
Mississippi School for Mathematics & Science Should NOT Be Moved

From Debbie Swartz <dkswartz5253@gmail.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 3:10 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dr. Boone:

As the Chief Academic Officer of the Mississippi Department of Education, I am sure you want what is best for every student in our state.

What is best for our most academically gifted students (MSMS) is to remain on the small and nurturing campus at Mississippi University for Women (MUW) where it has been since its inception 38 years ago.

MUW and Columbus have been an excellent fit. The small, safe, enclosed campus of MUW is the perfect location for 16 and 17-year-old students who have never lived away from home. They can be independent while learning to navigate a small college campus. MUW has an excellent police department on duty 24 hours a day. The enrollment at both MUW and MSMS is small enough for police officers to get to know many MSMS students. I heard a parent of a Mississippi State student explain that her 19-year-old son would not be able to tell the difference between a 19-year-old girl (college student) and a 16-year-old girl (MSMS student). Just think about the problems this scenario could cause for the students involved and Mississippi State. Please review the Cleary Report for MUW and MSMS and you will conclude that MUW is the safest campus for high school students.

The rich history of Columbus has provided opportunities for MSMS students with programs such as the nationally recognized Tales from the Crypt and the Eight of May Emancipation Celebration. Both programs were started by MSMS students and faculty.

The argument that MSMS students would be given more research opportunities at MSU is incorrect. I worked for 12 years as Assistant Director for Outreach at MSMS, and part of my responsibilities was to help place MSMS students in research opportunities at MSU. Every semester we only had a handful of students who elected to take part in this opportunity.

Also, Columbus has several downtown churches within walking distance of MUW, and many MSMS students attend these churches along with their families when they are in town. However, there are no churches within walking distance of the MSU campus.

If MDE wants MSMS to increase enrollment, it should lobby the legislature to appropriate funds for MSMS to grow on the MUW campus. It should not try to reinvent the wheel by moving MSMS to MSU while simultaneously favoring one public school (Starkville) over all public schools in the state.

Please consider dropping the plan to move The Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science from its present location. Thank you.

Comments on Mississippi School for Math and Science

From ANNE SWEARINGEN <wgrad73@comcast.net>

Date Fri 2/28/2025 9:21 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

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Dr. Donna Boone
Chief Academic Officer
Mississippi Department of Education

Dear Dr. Boone:

I am writing today to share my thoughts about the future of the Mississippi School for Math and Science.

Mississippi should be very proud to have had MSMS available to its best and brightest since 1987. The decision to house MSMS at MUW in Columbus was a wise one.

MUW and the city of Columbus offer a location that is just the right size and scope for high school-age students. MUW has proved in its long relationship with MSMS its commitment to excellence in education and research, including 41 dual-credit opportunities -- all tuition free. Indeed, the proof is clear: national recognition, 13 National Merit Scholarship recipients, and a superior faculty for Mississippi's top students.

MSMS's home is at MUW. Consolidating it with the Oktibbeha School District will dilute its mission, and cause it to lose the autonomy and attributes that make it unique. Additionally, the current supportive environment offers talented high schoolers the ability to thrive both academically and personally, growing up among people who care about and support them.

MSMS students are always no more than five minutes by foot from their classrooms, the library, dining hall, health and recreation centers, residences and classes, and the campus police. They have access to six advanced science labs, opportunities for research with university faculty, facilitated partnerships with other IHL system research institutions, full access to the MUW library, extensive academic resources, and full use of any facility on the campus.

The top three career fields chosen by MSMS alumni who remain in the state are education, medical and business -- not surprisingly, all areas in which MUW excels and retains a high number of graduates in the state.

MSMS students are able to further their education at MUW through the Power of Six Scholarship, the first of its kind to be offered to MSMS students. The full-tuition academic scholarship is inspired by six of MSMS's 12 inaugural faculty who were MUW graduates.

