

## Proposals for future of MSMS

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**From** Jason Palagi <jpalagi72@gmail.com>

**Date** Sat 3/1/2025 8:39 PM

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

### **External Email**

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To whom it may concern,

As a faculty member of MSMS, I found it disturbing that neither proposal truly addressed the major needs of MSMS.

The MSU proposal, with its integration of MSMS into SOCSO, would fundamentally change the nature of MSMS. It really seems like nothing more than trying to leverage funding for MSMS into the SOCSO. It was clear from reading their proposal that whoever composed it did not investigate what MSMS provides for its students in terms of dual credit and AP classes currently. The proposal fails to take into account the unique environment and culture of a small school intensely focused on academics in such a way that students are prepared for challenges they will face in nationally competitive colleges and careers.

The MUW proposal suffers from focusing on using MSMS to rehabilitate buildings that MUW has let sit in a state of disrepair for over 20 years. Further, the residence halls they propose for us to rehabilitate cannot accommodate 150 students each, which is the target enrollment.

Since its inception over 30 years ago, MSMS has not had a building designed and constructed for its needs, despite its students winning national achievements year after year and having a nationally recognized high school faculty. The students of MSMS deserve facilities worthy of their achievements and illustrative of their rank among the nation's top students.

Cheers,  
Dr. Palagi

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## MSMS Proposals

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**From** Naomi Buck Palagi <enaomib@yahoo.com>

**Date** Sat 3/1/2025 8:05 PM

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

### External Email

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Dear Dr. Boone,

I have read through the MSU and MUW proposals for future housing of MSMS. I currently have a child enrolled in MSMS and hope to have another one enrolled in future. While I had been a bit on the fence about the possibility of MSMS moving to MSU, after reading the proposals I am 100% opposed to moving to MSU given those parameters.

A few points I want to make:

- my child and the vast majority of MSMS students blossom and thrive in a setting that is specifically geared to their accelerated, in-depth academic success with an eye to becoming key, influential participants in our world
- tying MSMS to any school district dramatically changes the character of the school, which is a wonderful amalgamation of students from across the state who are given a collegiate atmosphere and take that forward into impressive college and professional careers
- MSMS does not need more activity options - the students, faculty and staff do a great job of creating and sustaining the activities that enhance their academics, although of course some of those activities do need increased resources. Throwing them back into a regular high school setting dilutes the purpose and without a doubt, the success of the school.
- MSMS clearly needs more funding for better facilities and more instructors to keep up the amazing work they have been doing. Tagging MSMS onto SOSD so that that district gets more money is simply not a solution that fits this problem.

In closing, following through with the MSU plan is essentially closing what is and has been for decades an incredibly successful school. Please don't let that happen on your watch.

Sincerely,  
Naomi Palagi  
MSMS parent

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## MSMS proposals

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**From** Rachel Cody Pfister <racody@gmail.com>

**Date** Tue 3/4/2025 12:15 AM

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

### External Email

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To the Mississippi Department of Education,

My name is Rachel Pfister, and I was a student at MSMS from 1999-2001. I am writing about the proposals by MSU and MUW regarding the future of MSMS.

I, like many other MSMS students, was the first in my family to attend college. Not only did I receive two bachelor degrees, but I also went on to get my PhD. This is not unusual for MSMS alumni - many of my cohort went to university and a large amount went on to obtain advanced degrees. We are a formidable force across the entire United States in the fields of mathematics, education, microbiology, medicine, law, and engineering. MSMS supported our interests and academic goals in a way few high school students get to experience. MSMS continues to provide a nationally renowned educational experience to high schoolers and is a true jewel in the state of Mississippi.

When I attended MSMS, I lived in Fant Hall and the boys lived in Peyton Hall. Peyton was devastated by the tornado in 2002. The students eventually moved to Goen and Frazer Hall. I have only seen pictures of these dormitories, but they are appalling in the living conditions. I know MUW has made strides to repair and renovate issues, but not enough has been done for the existing and future students. No student should have to go "home" to mold, backed up sinks, outdated and broken furniture, and peeling paint.

I am grateful that the Mississippi Department of Education recognizes that something must change for the future of MSMS. I have read the proposals from MSU and MUW about their plans for the future of MSMS.

Honestly, I find both plans to be subpar for the needs of MSMS students. I realize this doesn't provide an easy answer, but that is my opinion based on my experience at MSMS and as the parent of current high schoolers. MSU's proposal for MSMS to share the Starkville High School does not recognize that experience of MSMS alumni and students. MSMS is not just an extension or partner of a high school; it is more a partnership with a university. My worry with the MSU plan is that MSMS students will be treated as an extension of Starkville High School, not even its own entity. Furthermore, if the MSU plan is implemented, the students will be far removed from all semblance of community. MSMS students are high schoolers removed from their family and friends of their homes. Being geographically separated from any central community locations further isolates them and makes them reliant on school shuttles or students with cars. One important part of the MSMS experience when I attended

was that we could walk within a certain geographic distance of the school, visit stores, go to the gym, and even attend church. We didn't require a shuttle or a car to do so. We were able to feel like we were part of the community and not always "at school." I do like MSU's plan to better incorporate college credits into MSMS courses, and I believe MSU has better science, library, and research facilities than MUW. But with the geographic separation of the school from the remainder of MSU - how often will students be able to access those things? And if they do, how will they remain safe in a large and heavily populated college campus?

