
Opinion on the Future of MSMS

From Jeremy Padilla <jeremypad23@gmail.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 12:25 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Jeremy Padilla. I am an MSMS Alum—class of 2023—and a current Mississippi State student. I have been following the events transpiring with my alma mater since my graduation almost two years ago. In my opinion, the current proposal for an MSU move would be the worst course of action and would drastically alter the institution of MSMS. During my time at MSMS, I was a supporter of a move to Starkville, but contrary to this and the continuous push for the move from current students, alumni, and faculty, what I can say for certain is that what is being proposed is not what we envisioned when bringing up a move away from MUW.

After reading both proposals, I found that MUW is the only one considering MSMS's well-being and growth. MSU and the Oktibbeha County School District are proposing to blatantly leverage MSMS to benefit themselves and their residents rather than offering MSMS an opportunity for improvement. If MSU's proposal is selected, MSMS would lose much of its autonomy, have its culture wholly changed, and be in a worse situation than it is now, not speaking of infrastructure or facilities, given that it will become a proxy Starkville High School rather than being the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science.

Many alums I am close with, from the classes of 2021-2024, and myself believe that MSU's proposal is a joke that should not be seriously considered. The proposal has been made in bad faith and lacks much of the consideration seen in MUW's proposal. In short, MSMS would be better off left in Columbus but funded better and given the proper resources to upgrade its facilities. Bluntly, its issues are ones that can be remedied through funding and through a bit more interaction with the W, which is now on the table as seen in MUW's proposal. I believe that through this, MSMS will be able to return to the levels of prestige and excellence it had in the past.

Best regards,
A concerned Alumni

March 4, 2025

Mississippi Department of Education
359 North West Street, Post Office Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Re: Mississippi State Board of Education seeks stakeholder feedback on MSMS proposals

Dr. Donna Boone:

As a Secondary English Educator, I hear this exact question at least once (usually more than once) every school year:

"Ms. Panter, why are you an English teacher if you went to the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science?"

The question is understandable because I know my students are focusing on the "mathematics and science" aspect of my alma mater, which seems oppositional to teaching English. However, attending there showed me that while math and science are valuable aspects of the school, the "Mississippi School" is the most important part of the name.

My name is Harper Panter, and I graduated from MSMS in 2015. After graduating, I became a Mississippi Excellence in Teaching Program scholar and attended the University of Mississippi to earn my B.A.Ed in Secondary English Education. As you may find from my history, I am a big supporter of all things Mississippi. I now teach on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and every year I look forward to telling my sophomores that I attended MSMS. As a teen, when I heard about the incredible "Mississippi School" that offered so many opportunities for students seeking academic challenge and a pre-college like experience, I knew it was the perfect place for me.

I believe that the Mississippi State University proposal completely changes what made MSMS the perfect place for me and many other students across the state. I appreciate the State Board of Education and Mississippi Department of Education's interest in MSMS, but a different approach needs to be taken to ensure the school's longevity and success.

As a school unassociated with a school district, representing all of Mississippi, MSMS has the unique ability to nurture the amazing talent and academic ability that our state has to offer. Under MSU's proposal, the key aspects that make this possible will be stripped away including, but not limited to, a tight-knit college campus and small class sizes filled with like-minded students.

Outside of the two proposals from MSU and MUW, what MSMS really needs is full funding from its state. When I encourage my current sophomores to apply, I want to do so with the confidence that MSMS can still offer the "Opportunity for Excellence" that it did for me. This can only be achieved if MSMS is funded to an appropriate level. I trust that you will truly listen to the stakeholders' opinions and make a decision in the best interest of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science.

Thank you,

Harper Panter
English Teacher
Biloxi High School
thp2015@gmail.com

msms location

From Bill Parker <wsparker@muw.edu>

Date Sun 3/2/2025 3:54 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

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To Whom It May Concern:

Please note the following points about this proposed move of MSMS to Starkville:

1. Overlapping students from Starkville High School and MSMS will put the latter at a disadvantage in terms of learning quality and learning environment. The whole point of MSMS from the beginning was to have these exceptional students work in an environment forming a unit independent from the public schools of the state.
2. Evaluate the motive for Starkville HS wanting MSMS joined with a new campus for them. This is extra money to their advantage which they otherwise would not get .
3. Those pushing this move have little or no concern about the learning environment for MSMS students.
4. MSMS students would have further to go on foot to reach some of the facilities at MSU which is not the case at MUW.
5. MSMS may soon be adding a sophomore year. Such young students especially have no business living and going to school on a large university campus.
6. Columbus would lose a long established asset to its community and MSMS students would lose their long-established participation in community events (e.g., Tales from the Crypt).
7. It would cost the state less to appropriate funds to repair the dorms and other MSMS structures on the MUW campus.

For over 20 years I moderated state science bowl competitions on the MUW campus involving teams from MSMS. Every year these students demonstrated superior performance and notable teamwork. MSMS is one of the top such schools in the country. I believe that it can continue to attract exceptional students and provide a better learning environment by staying on the small self-contained campus at MUW instead of being thrust onto the large Division 1 MSU campus and mixed in with Starkville public schools. Why risk degrading one of the state's best assets?

William S. Parker
Professor Emeritus
MUW
Columbus, MS

Bill Parker

Regarding the proposals for MSMS by MSU and MUW

From Joseph Payne <paynejosephc@gmail.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 4:40 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

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Dr. Boone, MSMS subcommittee,

As a native of Starkville, an MSMS graduate, and a Mississippi State graduate, I have strong feelings about the two proposals regarding the future of MSMS. Taking the two proposals on their individual merits, **I believe keeping the MSMS at MUW and providing increased state funding is the best choice.** The MSU proposal would remove the specialness of MSMS, reducing it to a normal high school with a dorm, blur the lines between the state level funded school MSMS was created to be with the SOCS, and cost the state more.

When I first heard this discussion about moving the school to MSU I thought it sounded like a good idea. At first thought, the idea of increasing access to an R-1 university (and a university I hold dear to my heart) sounded like a big step forward. MSU has a lot to offer MSMS students – and no one can argue otherwise. Conversely, it is a fact that the current facilities used by MSMS on the MUW campus are in need of improvement.