I understand that a proposal to retain MSMS at MUW and one to move it to MSU have been submitted. I also understand the request for proposals required a very fast turnaround and now requests for public comment are given an equally short time frame. One has to wonder why, after 38 years as a part of MUW, there is now an apparent rush to turn an educational opportunity for gifted young people upside down.

The most cost-effective and responsible choice for MSMS and for Mississippi taxpayers is to invest in MUW's existing infrastructure. MUW has the experience, academic support, research and right-sized facilities for MSMS. With proper and long-delayed state investment, renovations of existing halls and construction of potential new residential facilities can be realized. MUW has identified two locations where a new 400-bed residential facility can be built for an estimated \$35 million. It is estimated that \$25 million would renovate and update MUW campus buildings (including Hooper Science Building, Shackelford and Mary Wilson) and add a robotics lab.

Instead of the \$85 million that MSU proposed investing in facilities, investment in MUW is estimated at \$60 million, a savings of \$15 million for Mississippi taxpayers. MUW has long served as MSMS's fiscal agent, handling administrative and financial services. State funding, however, has not kept pace with costs.

Relocating MSMS is unnecessary and would be costly to taxpayers. It is unfortunate that political pressure is behind the idea to move MSMS to Starkville. MUW is deeply committed to its successful and longstanding partnership with MSMS.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on this issue of importance to people within Mississippi and its neighboring states and to all who value excellence in education at any level. MUW, although smaller than some institutions in the state, has for 38 years made a huge impact on the lives of MSMS students. This track record of success must be allowed to continue.

Sincerely,

Anne L. Swearingen, B.S., M.A.

MSMS Expansion

From Susan Terrell <msmterrell3@gmail.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 2:51 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone ,

I am somewhat bewildered why the push to move the MSMS program from the W to Mississippi State. It is unreasonable to spend 85 million dollars to relocate an already successful program. The W has obviously found a winning solution having produced 13 National Merit Scholarship winners and a top notch high school.

Tax dollars would be better spent improving the successful program in place, not to mention the millions to tax dollars that would be saved.

A Concerned Citizen

MSMS

From Amy Thompson <dramy@thompsondentistry.com>
Date Thu 2/27/2025 1:31 PM
To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone,

My name is Amy Thompson. I graduated from MSMS in 1991. MSMS was a huge blessing for me. I came from Calhoun City where I did not have many options for academic growth. I went on to Mississippi State where I was blessed to receive the Schiling Scholarship. I know that MSMS was a large part of this. I am currently a dentist living in Huntsville, AL.

I have read the proposals from MUW and MSU and while I do love MSU and see some advantages to moving the campus there, I feel strongly that it should stay at MUW. I did not like that Starkville High school would share a campus with MSMS. I also think that the relative isolation of MUW is a good thing. 16 year olds do not need to be thrown into a college campus like MSU. There would be too many opportunities to get into trouble. I think MUW is a perfect place for MSMS, we just need to update the facilities. As you know in Alabama we have 3 magnet schools, the most recent being the Alabama School for Cyber Technology and Engineering here in Huntsville. The facilities for this school are amazing. I would love to see Mississippi step up and provide MSMS with the facilities that these kids deserve.

Thank you,
Amy Thompson

Feedback on MSMS Proposals

From Katie Thompson <ktmarietho@gmail.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 4:44 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Donna Boone,

Thank you for taking the time to read my response regarding the future of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS).

As an MSMS alumni (Class of 2015), I believe the best option for its future is to stay on the Mississippi University for Women's (MUW) campus. Before and while I attended MSMS, the State Board of Education knew of the problems related to facility conditions, and talks of funding were an issue even while I was there preparing to graduate.

Despite the lack of adequate funding from the State Board of Education, my class (2015) and the class before me (2014) have prospered, attended prestigious universities, and landed reputable careers. I, along with other classmates, am grateful for and have benefited from MUW's partnership and MSU's current research partnerships with MSMS, so I do not believe that moving MSMS's campus to MSU's campus would offer much change.

