU gain funding from the state to build their new facilities benefitting Starkville High School, SOCS, and MSU, an immediate spike in academic achievement and testing results by absorbing MSMS and also allow MSU first dibs on the state's brightest students. Any of those scenarios are unethical and should not be worthy of consideration.

Additionally and probably the most problematic issue I see with the proposed relocation is that MSU is requesting the state appropriate \$85 million in funds to help build the facilities on MSU's campus, and to also integrate it with Starkville High School. If the state of Mississippi is even considering spending that type of money to fund the relocation of MSMS to MSU's campus, then WHY NOT consider saving our tax payers' money (being that both MDE and our state legislators are supposed to be proper stewards of taxpayers' money) and invest in a more cost effective proposal by upgrading The W's existing facilities and infrastructure and increase the per student allocation for MSMS students. A move to MSU would be at minimum an additional cost of \$50 million over what it would cost to make the appropriate modifications. If given the proper funding and the green light to make modifications to existing infrastructure or to build new facilities on The W's existing campus, The W can offer minimum disruption to MSMSs operations while upgrading or building. The W has continuously proven to be a good, safe, and effective host to MSMS and will produce much greater outcomes with the proper resources. That is a guaranty. They have always done more with less funding than other institutions in our state that continuously keep their hands out for more!

I also want to point out two very concerning things that have bothered me since I first learned of the RFPs: 1) ONLY MSU and The W received RFPs from MDE. When Rep. Rob Roberson was questioned on this in an interview on The Commercial Dispatch's podcast, "Between the Lines," he first hem-hawed

around the question and then finally said, "only MSU was very interested." How exactly does Mr. Roberson know this? That is contradictory to what was discovered when The W reached out for additional research partnership opportunities for MSMS with University of Mississippi, University of Southern Mississippi and Jackson State University that were included in The W's proposal. 2) A rubric for evaluating any and all proposals was not provided or publicly published prior to either proposal being requested or submitted. (Assuming that MSU was given the same time frame to submit) President Miller asked this question of Lance Evans prior to submitting The W's proposal and was told that it would be determined and created AFTER the proposals were received. The sheer optics of that alone are enough to disqualify this RFP process from happening and any consideration of moving MSMS off of The W's campus. The lack of transparency from the public on a measure that will use the tax payer's dollars to fund it and also be detrimental to Mississippi's brightest high school students, a state funded IHL, a municipality, a state county and any and all stakeholders of the aforementioned, is made both in bad taste and bad politics.

To be clear, I am opposed to MSMS being relocated to MSU's campus and respectfully request that MDE provide full support to MUW and MSMS by requesting the legislature to fully fund their proposal and ensure their continued future success!

Thank you for your time and your consideration. I look forward to learning the outcomes of the RFPs and will be watching this process very closely and intently.

Sincerely,
Kristi Mosley,

MUW Class of 1999

MUW Alumni Association Board Director, 2015-2021

Past President of MUW Alumni Association, 2019-2020

MUW Legislative Engagement + Advocacy Partnership, Key Persons Lead, 2024-Present

MSMS

From jrmiss@aol.com <jrmiss@aol.com>

Date Fri 2/28/2025 5:32 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Public Input

Ms. Boone,

I would like to express my concerns with moving MSMS to Mississippi State. My primary concern is tax payer costs. The proposals both show that there is a significant difference in the costs. The costs are estimated at \$50 million more to move it to MS State than to invest at the MUW that campus. Even if the amount less than \$50 million more, the facts remain that the cost will be substantially higher. If there is funding included to improve the Starkville school district in the packaged proposal, that is another tax payer issue. The general public of Mississippi should not be funding a local school district building fund. That is on the Starkville tax payers.

Thank you for your consideration of this input!

With Best Regards!

James R Mullis

MUW MSMS Proposal

From Courtney B Murtaugh <murtaughs@me.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 12:43 PM

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

Cc rjohnson@house.ms.gov <rjohnson@house.ms.gov>; acockerham@house.ms.gov <acockerham@house.ms.gov>; rsanders@house.ms.gov <rsanders@house.ms.gov>

 1 attachment (1 KB)

smime.p7s;

Dr. Boone:

I want to comment on the MUW/MSU proposals about the Mississippi School of Math and Science.

As an alumna of MUW and a Past President of the MUW Alumni Association, I take much pride in the fact that the MSMS has been housed at my alma mater since its inception in 1987. Academic excellence has always been a hallmark of MUW, so it made perfect sense to locate the school there. Another W hallmark is its historic outreach to underserved student populations, including women, minorities, economically disadvantaged and diverse populations of all kinds in Mississippi.

As state support has diminished through the years, another thing the W is known for is creating favorable outcomes for less and less money. In fact, MUW is one of the most cost-effective organizations in Mississippi and has for years handled the financial and administrative services for MSMS despite state funding not keeping up with costs. MSMS alums who remain in Mississippi become teachers, doctors, nurses and business leaders, all of which the state sorely needs. Why wouldn't the state invest taxpayer dollars to enhance an existing SAFE environment for these outstanding students?