MSMS is a special place. A portion of that specialness comes from its relative isolation. The W is a large enough university to provide access to academic and extracurricular resources needed by MSMS, but small enough for MSMS to feel like its own world. Sure, there are MUW students around and co-occupied spaces, but shared classes are minimal so you build strong relationships with the other students – learning from each other and building real-world collaboration and social skills. It's also a space that allows a stepping stone between living at home and moving out into the real world after graduation through the residential program. The proposal from MSU removes those things by not only moving the school to a larger, busier campus, but also combining both academics and extracurriculars with a local school. It reduces the school to little more than a normal (albeit high performing), local school with a dorm.

The proposal from MSU blurs the lines between the state level funded school MSMS was created to be with the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District. The Mississippi legislature purposely created a school that would be outside the normal school district structure, so it was a school for the state and not just one locality. Furthermore, that difference ensured the state level funds allocated to the school were used for the school for the benefit of the entire state. Combining MSMS with a local school district creates a situation primed for corruption to use state funds to disproportionately benefit a single school district over the rest of the state. The SOCSO already benefits tremendously from sharing Starkville with MSU.

Finally, MSU's proposal costs more. The root of most issues being used to underpin the argument to move can be solved by increased funding. As MUW points out in their proposal, MSMS is already underfunded among its peers despite consistently outperforming them! The proposal from MSU estimates \$85m is needed from the state to move the school – a cost that could pay for the \$16,000 per student expenditure difference from peer state schools for more than 2,600 students through 11th and 12th grade.

Thank you for taking feedback. As a native Mississippian, proud MSU and MSMS graduate, former Mississippi National Guardsman, and life-long advocate for the state, I look forward to the continued success and growth of MSMS and seeing the returns reaped by the state for its investment in it.

Thank you,

Joseph Payne

The Future of MSMS

From Pepper Pearson <pepperpearson@hotmail.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 3:05 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

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Dr. Boone,

I graduated from MSMS in 1997. After graduating, I chose to do my undergraduate degree out of state. However, I returned for law school at Ole Miss, and am currently employed with the State of Mississippi as a staff attorney for a Circuit Court judge. Due to my employment, I understand how limited our resources can be in this State. I also understand how important funding our educational system and keeping our brightest minds in our State is to our shared future. After reviewing the proposals, keeping MSMS in Columbus just makes more sense. Improving an existing infrastructure rather than building an entire new facility, to me, seems to be a better use of our tax dollars.

There are other concerns with moving MSMS to Starkville. For many students, their first semester at MSMS is their first time away from home for any extended time. Placing them in the midst of a large university campus seems very short sighted, and would be a detriment to their well-being. I know for myself, the MSMS experience was a bit like training wheels for the college experience. I was much more mature and better prepared than some of my peers for the independence of college. This was only possible due to the limited freedom that MSMS and the Columbus community provided me.

Finally, MSMS is primarily a STEM based experience, but that is not its only focus. MSMS provides phenomenal history, literature, and arts classes. It promotes the arts and history through projects like Pilgrimage and Tales from the Crypt. Those same community opportunities would not be available if moved to MSU. Also, MUW has always shared its literary and arts programs with MSMS. It is this access to the liberal arts that have produced (that I know personally) several lawyers, college literature and history professors, and one journalist for the Wall Street Journal. The MSU proposal is severely lacking in providing this essential but less noticed aspect of the MSMS educational experience. MSMS is not just a math and science school. It is an opportunity for our State's best and brightest to take advantage of opportunities they may never have had in their home communities. Based on the foregoing, please take this as my support to keep MSMS at its current location and to provide adequate funding to rehabilitate the existing facilities. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Pepper Pearson-Russell
MSMS Class of '97

Comment on MSMS moving by a current student

From Carys Peden <caryspeden@icloud.com>

Date Thu 2/27/2025 10:55 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

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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, my name is Carys Peden, and I am a current student at MSMS who serves as SGA President.

I believe that our school seriously lacks funding. To no fault of our own, I have noticed that our lab equipment is often old, the residence halls still experience issues such as having stark contrasts in temperature even after renovations, and a handful of our extracurriculars may eventually die out due to a lack of funds that cannot be distributed to clubs' resources or traveling costs for competitions. This lack of funding places a great stress on all members of our community, including administration, faculty, students, and parents. The general consensus that I have received from the MSMS community is that we do not wish to move to MSU campus. People look at the benefits of us moving to the MSU campus, but they do not appreciate the benefits which we already have in Columbus. These benefits consist of providing students with Columbus's walkable downtown area, access to the rich-in-history Columbus Lowndes Library which allows us to conduct programs such as Tales from the Crypt, and focus on a quiet campus that doesn't feel too "college" (as in no explicit greek life presence or partying). Furthermore, I hate the idea of sharing amenities and a building with Starkville High School. My opinion holds nothing against the students, but I rather worry for the logistics. Would we consolidate sports teams, fight over turns to use spaces in shared academic buildings, or be punished for interacting with Starkville High school students? What would the effects be of putting MSMS students with Starkville High students when MSMS students experience stricter rules around social life (for example, we have systems such as privilege plans and have curfews because we live on campus). Seeing Starkville High students get to live the "teenage experience" that we have sacrificed for education would likely cause MSMS students to feel trapped on an already isolated campus. Additionally, if we were able to take the same classes as Starkville High students, why should they not be considered and given the privileges (such as full ride scholarships) and prestige that comes with being a MSMS student. Additionally, loved faculty have threatened to quit if this move occurs. Why should we uproot our entire MSMS community and potentially destroy it when its only problem is that our requests for funding are ignored or not fully honored? I don't think anyone affiliated with MSMS really wants to move to MSU, I just think that we crave the nice amenities and funding that would come with it.