MSMS has a rich history on MUW's campus, dating from the creation of MSMS. Moving MSMS to MSU could disrupt traditions like "Tales from the Crypt" and memories for alumni during alumni weekend. MSU, in its proposal, does state that it will offer more research opportunities. However, as stated before, this already occurs through a research and mentorship program between MSMS and MSU. Students who have participated in this program would either take a bus offered by MSMS or would drive to MSU's campus. Of course, I am aware that not all students have vehicles to drive to campus, but as stated before, MSMS will drive the students to MSU's campus if needed. This example shows more of a funding issue than a location issue regarding getting more or better busses for students who do not have cars. Also, MSU mentioned that they plan to partner with their MSMS campus and Starkville High School (SHS) if MSMS is to be relocated there. That is awesome because all students deserve top-quality educational opportunities. However, this will create an unfair advantage for SHS students compared to other Mississippi high schools with academically gifted students. Plus, with the potential increase in class size, if MSMS relocates to MSU, it would yield more financial issues because there will be a need for more MSMS quality faculty and staff for the potential increase in class sizes.

Yes, MSU can offer more research opportunities and new buildings, but that is not what makes MSMS a top High School. I have recently looked at the MSMS's course catalog. While still on MUW's campus, the academic opportunities have tremendously increased since I last attended MSMS due to the

phenomenal MSMS faculty and staff who have advocated and dedicated their time to make this possible. What makes MSMS one of the best High Schools to attend in this nation are the academically curious students and, most importantly, the academically well-equipped, trained, passionate, and dedicated faculty and staff. I believe that MSMS will and will always prosper while on MUW's campus. The only obvious issue is the inadequate funding from the State Board of Education for building renovations.

Thank you for your time, and have a wonderful day,
Katie Thompson

MSMS proposals

From Jeff Turnage <jeff.j.turnage@gmail.com>

Date Fri 2/28/2025 8:46 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.

My name is Jeff Turnage. I am from Columbus and have been a contributor to the MSMS Foundation for years. Why? Because the school is one of the best things this state has ever created and it has been a tremendous success right where it is. It's sole and only problem is that it has been underfunded for so long that the living quarters are now unsatisfactory. So, Starkville wants a new high school and MSU wants the best and brightest to enroll at MSU when they get out of high school. But how to get this done? Closing the best public school in the country and combining the consolidated city/county high school in Starkville with MSMS? As it stands at present, MSMS turned out more national merit scholars than the surrounding states' STEM schools by more than double, with half of the monetary the support from the state. So, we want to take what is clearly turning out stupendous results and try an experiment by putting these gifted children into a public school in Starkville, where they will be intermingled with typical high school students. I don't see how this is very ... Smart. Why would a parent of a gifted child in Shubuta take him out of a public or private school at home to send him 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? I encourage MDE to review the facebook site with the title *MSMS Parents Lending United Support* for some of their reactions to the MSU proposal. I am going to paste just one facebook post from a parent below to save you the trouble. Also, 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. So, I have a real issue with taking my tax dollars and supporting the Starkville/Oktibbeha Consolidated school district build a partnership school with MSU. The MSU proposal says they need the State to appropriate \$85M to help build the school. If the State is going to put that much money into MSMS, it could give \$50M to the W and achieve a guaranteed better result. How can I make such a guarantee? Because its working great now with inadequate facilities. MSU and SOCSO cannot make the same guarantee. See the facebook page I mentioned above at this link: [MSMS Parents Lending United Support | Facebook](#)
Here is just one post from that website.

[Elise Epperson Deano](#)