MUW proposes an investment of \$60 million to expand and upgrade MSMS facilities, as opposed to the \$85 million that MSU has proposed. Since most of that \$85 million will go to upgrading Starkville High School, state funds will be used to upgrade a local school in a local school district. I think I can safely say that most public high schools in Mississippi would love to have an extra \$85 million of state money. If Starkville High needs an upgrade, let the citizens of Starkville pay for it. Clearly, it simply makes more fiscal sense to keep the school at MUW.

MSMS at MUW must be doing something right if MSU and the Starkville Public School District are so anxious to get their hands on it and the taxpayer dollars that support it. I hope that the IHL and the Legislature will do the fiscally responsible thing and leave MSMS where it is, and then properly fund it with the dollars it needs and deserves. As an MUW alum, I cannot support this egregious money grab by MSU. I urge MDE and the Legislature to invest in MSMS's future while maintaining its successful partnership with MUW.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Kind regards,

Courtney

Courtney Ballard Murtaugh

Class of 1978

Past MUWAA President 2017-2018

Granddaughter of Courtney Lucius Best, Class of 1918, IIC

Mother-in-Law of Xenia Dylag Murtaugh, Class of 2019, MUW

MSU vs MUW

From Mirae Nishikawa <nishikawam26@themsms.org>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 4:46 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.

Good afternoon, my name is Mirae Nishikawa and I am a student at MSMS.

When I first learned about the possibility of MSMS being moved to MSU I was supportive. MSMS has been long overdue for improved facilities, especially as a leading high school in the U.S. But after hearing and reading the proposals for myself I realized this proposal would primarily benefit MSU, especially SOCSO. One of the most unique things about MSMS is the community and moving to MSU, especially since it's such a big campus, it would lose the close knittedness that makes it so unique. Also, one of my favorite classes is Tales from the Crypt, and moving to Starkville will most likely take this opportunity away from future students.

I have a unique view on this situation since Starkville High is my home school. I know what Starkville high is like and the students there genuinely don't care about getting an education. I don't think they'll appreciate the improved facilities anyway. Even after the building of Partnership, kids haven't become more eager to learn so I don't know how MSMS will be able to help them either.

Thank you,

Mirae Nishikawa

Chief Academic Officer Donna Boone - MSMS

From Ed Oakes <eaoakes@hotmail.com>

Date Fri 2/28/2025 11:26 AM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Ms. Boone,

I've earlier stated my reasons for NOT relocating the MSMS campus to MSU and sent that email to all the state board members. I'll reiterate for you:

- 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.

I can now include that relocation to MSU will cost \$50 Million dollars more since the "proposals" are in and personally I'll state that my daughter who is a graduate of MSMS, would not have been allowed to attend if the campus was at MSU.

Sincerely,

Ed Oakes

Relocation of MSMS

From Katy Canion Pacelli <katypacelli@gmail.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 3:18 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 write to you today from a very unique position. I am an MUW graduate (class of 2000), the sister of a MSMS graduate (class of 2000) and the mother of a sophomore in high school, who is well qualified to apply and potentially be accepted to MSMS.

I have reviewed the proposals submitted for MDE's RFP to host MSMS. To me, the next move for MDE and the Legislature is to leave MSMS on the campus of MUW and invest in the infrastructure there. On MUW's campus MSMS will be able to maintain their autonomy and identity as they have done for the past 37+ years.

The MSU proposal calls for MSMS to basically be absorbed by Starkville High School with the two schools sharing many facilities. At this location, MSMS would merely be an "academy" of sorts - a school within a school. MSMS will be forced to share athletic facilities with a Division I athletics program or perhaps the intramurals program. In reviewing this proposal, one has to wonder if it is MSU that actually wants MSMS on their campus or is it the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District? Matter of fact, they even want to change MSMS's name.

Finally, as the mother of a sophomore in high school, who again has the grades and test scores to be competitive for admission and wants to pursue a career in a STEM field, there are NO circumstances where I would allow him to attend the school proposed by MSU and SOCS. First, he already attends a large 7A school and being in an academy at Starkville HS offers no advantages for him. Additionally, I don't feel like a 16 year old needs to be a residential high school on a large, SEC, R1 campus. Additionally, I asked my mother if she would have allowed my brother to attend MSMS had it been located at MSU and she gave a firm no. I also polled several friends with children the same age and no one said they would allow their child to attend MSMS on the campus of MSU.

I strongly encourage MDE and legislature to make the right choice to leave MSMS on the campus of MUW and to invest in this rare jewel we have.

Thank you,
Katy Canion Pacelli
Rankin County Resident
MUW Alumni

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Katy Canion Pacelli

601.506.3306