Thank you,
Carys Peden

Sent from my iPhone

MSMS needs to stay at MUW

From Becky Pierce <becky.v.pierce@gmail.com>
Date Mon 3/3/2025 6:54 AM
To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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

Dear Dr. Donna Boone

Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) needs to stay in Columbus, MS on the campus of Mississippi University for Women (MUW). The smaller campus is safer. The walkable city of Columbus is more hospitable for high schoolers without vehicles. The proposal of MUW to restore the historic residential halls of Fant and Peyton is ideal. It removes blight from MUW campus, preserves historic Mississippi buildings, and provides a beautiful living area for the MSMS students. As an alumnus of MSMS who lived in historic Fant hall prior to its disrepair, I was disheartened to hear MSMS was forced to move the students to the poorly lit, less spacious residential halls of Goyen and Fraser. After graduating MSMS, I went to LSU for college. I found the quaint town and campus of MUW to be something I missed terribly. Large state schools swallow students into a lost void of ambiguity. It is not safe to move MSMS to Mississippi State University's campus.

Columbus' economy would also be greatly affected by the removal of MSMS from its city. Many MSMS graduates who were originally from other parts of the state have returned to the endearing town bolstering the community. From my 2003 graduating class alone I know of four students who returned to Columbus after attending college outside of the state to support the community of Columbus. One is a doctor, another a local store bookstore owner, a teacher and the third is a nurse. Columbus with its lovely main street community would suffer without the influx of professionals that results from housing MSMS.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Vidrine Pierce, (ASCP) C,H

MSMS

From Bridget Pieschel <bpieschel@icloud.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 3:01 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

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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:

Thank you for allowing the Mississippi public to have input about the proposals from MUW and MSU and the future of MSMS. I have to admit I was taken aback when MUW was asked to defend its campus as the best home of MSMS, since the state high school for the gifted has been there since the late 80's. As a free standing institution with a prizewinning faculty, it has produced the best and brightest high school graduates in our state—in many cases, in the country. The only thing holding the school back from expansion has been a lack of state appropriations to cover increasing costs of salaries, food, supplies, maintenance, etc. More money is what MSMS needs, not a new location.

The MSU plan is detrimental to MSMS. First, MSMS would be a part of Starkville High School, not a free standing institution with its own faculty. Secondly, MSMS, which now has its own music and sports programs, would have to share these programs with SHC.

Finally, I am appalled at the idea that so much state tax money would be spent to build the school at MSU, when a third of that cost could upgrade every part of MSMS on the W campus.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion.

Sincerely,
Bridget Smith Pieschel

Sent from my iPhone

Opposition to Relocating MSMS to Starkville and Integrating with Regular High School

From irenepintado <irenepintado@pm.me>
Date Fri 2/28/2025 2:39 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.

I am writing to express my strong objection to the proposed relocation of the Mississippi School for Math and Science (MSMS) to Starkville and the plan to integrate it into a regular high school.

The unique mission and vision of MSMS have been to provide an advanced educational environment specifically tailored to gifted students. By making MSMS an appendage to a regular high school, we risk diluting its specialized programs and undermining the very purpose for which it was established. This change raises the question: why bother maintaining MSMS at all if it is to be merged with a traditional high school?

Moreover, the financial implications of this move cannot be ignored. The costs associated with relocating MSMS to Starkville are substantial, and it is evident that remaining in Columbus at the Mississippi University for Women would be a more cost-effective solution. This shift not only places a financial burden on taxpayers but may also compromise the quality of education provided to our students.

It is essential that the needs of MSMS students and the broader community are taken into account when making such significant decisions. The current MSU proposal does not reflect the best interests of those who benefit from MSMS's specialized curriculum and unique learning environment.

I urge you to reconsider this move and prioritize the continued excellence of MSMS as an independent institution dedicated to nurturing the talents of our brightest young minds.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,
Irene Pintado, Ph.D

Public Comment on MSMS Proposals

From Chanley E Rainey <cerainey@muw.edu>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 4:59 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

 1 attachment (124 KB)

MSMS Expansion Proposals_CR.pdf;

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Dear Dr. Donna Boone,

I have been greatly disappointed in the policy approach MDE has taken in exploring the future of MSMS. The schools were ambushed by the request for proposals, and the public was given barely a week to review the proposals and submit comments. I usually resist the cynicism that poisons so much of our politics and policymaking, but the actions of MDE, Representative Roberson, and others over the past year are very hard to square with democratic values. It certainly looks like the chairman of the House Education committee is using his power to get a favor from MDE in the form of a recommendation that legislators can use for cover as they take an unwise and unpopular vote to merge MSMS with the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District's proposed new high school on the state's tab.

Having read both the MSU and MUW proposals, however, I find myself—perhaps naively—optimistic that the right choice will be made despite the flawed process that has been followed. The MSU proposal is so terrible that I cannot see how anyone could, with a straight face, tell the people of Mississippi that they should spend \$85 million dollars to implement it. Even if it were the only proposal, MSU's plan is so vague and laden with jargon smokescreens, so focused on SOCS and opportunities for MSU Education and Continuing Education students, and so expensive that its chances of adoption would seem slim. When it is compared to The W's concrete, practical, proven, and less costly proposal, surely everyone will agree that relocation is the wrong path forward.

MSU's plan makes little effort to hide the centrality of SOCS to their vision. SOCS is mentioned 57 times in MSU's proposal, while MSMS/MSMS:E appears in the body of the proposal 83 times. Absurdly, the proposed 7-member planning team includes only one representative from MSMS—their executive director—while the SOCS Superintendent gets a seat and an additional designee. MSMS has seen tremendous success with shamefully inadequate resources, but apparently they don't know enough about what it takes to run their school to merit equal voice in planning a radical change in its operations. This isn't just insulting, it's patently unwise.

As someone currently mentoring an MSMS student, and having watched one of my daughter's best friends thrive at the school in the last two years, I sincerely hope that MDE will provide an honest recommendation to the legislature. The only recommendation that could be made in

good faith on the basis of these proposals is to finally fund MSMS at adequate levels and to leave it where it has been thriving despite neglect for the past thirty years, at The W.

Sincerely,

Chanley Rainey

Chanley E. Rainey
Director, Center for Women's Research & Public Policy
Faculty Fellow, Women's College
Associate Professor of Political Science
Department of History, Political Science, and Geography
Mississippi University for Women
1100 College Street, W-1634
Columbus, MS 39701
(662) 329-7173
cerainey@muw.edu
Pronouns: she/her

March 4, 2025

Dear Dr. Donna Boone,

I have been greatly disappointed in the policy approach MDE has taken in exploring the future of MSMS. The schools were ambushed by the request for proposals, and the public was given barely a week to review the proposals and submit comments. I usually resist the cynicism that poisons so much of our politics and policymaking, but the actions of MDE, Representative Roberson, and others over the past year are very hard to square with democratic values. It certainly looks like the chairman of the House Education committee is using his power to get a favor from MDE in the form of a recommendation that legislators can use for cover as they take an unwise and unpopular vote to merge MSMS with the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District's proposed new high school on the state's tab.