Top contributor

· [16h](#) ·

"I'm getting a bit stirred up about the future of MSMS. Initially, I'll admit I thought that MSU wasn't a horrible choice. I wouldn't feel like my child was less safe in Starkville. However....when I read that the proposal was to basically put MSMS on campus with the Starkville/Oktibbeha County School District I was shook. Who on earth thinks that is a good idea? Likely it would bring SOCSO up, but it

would definitely bring MSMS down. If there is money to be spent, spend it on increasing per pupil spending for MSMS and build new dorms. How are high achieving kids supposed to thrive when dorms are 90°? With mildew and mold? And broken elevators and windows that don't open? My child graduates this year. He will not be personally effected one way or the other. But folks, they are trying to put lipstick on a pig and trick us. Rob Roberson (R-Starkville) said, and I quote "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 and career that we want for all our kids." First, where in the Sam Hill does he think MSMS students come from? They were all in high schools both public and private in Mississippi that they certainly could have stayed in if they so desired. Our kids wanted more. Our kids wanted something different. My son, as adorable as he is, would most definitely qualify as a nerd at most schools. I do not want him around students who would make fun of or bully him because he'd rather do math problems than go out with friends. Or that he'd rather play chess than ever watch a sporting event. I spent 8 years as youth court referee in my County and bullying is out of control and it seems neither schools nor the parents of the bullies wish to intervene. It's awful. Our kids need wings to fly and freedom to learn not bullies that would ground them.

I am attaching pictures with the names of the house and senate Education committees. I am also attaching links to the names, emails and phone numbers of each legislator and the names and emails of the Mississippi Department of Education Board Members. We need to flood them with emails and phone calls. We need our neighbors, grandmas and cousins to do the same. This cannot be a done deal. Okay. I am off my soap box (for now) 📄😊 "

Dr. Donna Boone

From LYNDA UMFRESS <umfress2@aol.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 6:47 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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I write in support of retaining MUW as the location for MSMS.

I taught high school gifted students for 11 years prior to my retirement in Kentucky. I am well aware of the difficulties these divergent thinkers face in and out of the classroom.

For over 40 years, MUW has successfully been meeting the needs of these students. In the classroom, the academic programs are varied and highly challenging. Outside the classroom, the unique campus is just large enough for students to experience independence and campus life without overwhelming them.

Actually, I'm just confounded by the proposal to move MSMS. Why uproot a program that works and replace it with one that MIGHT work? I also understand that the total cost of the MSU proposal is \$25 million more than the MUW proposal. It would NOT be fiscally responsible to undertake this action.

It seems to me that MUW's success with MSMS should be a cause for celebration NOT a cause for removal.

Please keep MSMS at MUW.


Lynda Umfress
Columbus
Sent from my iPad

Do Not Waste \$25M+ by Moving MSMS to MSU - Leave MSMS at MUW

From Bill Van <bilvan@gmail.com>

Date Sun 3/2/2025 4:48 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

 1 attachment (14 KB)

Dr boone.docx;

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Dr. Donna Boone

secondaryeducation@mdek12.org
Mississippi Department of Education

Dear Dr. Boone,

I am writing to express my strong support for Mississippi University for Women (MUW) in Columbus, Mississippi, retaining the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) on its campus. This partnership has long been a beacon of academic excellence in the state, fostering an environment of intellectual rigor, innovation, and opportunity for some of Mississippi's most promising students.

Since the formation of MSMS in 1987, the legislature has neglected its responsibility to provide adequate financial support to the institution. Despite this, MSMS has thrived, producing 13 National Merit Scholarship winners and fostering an environment where gifted students can excel. Mississippi University for Women (MUW) has demonstrated remarkable resilience, consistently achieving excellence despite financial constraints. Its commitment to grit, determination, and dedication to student success has ensured MSMS remains a premier academic institution.

Mississippi State University's (MSU) proposed relocation plan would cost taxpayers an additional \$25 million, contradicting the state's supposed aim of fiscal responsibility. The hidden costs of such a move have not been transparently disclosed, raising further concerns about its financial feasibility.

Additionally, the political pressure to move MSMS appears to be a thinly veiled effort to undermine the students and alumni of MUW. (Some would say akin to a public lynching) Further the MSU proposal disregards the original intent behind MSMS's formation—to provide an elite educational experience separate from traditional high schools. The MSU plan undermines this mission by co-locating MSMS with a local high school, thereby diluting the specialized academic environment that has made MSMS so successful.