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Sincerely,

Chanley Rainey

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Chanley Rainey". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

MSMS Proposal Feedback

From Abby B. Ravichandran <abbybruce96@gmail.com>

Date Sat 3/1/2025 3:35 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. Donna Boone,

I am an alumna of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) and after reading both proposals in entirety, I strongly urge the Mississippi State Education Board (MSEB) to accept the proposal from the Mississippi University for Women (MUW) to continue housing and operating MSMS.

While MSMS is a school for academically gifted students, the value of education received there is more than rigor of the academics. The setting of MSMS within the MUW campus provides an integral part of that value.

With Mississippi being a very rural state, many (especially smaller) school districts do not have the resources to provide the types of courses that their academically gifted students want and need. MSMS fills this gap by selecting students from all over the state regardless of background to attend the school. The MSMS Foundation recently outlined that ~50% of the Class of 2024 received free or reduced lunch at their home schools and ~27% hope to be the first member of their family to graduate college. MUW, having partnered with MSMS for its entire 37 year existence, understands that the needs of this unique student body include more than just access to more dual-credit classes and research opportunities.

My greatest fear of a potential transition of MSMS from MUW to MSU is that in a pursuit of academic excellence, the mission of uplifting students from rural communities will fall by the wayside as the selection criteria for students begins to shift away from those with potential with little opportunities, to only those who have already proven the ability to succeed in the environment of a large, four-year, SEC-football school through academic summer camps and/or pedigree.

The smaller town feel of Columbus and the preexisting gated campus structure of MUW provides security and comfort to students and parents alike. Students can focus on adjusting to the amplified course load, rather than stressing over the logistics of catching a bus to another part of campus. Everything is conveniently located within a five minute walk, and shuttle buses are provided for running errands (like Walmart) on the weekend. Parents do not have to worry about where their children (still minors) might be. The MUW campus provides the perfect space for students to acclimate to a more rigorous educational environment, setting them up for future undergraduate success, while also offering advanced coursework.

Additionally, to incorporate MSMS students into the same space and extracurriculars as a non-residential public high school (Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District) as outlined in the MSU proposal feels like a step in the wrong direction. My parents still quote my older sister telling them in her first days at MSMS, "I've found my people." I felt much the same when I attended. Being in a school where all of the other students not only wanted to be there, but also wanted to learn, made me feel like less of an outlier and allowed me to grow into a more confident version of myself.

One example of this is my involvement in the MSMS soccer team. At my home school, I was not athletic and never would have passed try-outs for the varsity or jv soccer teams. However, at MSMS, with the "anyone can join" attitude of the sports teams, I learned how to play soccer, which I still do to this day in an adult recreational league, and gained an understanding and appreciation for physical wellness that I was not previously receiving. While it might sound good on paper, combining extracurriculars does not necessarily equate to increased opportunities for students when the resources are already saturated.

I do hope that the MSEB will accept MUW's proposal to continue housing and operating MSMS and work with the state legislature to acquire the funding needed for upgrading the facilities.

Abby Bruce Ravichandran
MSMS Class of 2014

Attn.: Donna Boone_MSMS Should Remain at MUW

From Emma Richardson <emmagbrichardson@gmail.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 1:01 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Ms Boone:

I urge you to add your voice in persuading State Board members of the Mississippi Department of Education to vote to keep the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science on the campus of Mississippi University for Women.

I was fortunate—blessed—to teach at MSMS as an inaugural faculty member beginning in 1988, and at the time of my retirement in 2019 (after a total career of forty-five years of teaching), I was the longest-serving faculty member of MSMS. I have known MSMS “since the Creation,” as both a faculty member and as the parent of two alumni.

Mississippi University for Women is where MSMS needs to stay. In separate emails to Board members two weeks ago, I detailed the many reasons for its staying; now having read the two RFPs, I am even more convinced that MUW is the place for MSMS.

Aligning MSMS with Starkville High School--with any other high school--would work to the detriment of the vision that has been the reality of MSMS since its inception. A hallmark of the MSMS experience is the continuing establishment of a *community of learners* comprising students selected exclusively for learning at MSMS with teachers hired exclusively for teaching MSMS students. That experience has resulted in the incredible successes of MSMS students since 1988; students learn *with* and *from* each other--in the classrooms and residence halls--in an environment of trust, one wherein they take academic risks without fear of being derided or marginalized.

Additionally, the thoughtful, granular *specificity* in the RFP from MUW contrasts vividly with the "ad-speak" tone of the RFP from MSU, which invites readers to *imagine* a lot (count the uses of "imagine"), but is scant on specifics. I'm concerned that the RFP from MSU incorrectly names MSMS (first sentence, third line); furthermore, that RFP does not give this reader confidence in the care the institution would take with details of student care: In the sentence, "The new SOCSO high school and MSMS:E located at the front door to MSU's campus will be transformational as one of its central design tenants is to be highly visible from the connecting transportation infrastructure and the MSU campus," I believe "tenants" should be "tenets," but even with that change, I cannot parse the meaning of the sentence.

What a wonderful school is MSMS! I urge you to add your voice to ensure that it stays on the MUW campus and that its funding be heartily increased by the Mississippi Legislature.

Sincerely,

Emma G. B. Richardson

624 Third Avenue South

Columbus, Mississippi 39701

662-574-9635

RFP for MSMS response

From Hillary Hamblen Richardson <hamblha@gmail.com>

Date Thu 2/27/2025 4:12 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone,

Thank you for inviting the public to comment on the RFP proposals for MSMS's future. After reading the introduction to the MSU proposal, the emphasis in workforce development lacks the spirit of a true gifted education. While MSMS students deserve these opportunities, they are also extremely well-rounded in every academic aspect at MUW, declaring majors from film production to Mechanical Engineering to English Education, which is why they top the National Merit finalist lists and scholarship awards every year, and continue to be successful no matter what they major is. By absorbing MSMS(Extension) into the SOCSD, they would lose what makes them shine and water down the intended experience for these students.