The longstanding relationship between MUW and MSMS has cultivated a unique synergy, offering high-achieving high school students access to collegiate-level resources, faculty expertise, and a setting that encourages advanced academic inquiry. The presence of MSMS on MUW's campus has not only enriched the university's academic culture but has also provided students with unparalleled exposure to post-secondary educational opportunities, seamlessly facilitating their transition to higher education and professional success.

MSMS plays a pivotal role in advancing STEM education within Mississippi, equipping students with the critical thinking skills and knowledge necessary to contribute meaningfully to the state's economy and workforce. Relocating MSMS away from MUW would disrupt the collaborative infrastructure that has been instrumental in the school's success, potentially jeopardizing the quality of education and support that MSMS students currently enjoy.

Furthermore, MUW's historical commitment to academic excellence and its dedication to fostering an inclusive and intellectually stimulating environment make it the ideal host for MSMS. The university's resources, faculty mentorship, and campus facilities provide an ecosystem that nurtures the intellectual and personal growth of these exceptional students. Any disruption to this partnership risks diminishing the effectiveness of MSMS's mission and the broader educational opportunities available to its students.

I urge you to advocate for the continued presence of MSMS at MUW and to recognize the invaluable benefits of maintaining this well-established and highly effective partnership. The future of Mississippi's brightest students depends on the preservation of this institution in its current, thriving environment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

W. H. Vandergriff

bilvan@gmail.com

Move to MSU opinions of MSMS student

From Cassandra VanRiessen <vanriessenc26@themsms.org>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 5:28 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

Cc hriessen2021@gmail.com <hriessen2021@gmail.com>; Cassie van Riessen <criessen2021@gmail.com>

External Email

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State Board of Education,

My name is Cassie van Riessen, I am a rising senior at The Mississippi School of Mathematics and Science and I wanted to share my thoughts on the proposed move of MSMS to MSU. I have read the proposals and discussed with trusted adults, teachers, and peers.

While MSU has great opportunities for MSMS students that would be more accessible if we were located on their campus, we are able to use MSU resources for research and MUW resources, being on their campus, that still are very useful to us. MUW is not a big city college with as many attendees, fraternities/ sororities, or other organizations and events such as football and major sports. These are huge factors that alter the life of MSMS students on campus, it takes away from the experience of a small college as many new structures would be implemented to increase security for student welfare which can be greatly limiting to students. MUW offers a smaller campus which is more suitable for high schoolers and makes parents more comfortable than such a large campus like MSU. MUW has been able to offer us great resources and while there are things that could improve such as dorm life and the cafeteria, moving to a larger college campus presents more issues that are not as fixable. MSMS is supporting MUW and the small town of Columbus which would be a major asset to remove. It partners with local businesses for mentorship and moving to Starkville resets those connections. While moving to MSU is beneficial to MSU and Starkville school, it is not as good for MSMS as it may at first seem.

Moving to MSU and essentially sharing with Starkville school devalues MSMS as many of our attendants are Starkville students who came to MSMS for a reason. It would help Starkville, but MSMS is meant to be the school for the best and brightest of the state and having that connection to a more regular high school will not support that image. MSMS being separate is helpful to its recognition as being different from other high schools and being appealing to students from those other highschools.

Thank you for your consideration,

Cassie

C/O 2026

662-588-0349

Future of MSMS location

From Wang Yanmei <yanmei2008@gmail.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 9:43 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone,

I am a parent of current MSMS student (class of 2025) and my younger son is planning to attend MSMS in 1.5 years, thus I am personally concerned about moving MSMS to the MSU campus.

My main concern is around the MSU proposal of sharing facilities between MSMS and Starkville high school. The only reason both of my sons love to attend the MSMS is because it offers the academic experience not available at our local high school and only at MSMS they would be able to find "their people" and be themselves/nerds without being judged or bullied. Under the MSU proposal, my younger son will not be interested in attending the MSMS and I don't feel comfortable sending him there either.