Here are my additional comments:

-MUW shares its resources with MSMS. Moving MSMS to Starkville, according to the MSU proposal, would create shared facilities with the partnership middle school. That seems like a downgrade, rather than an upgrade. Although MSMS would theoretically have access to college resources, a 2-mile public bus ride separates them from these.

- MDE should fund MSMS' funding requests for new buildings on MUW's campus, after 37 years of not doing so. They deserve new facilities, and MUW has offered the space for them in the center of campus. The potential here is great, and provides a safer, more intimate learning environment than an off-campus facility shared with MSU's partnership middle school. MDE could make MSMS greater than it already is.

- The call for RFPs and the process itself heavily favored MSU, which is unfair and hints at some political, closed-door conversations that do not take into account what's best for MSMS students. The MSU proposal makes it sound like this would be just another Starkville school (when it in fact isn't even a Columbus school - it's outside of the local districts' administration, as you know).

- It would be fiscally irresponsible to create new facilities and infrastructures to the tune of \$85 million in Starkville when there are buildings and structures already in place and ready to be improved for \$50 million. It makes more sense to spend fewer dollars on MUW's campus and continue the legacy of MSMS' excellence, rather than spending more money and weakening the whole academic experience.

Thank you again for reading and considering these comments.

Hillary Richardson

MSMS Proposals

From Thomas Richardson <richardsontb@gmail.com>

Date Fri 2/28/2025 4:06 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone,

I'm providing my comments today about the MSMS proposals in four equally important capacities: as an MSMS faculty member, as an MSMS alumnus, as a Columbus/Lowndes County taxpayer, and as the parent of a gifted child who dreams of attending MSMS. In every single one of these contexts, I find the MUW document far superior to MSU's.

My first observation about the proposals is about how they are packaged or presented. Mississippi State's document is certainly glossier—complete with color pictures—but it leaves much to be desired in substance. In fact, in several bullet points that require plans, MSU punts, or, at the very least, speaks vaguely of concepts of plans developing some time down the road. MUW's document, on the other hand, lacks that visual pizzazz but addresses each required item with much greater depth and with understanding of what works for our school. If these were submitted to me in an English class, the W's would receive the higher grade every single time. Honestly, this visual symbol of substance over style captures well MSMS's own success, which is in succeeding in all levels of a child's education (from STEM to the arts to personal growth and development) without showy toys. We value depth of learning and expression, and we do not value gimmicks.

Secondly, the most egregious issue with the content of the MSU proposal is that it yokes MSMS into a relationship with the Starkville-Oktibbeha school district. This is unacceptable—full-stop. In addition to the wishy-washy education that will result from taking MSMS out of its full immersive experience, I'd argue that new projects for the Starkville schools are *primarily the responsibility of their district*, and that *funding for MSMS rests in the hands of the state*. It's a dangerous precedent to put those models together. MSMS thrives because of our independence: MSMS faculty teaching MSMS students within a close-knit college community. Additionally, as someone who pays taxes into a different local school district, I'm offended that *one local district* would benefit from the MSU proposal. To be frank, MSU/SOCSD playing this game is conquistador behavior. The Lowndes County School District, in contrast, has never tried to attach themselves to or overtake our operations in such ways, and, as it turns out, they've still achieved a district rating of "A" completely on their own. Perhaps Starkville should be looking at their model.

The location of our buildings in the MSU proposal also causes confusion. On the one hand, it makes sense, for security reasons, that students would be far away from the center of a large university's campus. It is, in fact, terrifying to imagine our MSMS students in the midst of a campus that has

returned such disturbing numbers in the Clery reporting. (This is not necessarily MSU's fault; any large university would have similar reporting.) However, not being in the middle of a college campus erodes one of our most important features. Our students get great use out of the MUW library, the cafeteria, the gym, health center, etc.—all of which are a short jaunt from the main academic building. Our students are at the heart of one campus right now (and would be in the future at MUW), but would be afterthoughts on the other. In other words, our students have enjoyed for almost four decades a liminal space between K-12 and IHL, and the MSU plan pushes us back toward the K-12 model, even in the "geography" of the plan.

I would also like to remind MDE and the State Board that many of MSMS's greatest successes have come from pursuits in the humanities and arts, and MUW appears to be the best place to continue those projects as we grow in other ways in STEM (with great partnerships coming down the line from multiple universities, including MSU!, if we follow the W model). I don't need to tell you about the school's public history projects (Tales from the Crypt, MoreStory, Eighth of May, etc.) that are intimately connected to the Columbus community, and which have brought great notoriety and inspired similar projects nationwide. What not everyone knows, though, is that we have for 35+ years had an incredibly successful creative writing program. Our literary magazine receives superior ratings at contests; our students win copious regional and national Scholastic Writing Awards (93 regional awards this year), the oldest and most prestigious awards in the field for high schoolers; and just a couple of months ago, MSMS senior Savannah Massey was named the only Mississippi recipient of the prestigious YoungArts Award with Distinction. Again, much of this is possible because of our tight connection with MUW, which has a remarkable literary history itself. Our students attend the Eudora Welty Writers' Symposium and many more campus book talks that are part of being in the middle of such a campus. Additionally, I share strategies with professors in the MUW Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing, and those teachers regularly workshop with our students in my classes. This is an MFA program, by the way, that last year was rated tenth in the country, ahead of typical giants in the field, and just behind some universities like Harvard and Notre Dame. Our students are also beneficiaries of many partnerships with Friendly City Books, a store/publisher with a nonprofit wing, founded by an MSMS grad who moved back here from D.C. because she believes in *this* community.