During the last 20 months, I have been to the MSMS campus over a dozen times. Overall, I love the beautiful campus, but definitely agree with all of the parents and students that the facilities, especially the dorms need some improvements: my son's room is either too hot or too cold and the humidity is unbearable. The bathroom and break area remodeling last summer improved the living experience to certain extent, but the heating/cooling system issues continue to exist. If the SDE can allocate funds to improve the existing MSMS facilities at the MUW, it would be the best solution for the students.

Thanks for your consideration.

Yanmei Wang

MSMS relocation

From ru204@aol.com <ru204@aol.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 1:35 AM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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Dear Dr Boone

I am writing in opposition to moving MSMS from the MUW campus. On a small budget compared to similar schools MSMS has accomplished amazing things and has received national recognition for it. Though my children did not attend MSMS several of their friends did and I recall how they loved it and loved the setting it is in. They especially liked the sense of security and low-key friendly atmosphere provided by a small college campus. They were able to develop the relationships possible within a small student body with access to an across the street college library and student union.

For MSMS being a small school to now share facilities and campus with a large High School would forever change the unique character and learning experience that has brought MSMS its national reputation as one of the country's leading high schools. MSMS needs to be a stand-alone high school and not find itself overpowered by association with a much larger high school. MSMS needs to stay where it is and needs to be properly funded.

I am retired from law practice and serving as County Attorney in Clay County and have not only a Juris Dr but also a BA in secondary education. One lesson I have learned over the years is that all too often tampering with success does not bring good results.

Rufus Ward
96 Travis Street
West Point, Mississippi 39773
662-295-7126

MSMS Proposals Feedback

From gordon.t.welch@icloud.com <gordon.t.welch@icloud.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 5:00 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

External Email

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

To the Mississippi Department of Education,

Late this afternoon I stumbled upon these proposals brought forth by MUW and MSU, so please bear with me as I try to shove all my thoughts into a coherent message right before the deadline. This situation affects me on about as personal of a level as one can get. I am from Starkville, and attended the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District (SOCSD) from K-10. Afterwards, I attended and graduated from MSMS in 2023. MSMS was a unique experience for me, where I learned that while I thought math and science was my thing, I quickly found out that it wasn't. However, this didn't leave me to give up and drop out, as this math and science school turns out to have a very gifted history and english department as well. Through great minds like Mr. Charles Yarborough, Ms. Julie Heintz, Dr. Thomas Easterling, Mr. Thomas Richardson, and Dr. Kayla Hester, I learned that my calling falls more into the humanities department. I know I am not the only student who had this experience, and these teachers are essential and must be kept to ensure a true MSMS experience beyond that of math and science. These employees help lead students to create projects that represent Mississippi at National History Day, that represent our fallen World War 2 and Vietnam War veterans from Mississippi, and tell stories of the Civil War and Emancipation from the context of Mississippians. Without these teachers, you are cutting out Mississippi from the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science. If you want these students to return and remain in this great state, then you must give them a reason to. Let them learn about Mississippi, and let them represent Mississippi. In my opinion, if moving this great school requires losing many faculty members, then the move is not worth it.

Secondly, this move would be wonderful for the SOCSD, but it requires the education of students from Kindergarten to 9th grade to be at a much more effective level. If you throw students from SOCSD into MSMS level classes without giving them the proper education beforehand, you might as well fail them all now. I loved many of my teachers during my time in the SOCSD, but I myself felt very unprepared when entering MSMS. If it wasn't for the time teachers had at MSMS to help me, I would've failed. With this ambitious goal of 450 students from grades 10-12 and allowing Starkville High School students to participate as well, you will take away the one on one time that MSMS classes offer due to their small class size. I can't express enough how much this would benefit SOCSD, but it would also be unfair to people who don't have the privilege of living in Oktibbeha County.

Most importantly, I want to talk about safety. Moving to MSU would bring safety to MSMS in some ways, but also bring about new problems. MUW has no fraternities on their campus, MSU is flourishing with

them. I can't help but think that students will be tempted to sneak into fraternity parties and events. MSU must ensure that this does not happen. At the same time, with proper procedure, I do personally believe that MSU's corner of campus could be much safer than at MUW. At MSMS, I actually got used to falling asleep to the sound of gunshots, or something similar. We were not in a bad area per se, but we were very close. I also remember a time when someone robbed a house just across the street from campus, and then ran across the street to campus armed. While this is not the fault of MUW, it is something that will cause parents to question whether or not they want to send their child there.