I have so many more things I could say about the proposals, but I know you are probably bombarded with commentary—which is good, of course, since it shows interest in our school. I'll therefore leave it at this: *Facilities are the main issue in this entire conversation. The Occam's Razor approach would say we should ask the legislature for money for new and renovated buildings on MUW's campus so that we can continue the success we've already proven AND grow in ways that give our students a true immersive experience in the heart of a college campus.*

Sincerely,
Thomas B. Richardson
English Teacher, MSMS
MSMS Class of 2004

Proposals for MSMS partnership

From Thomas Richardson <trichardson425@gmail.com>
Date Tue 3/4/2025 11:53 AM
To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment on the proposals from Mississippi University for Women and Mississippi State University for a partnership with the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science. I have read both proposals carefully, and I encourage you to continue MUW's partnership with MSMS and to fund the necessary renovations and/or new construction that will enhance MSMS's operations.

MUW faculty were instrumental in establishing MSMS, and they have been a partner in the outstanding achievements of the students, faculty, and staff of the school for its entire existence. MUW has also invested heavily in the school through millions of dollars in tuition waivers for the students and in heavily discounted costs for services provided to the school. For example, the figure that MSMS contributes only 69 cents per square foot towards maintenance of its dedicated space is staggering!

The plan from MUW is specific and detailed and makes a strong case for the suitability of the MUW campus for MSMS's academic and community mission, for the convenience for the students, and for the operational support of the school. The expanded academic opportunities for MSMS are exciting, especially the new research, mentorship, and course offerings with the University of Mississippi, Jackson State University, and the University of Southern Mississippi, and the possibility of a joint honors program between MUW and MSMS. MUW has demonstrated its commitment to the success of MSMS for thirty-seven years. MUW has also provided a choice of spaces on campus for new builds, as well as options for renovating facilities in the center of campus for MSMS use. Either way, the costs will be less for construction and renovation at MUW than in the MSU plan.

The proposal from MSU lacks any substantive details for establishing and implementing a plan for MSMS; instead, MSU offers a proposal that represents State Representative Rob Roberson's vision for enhancing Starkville High School by building a new high school on the pretense of serving MSMS. MSU's proposal will rob MSMS of its unique identity and undermine its long-term viability and efforts to expand.

I am the parent of two MSMS graduates. I also served for several years as a member of the MSMS Foundation Board. I am well aware of efforts by MUW administration to work with MSMS administrators, especially during the tenures of Dr. McConnell and Dr. Cook, to upgrade facilities. Dr. McConnell had plans for renovating residence halls and renovating and expanding academic facilities, most of which were dismissed by Dr. Cook. Dr. Cook early in his short tenure was offered space on the MUW campus for building new facilities. Current MSMS leadership has been involved in developing a new Master Plan for MUW, to include new facilities for MSMS. I am sorry that multiple sources have suggested that MUW is to blame for funding matters for which the State Board of Education and the Legislature are responsible.

Representative Roberson in a recent interview used the term "no-brainer" in reference to the need to support MSMS. I would suggest, after reading the two proposals, that it is also a "no-brainer" that MUW and MSMS should continue their partnership on the MUW campus—with appropriate State funding support for facilities and operations.

Thank you,

Tom Richardson
Columbus, MS

comments on the MUW/MSU proposals for MSMS

From Beth Roach <westba8@gmail.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 11:05 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone,

I graduated from MSMS in 1997. I am also a veteran Mississippi public school educator, having taught in Jackson Public Schools from 2008-2023.

I support the continuation of MSMS in partnership with MUW for the following reasons.

1. In general, both proposals offer many of the same benefits to MSMS - dual credit enrollment, food services, access to health and wellness services, facilities maintenance, human resources services, etc. However, the proposal from MUW best allows MSMS to retain its unique identity as an independent residential high school for developing the math and science competencies of the gifted and talented students of the state. The MUW proposal outlines the benefits MSMS gains from location on their campus while also supporting their continued operation as a distinct high school campus. The MSU proposal blurs the lines between students enrolled in MSMS and SOCS. One particularly concerning statement from the MSU proposal indicates "SOCS students could take an advanced academic course at MSMS:E" (MSU pg. 2). MSMS has a rigorous application and interview process. Why would an SOCS student need to or be allowed to take a course at a program to which he/she had not applied? MSMS should not be moved to MSU to become an extension of SOCS.

2. As the MUW proposal indicates, MSMS derives significant financial benefit from the university's facilities and infrastructure for very low cost. For 37 years MUW has provided extensive services to MSMS with very little financial return. The problem is not with MUW, but is instead with consistent underfunding of MSMS itself.

3. One of the significant benefits of my MSMS student experience was being with a significant population of like-minded peers. Like-minded in the context of belonging to a peer group who thrived on academic challenges around math and science. I do not find relevant the claims from the MSU proposal indicating opportunities for MSMS students to "experience extracurricular activities with SOCS, and build relationships and comradery with SOCS students and faculty." (MSU pg. 2) When students enter MSMS as 11th graders, everyone is new and students all get to engage in building the community that they learn and live with for two years. The overlaps with SOCS named in the MSU proposal would require MSMS students to integrate with an existing school community two years into their high school experience. Students enrolling in MSMS are looking for something different than

what is offered by the traditional high school experience. The extracurricular activities offered at a traditional high school are not necessarily what the MSMS student is seeking.

4. As a parent, I can add that locating MSMS in Starkville will likely give families pause about moving their 16 and 17 year old children to the proximity of MSU. Students are not confined to MSMS facilities in their evening and weekend hours, nor should they be. However, the MSU campus definitely provides increased access to situations and experiences for students who are not under close parental supervision. When I was a student at MSMS we were expressly forbidden to visit Starkville for these very reasons. In addition, the costs associated with SEC campus culture may be prohibitive for some families. For example, the cost and availability of hotel rooms during football season could pose a problem for MSMS families.

I strongly encourage you to choose the option allowing MSMS to thrive as an independent program while upholding its mission, purpose, and goals. Don't pass this amazing program and special place off to the highest bidder. Instead fight for the financial support MSMS and its students need to continue at MUW.

Sincerely,
Beth West Roach
MSMS, Class of 1997

MSMS

From C. Amaris Robinson <caryn.amaris.robinson@gmail.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 8:12 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Please leave MSMS at MUW. I have read both proposals, and it makes no sense economically to move the school to Starkville. It is also not in the best interest of the students at MSMS. For years the campus of MUW has provided a safe, comfortable, welcoming environment for these highly gifted students. They already have a wonderful facility that just needs a little updating. It does not make sense to spend more money on a new facility when one exists already that is perfectly for the job!

The proposal to relocate MSMS feels more like a punitive action against MUW and Columbus than a decision made in the best interest of the state and the students.

I am a longtime resident of Columbus as well as a local business owner, and I am a graduate of MUW. I was always proud to have the MSMS students on our campus. We were able to coexist in our own little separate worlds without any problems. I believe this action will not only be harmful to Columbus, it will further harm the W at a time when it needs more support, not less.

Starkville and Mississippi State University are doing just fine. They don't need MSMS! Please leave this wonderful school for our gifted students right where it is in the heart of the Friendly City!

Thank you very much for your time.

C. Amaris Robinson, MUW Class of 1999
Co-Owner | Executive Leadership Team | Culture Guardian
Burford Electric Service, Inc.
662-251-4864
662-328-5679

Comments on MSMS Location Proposals

From Jennifer Rogers <jdrogersms@gmail.com>
Date Tue 3/4/2025 9:48 AM
To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>
Cc Jennifer Rogers <jrogers@ihl.state.ms.us>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the MSMS location proposals submitted by the Mississippi University for Women (MUW) and Mississippi State University (MSU).

I am a native Mississippian, 1997 graduate of MSMS, and the current Director of the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid, an office of the Institutions of Higher Learning. I respectfully submit these comments as a product of MSMS, a Mississippi taxpayer, and an advocate for education in Mississippi.

Prior to reading the proposals, I was mostly certain of my conviction that MSMS should remain in Columbus on the MUW campus. After reading the proposals, I am absolute in my conviction that the school should remain where it is.

Why fix what isn't broken? MSMS has a long history of providing academic excellence from its current location in Columbus, MS. It is routinely named one of the top 10 academic high schools, not just in Mississippi or the South, but in the nation. And while its focus has always been on STEM fields, the school has provided rich experiences in the arts, culture, and history as well. The school's location in Columbus allows students access to experiential learning opportunities about the beautiful, tragic, and rich history of Mississippi and the American South through the annual Pilgrimage and Tales from the Crypt. The MSU proposal focused almost entirely on STEM education and opportunities, but I believe high school students need the academic balance that MSMS has been able to provide in Columbus. Also, high school should be high school, so if you are moving MSMS to a larger college in order to provide more "college-level" experiences, then college ultimately becomes less meaningful as well. No one can honestly argue that the academic opportunities provided to MSMS students are in any way failing, lacking, or in need of improvement. That aspect of the school is in no way broken and in need of fixing.

What is not working in the current location is infrastructure. The school is desperately in need of facilities' upgrades. I am likely an outlier in my thoughts on this (and current and future students may cringe), but I do not believe that high school students need brand new dorms built with top-of-the-line amenities. They need safe, clean, mold-free dorms with working heat and air and up-to-code plumbing. I actually have many fond memories of shared hall bathrooms, dorm duty, and room inspections. And my MSMS roommate remains one of my dearest friends after nearly thirty years! The

dorm situation at MUW must be addressed, but ultra-modern new dorms are not required. But to continue to offer cutting edge academic experiences in the STEM fields, MSMS needs a continuous and stable funding stream for labs and academic technology. As noted in the MUW proposal, even with a brand new dorm, this can be achieved at a cost of \$35-60 million. Such an infusion of cash would not be required had the school been properly funded on an annual basis.

Alternatively, MSU proposes spending \$85 million in state funds to build all new facilities, which would be partly shared with Starkville High School students. As a Hinds County taxpayer, I do not support the use of my tax dollars to prop up another county's school system or the unnecessary waste of building all new facilities, when MSMS students can currently access all of the MUW facilities (cafeteria, library, gym, labs, etc.). The MSU plan would also require an additional \$87 million in bonds from Oktibbeha County, which I'm sure not all county residents support. On that note, I do not support the integration of MSMS into the Starkville Oktibbeha County Consolidated School District! I also find it offensive that the state would consider taking an asset from one community and giving it to another. MSMS is an integral and vital part of the MUW and Columbus communities. It would just be an afterthought in Starkville.

My next comments stem from my thoughts on the integration of MSMS in the MUW and Columbus communities. Based on the map provided by MSU for the proposed location of MSMS, the school would be separated from the main campus. Students would be unable to walk the campus, walk to town, or truly engage in the larger Starkville community. Current MSMS students can do those things on the MUW campus and in Columbus. Many students at MSMS come from underprivileged backgrounds and may not have a car that would be necessary to get around Starkville.

Finally, I worry for the safety and focus of high school students in Starkville. In my opinion, 16 and 17-year-olds have no business being away from their parents and adjacent to a huge college campus. I was one of those kids who excelled in the classroom, but I also got into every bit of trouble I could find. Luckily (or blessedly), there was only so much to get up to in Columbus and on the MUW campus. I can only imagine the trouble I would have found in Starkville – and it probably would have resulted in me getting sent home. That would have changed my whole future. MSMS was one of the single most transformational experiences of my life. Yes, that had to do with what I learned in the classroom, but it had even more to do with what I learned outside of the classroom from my classmates. I learned to respect and love people who look and believe very differently from me in part because of the relative isolation of the school and small-town nature of Columbus. There would be so many distractions on a big campus that much of that would get lost. Plus, I imagine safety for 300+ minors would be harder to manage in Starkville than Columbus.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly support leaving MSMS where it is as a vital and integral part of the MUW and Columbus communities, while investing adequately in rehabbing the facilities.

Thank you again for your consideration of these comments.

Jennifer Dockstader Rogers
MSMS Class of 1997
(601) 750-6762
jdrogersms@gmail.com

MSMS comments

From Robert Scott <scottrobert1997@gmail.com>

Date Wed 2/26/2025 6:04 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,

I am strongly opposed to Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science relocating to Starkville/Mississippi State. I believe it is a waste of taxpayer money to build an entirely new facility, and instead that money should be spent improving the existing facilities on Mississippi University for Women's campus. MUW is the perfect home for the school and has done well keeping MSMS going despite inadequate funding.