Lastly, this would cost the state a ton of money. MUW's outline for cost is much less than Mississippi State's and SOCCSD's. It kinda feels like SOCCSD and the mayor of Starkville are scapegoating actually paying to better their educational system.

Ultimately, this move could have great benefits to SOCCSD, MSU, and MSMS, but it could also change MSMS's reputation and cause many safety problems. If MSMS stays where it is, I hope MUW learns from this moment and puts more work into progressing and enhancing MSMS.

Thank you for your time,
Gordon Welch
MSMS Class of 2023
University of Mississippi Class of 2027

Dear Dr. Boone,

My name is Cody Westbrook. I graduated from the Mississippi School for Math and Science in 2012 and am currently pursuing my Masters at Mississippi State University. I'm writing to you today to express my opposition to the proposed relocation of MSMS to the MSU campus. My time at MSMS was extremely important to me and I do not believe if the school were located on the MSU campus during my time there that it would have been as impactful. After reading the proposal, I see no fundamental differences in what is offered to MSMS by MSU if the relocation moves forward but I do see three major negative effects on the school: community, academic culture, and cost.

MSMS emphasizes community before an incoming junior sets foot on campus and its importance is reinforced throughout a student's time on campus and after. The smaller student body and residential nature of the school are important aspects of this community. The ability to work and study together in the evenings without transportation difficulties starts the process early, and soon enough you find yourself spending all of your free time together as well. Joining SOCSO will add an average of 300 students to each graduating class who are not residential. This will destroy the sense of community that MSMS has long strived to build and maintain.

The academic culture of MSMS will be noticeably diluted with this merger. Going to MSMS was the first time I was able to share classes with people as driven to learn as I am and feel challenged by my peers to pursue bigger things. Merging with SOCSO means that new MSMS students are less likely to experience this feeling because the small class size and incredible faculty are really what set MSMS apart. Simply applying to something like MSMS is more of a risk than most students willingly take on until their senior year of high school. Everyone on move-in day knows they are doing something a bit strange but that they are all in it together. If 75% of the student body goes home at night, that unnecessary level of division is both inherent and apparent to the student body and defeats the entire purpose of a unique place like MSMS.

Finally, the cost of this plan is shocking for the lack of return it offers. MSMS can renovate or build new dorms to be ready for future growth for half of the price to taxpayers or the state than what SOCSO is asking for. Fiscal responsibility should dictate that the exorbitant price should offer more to MSMS than the current proposal. The only students to benefit from the move would be SOCSO students. They would get new facilities funded by the state instead of local property taxes, as the state constitution dictates they should be, and the MSMS name is simply being used to grant the district access to funding from the legislature that they would otherwise have no right to.

The Mississippi School for Math and Science is something our state should be proud of. Investing in its future is something I wholeheartedly support. However, I believe that making the decision to move MSMS to Starkville not only darkens the future of the school, but of Mississippi as a whole.

- Cody Westbrook

MSMS Proposal

From Tyler Wheat <tylerwheat831@gmail.com>

Date Tue 3/4/2025 3:50 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 firmly opposed to relocating the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science to Starkville/Mississippi State. Building an entirely new facility is not an efficient use of Mississippi taxpayers' money. A more excellent approach would be to invest in improving the existing facilities on the Mississippi University for Women's campus. As the saying goes, don't fix what isn't broken. The W has been a perfect home for MSMS, allowing the school to thrive despite years of inadequate funding from MDE.

Thank you,

Tyler Wheat


Sent from my iPhone

MSMS Proposal Response

From Elizabeth Whittington <eyoste@gmail.com>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 8:01 AM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

 1 attachment (28 KB)

MSMS Donna Boone.docx;

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:

As a parent of a Mississippi high school freshman, I am deeply concerned about the proposed relocation of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) from Mississippi University for Women to Mississippi State University. It raises financial and logistical concerns and also threatens the unique academic environment that has made MSMS one of the most successful institutions in the state.

The proposed move would disrupt this successful high school and unnecessarily increase costs for Mississippi taxpayers. From what I've read of the two proposals, the estimated cost of relocating MSMS to MSU is \$85 million, while upgrading and expanding the school at MUW would require only \$60 million, a \$25 million savings that could be reinvested in academic programming, housing renovations, and student resources. This seems like a no-brainer to me.

We must also pay attention to what's going on outside Mississippi. Consider that many of our universities will be impacted by recent executive orders and MSU may need to redirect costs to projects other than MSMS. For example, since NIH funding may now be capped at 15%, MSU could be impacted with a deficit of more than \$8 million. What happens then?

The surprise Senate Bill 2715 that was introduced last year on moving MSMS also raises ethical concerns. The lack of transparency and limited opportunity for public feedback suggest that political and financial motives, rather than the best interests of students, are driving this decision.

MSMS is nationally recognized for its academic excellence and consolidating it with the Oktibbeha Consolidated School District at MSU would undermine that. Relocating to a larger university campus would diminish this well-structured environment. I strongly urge you and other decision-makers to reconsider this move and instead invest in strengthening MSMS where it has been for decades.

Mississippi students deserve stability, excellence, and fiscal responsibility—not a costly relocation that benefits political interests over education.

If MSMS moves from MUW to MSU, my student will remain at DeSoto Central High School, as we will not even apply. As a parent, I do not believe that a 16-year-old should be a high school student on the campus of one of the state's largest universities—much less a 15-year-old since the proposals include adding sophomores. Thank you for your consideration of our brightest students, their parents, and Mississippi taxpayers.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Whittington
3645 Nail Rd.
Southaven, MS 38672
469-441-6550
eyoste@gmail.com

MSMS

From Elise Wilson <ewilson1229@gmail.com>

Date Sat 3/1/2025 7:12 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.

This email is to share my disapproval of the move of MSMS to MSU's campus, creating MSMS:E. MSU's proposal removes the very fabric of what makes MSMS such a special institution and uses those students to create a new high school for the SOCSO.

As an alum of MUW and current employee of the university, I have experienced first hand how MSMS students are woven into the fabric of MUW. These students are distinguished among their peers enrolled at their home school districts. Placing MSMS students in a school setting with students from SOCSO frankly does not make sense. Using state appropriations to fund a new school for SOCSO also does not make sense.

My children attend the Lowndes County School District and I would like to request the same funding opportunities for my school district as SOCSO. If State funding were pumped into our local school districts in Columbus and Lowndes County to the tune of \$100 million, it would change the future of children enrolled in those districts.

MSMS current faculty are exceptional professionals in their fields. They as well are woven into the fabric of MUW and the Columbus community. MSU's proposal communicates that MSU professors will serve as adjunct teachers for MSMS. Current MSMS faculty have prepared more National Merit Scholars at MSMS than any other peer institutions. Why are MSU faculty needed to replace these qualified professionals??

Why does MSU believe they are better simply because they are bigger? I dispute Rep. Rob Roberson's assertion that MSMS students will be more successful at MSMS:E on the basis that MSU is a bigger institution.

Taking all human assets aside and primarily looking at dollars, it is more financially responsible to leave MSMS on MUW's campus and adequately fund the school. MUW has taken far too much flack for MDE's lack of funding of MSMS. \$38 million to complete MSMS's "wish list" of updates is cheaper than MSU's \$85 million proposal. MUW's proposal to keep MSMS on their campus is more cost effective than MSU's proposal to move the school, and it is ultimately better for MSMS.

It maintains highly qualified teachers and the tight knit culture at MSMS. It does not pad the pocket of SOCSO to build a new high school.

I ask that MDE adequately fund MSMS on MUW's campus.

-Elise Wilson