Sincerely,
Robert Scott

FOR: Dr. Donna Boone - Chief Academic Officer

From josie shumake <jsshumake@hotmail.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 2:34 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,

My father served in the Mississippi House of Representatives for several terms, and one of his proudest achievements was helping shepherd to completion the bill that created MSMS and housed it on the MUW campus in Columbus. It was true then, and it continues to be true that the best place for the school remains right where it is located now.

These students are phenomenally gifted, but they are still young high school students living away from home. MUW offers a controlled (but not heavy-handed) environment for their maturation. Just this morning, I was talking to one of our public school librarians. Her daughter graduated last year and transitioned smoothly to classes and life at the University of Mississippi. Both credit MSMS with that success. But her mother also added that had MSMS been located at MSU/Starkville her daughter would not have been allowed to go. She is not the only parent who has raised this important issue. There are serious concerns about a student population of 23,000 and the accompanying university lifestyle so close to the proposed MSMS-E location.

MUW's small, compact campus and the walkable downtown Columbus remain the perfect match for students at MSMS. The W administration, faculty, staff and students are supportive of the MSMS students' activities and academic growth. Additionally, they reinforce what the MSMS administration and faculty are doing. This environment enables the MSMS students to thrive and grow together – forming tight cohorts that remain mutually supportive through and beyond their time at MSMS. Local Columbus citizens also play a part in taking care of “our kids” by attending their activities, inviting them to local worship services, and involving them in our city events.

The MSMS identity that these carefully curated bonds establish would disintegrate in an environment that sees MSMS become just another part of an SOCS D Partnership High School.

The students deserve an opportunity for continued excellence, and the best place to make sure that happens is on the campus of MUW.

Sincerely,

Josie S. Shumake

Columbus, MS

FOR: Chief Academic Officer - Dr. Donna Boone

From josie shumake <jsshumake@hotmail.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 4:52 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

 1 attachment (1 MB)

img171.jpg;

External Email

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One final thought before 5:00 p.m. The concluding paragraph of MSU's proposal clearly reveals that the real purpose is to fund, with the money from state taxpayers, a new facility for SOCSO. This partnership will not "be a model for others in the state" -- unless, of course, other public school districts can tap into state funding (instead of bond issues) to build new facilities and create other versions of MSMS.

The MSMS student newspaper sees the root issue; I hope MDE will take that into consideration, as well.

Many thanks,
Josie Shumake
Columbus, MS



MSMS future

From Slim Smith <ssmith@cdispatch.com>

Date Sun 3/2/2025 7:14 AM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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It's more than obvious tht Mississippi State's RFP consists entirely of a scenrio where MSMS and a new Starkville High School are intrinsically linked. The plan opens a new revenue stream for Starkville Schools for construction of a new high school funded by taxpayer throughout the state, which is quite p illegal. It's obvious that the real beneficiary of such as move is Starkville Schools not MSMS, which has succeeded beyond reason in its 38 years on the MUW campus. Stay out of court. MSMS at MUW.

--

Slim Smith

The Dispatch

Cell: 662-609-4686

MUW/MSU MSMS Proposals

From Andy Snyder <asnyder0096@gmail.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 4:30 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone,

I am reaching out regarding the MUW/MSU MSMS proposals. I would like to start off by saying I am a Faculty Member at MSMS. I am currently in my 7th year at MSMS, for 6 years before I was a faculty member of MUW.

Having read both proposals, as well as my experience with MSMS, I feel the move to MSU would be a disservice to the students. There are many factors that move me to feel this way. I will address each.

Community - MSMS has a very strong community. I believe the idea of merging spaces with another school would destroy this community. Many students leave their previous schools because they do not feel accepted or safe, and thrive for a welcoming community. The idea of having nearly 1000+ more students in shared spaces would discourage a large number of students from even applying.

Academics - Yes, MSMS desperately needs a new academic building. I firmly believe this building needs to be on the MUW campus. Again, the idea of merging with another institution would completely undermine the founding ideas and principles of MSMS.

Safety - I feel the smaller MUW campus is a much safer environment for the students. The short distance from the dorms to the academic building, or the cafeteria is a great advantage for the students. I am aware that the MSU proposal has academics and dorms close to each other, but with the multitude of students not part of MSMS on the campus I feel it is an opening for bullying.

MUW is also a very short walking distance to downtown Columbus where students are able to socialize and take advantage of Downtown Columbus. If the move to MSU happens I see this type of opportunity taken away from students.

I also fear that students having access to the MSU campus while checked out of the dorms for free time could lead to some potentially bad things.

Overall I feel moving the school to MSU is a poor thought. It would completely destroy what MSMS is and what it has been for over three decades.

Thank you,

Andy Snyder

Feedback regarding proposed relocation of MSMS

From Sylvia Starr <starrsg@aol.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 6:13 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>; rroberson@house.ms.gov
<rroberson@house.ms.gov>

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.

Greetings Dr. Boone and Rep. Roberson,

Thank you for allowing public feedback regarding the proposed relocation of MSMS from Columbus to Starkville.

I am writing to you on behalf of the students and families of MSMS, the staff and of MSMS, taxpayers of Lowndes county, and as a loyal daughter of MUW.

The proposed move is not in the best interest of the academically advanced students that attend MSMS from all over the Magnolia state.

These students are talented and thrive in a smaller environment and do not risk bullying on the MUW campus. MSMS has produced 13 National Merit Scholars

MSMS students have access to all the resources on the W campus and are in a supportive, gated and very secure campus.

Consolidating MSMS students with the Oktibbeha Consoliated School District will lead to their loss of autonomy.

The W offers 41 dual credit courses to MSMS students, all tuition free

MSMS students are no more than a 5 minute walk to classrooms, dining hall, health center, recreation center, residences, and the campus police

Providing state funding of 20 million would allow updates and upgrades at one third of the proposed 85 million relocation.

If there is rising political pressure to make this relocation, then why weren't other universities allowed in the RFP process?

Education is greater than politics. The taxpayers of MS overall are not in agreement with spending 85 million to make Oktibbeha county and Mississippi State look good.

MUW is proud to house and support MSMS, but it is time to provide these kids the proper funding they deserve.

Please do not relocate the MSMS students. Leave them in Columbus at MUW.

Sylvia Starr

starrsg@aol.com