MUW's proposal is subpar in other ways. MUW does not seem to recognize the actual extent of the problems that MSMS students have and are facing. The dorms need more than fresh paint and new lobby furniture. Those are great steps, but the dorms should be completely renovated and made modern. Even better would be to have dormitories that are closer to the academic facilities. The proposal to renovate Fant and Peyton Hall and return MSMS students would be fantastic, but this seems to not be MUW's intention. That seems to have been added on as an afterthought idea. MUW's other facilities, including libraries and educational facilities were extremely dated and inferior to MSU's when I was a student at MSMS. I do not know their current state so it would be disingenuous of me to comment on them. However, I am doubtful that MUW's claim that these facilities could compare with those of MSU.

MUW has a huge advantage over MSU in that the MSMS facilities are essentially their own part of the campus without being completely removed. Students are able to visit areas of Columbus without needing a shuttle or car. They are able to find and build community with the city in a way that would not be possible with Starkville.

I hope that the Mississippi Department of Education reviews both proposals and is able to find a solution that benefits the MSMS students as they deserve. They deserve to have safe and modern homes. They deserve to have educational facilities that meet their demands. MSMS has shown again and again that they produce exceptional students and future professionals with substandard facilities. Imagine what they could do with facilities that are deserving of them. MSMS students also deserve to have the opportunity to be treated as their own institution - not an add-on to an existing high school. And finally, MSMS students deserve to be able to have access to community amenities, churches, stores, etc without relying on transportation. It can be isolating to be so far from home and always feel that you are "at school." Provide them the opportunity to have community.

I realize this may be beyond the reach of the MDE, but I hope that both MUW and MSU are pushed to better understand MSMS students and the MSMS experience and needs. I hope in doing that, both universities are able to put forth better proposals that better meet the students' needs - as humans, as teens, as students. I also sincerely hope MDE supports the future of MSMS with funding considerations that will meet the needs of students. MSMS students are an amazing representation and asset to the state.

Thank you,  
Rachel Cody Pfister, PhD  
MSMS Class of 2001.  
USC BA Anthropology and BA Psychology class of 2005  
UCSD PhD Communication, class of 2016.

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## Feedback on MUW and MSU proposals for MSMS

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From Lori Pierce <lpierce@themsms.org>

Date Sun 3/2/2025 9:31 PM

To SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

### External Email

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I have been teaching World Languages at MSMS for 15 years now. In this time, I have had the great opportunity to learn about MSMS from some wonderful colleagues, including several of the original teachers at this school. In terms of how we teach and interact with each other here, I don't think there is a better model for quality teaching. I am anxious to continue working in an environment like this. In the time I have been at MSMS, our facilities have never been the best, but their condition has really deteriorated to the point that those issues are now interfering with our ability to actually hold effective classes in Hooper and for students to be able to study in the residential life buildings. I am glad that the request for proposals was made so that we could see just what is on the table with both MUW and MSU. Here is what I think about those two proposals:

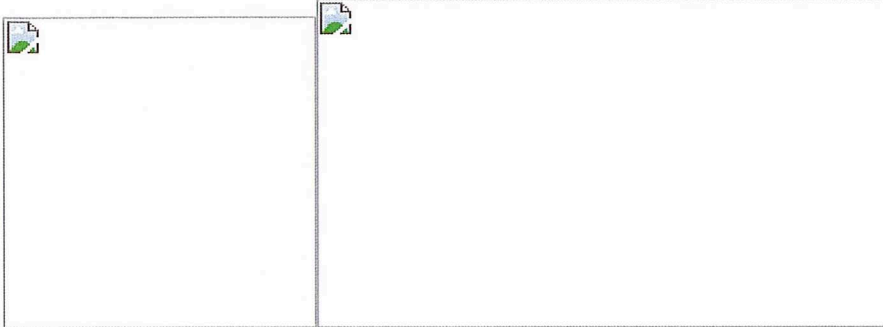
- 1) MSU's proposal to combine MSMS with Starkville High in the SOCSO would fundamentally change MSMS and effectively erase all the amazing culture and traditions that support great academic achievement. I have three children, one who graduated from MSMS and two who graduated from Starkville High School, so I feel I'm in a pretty good position to evaluate a merging of the two and it would be a disaster for MSMS. Our ability to create a school with a primary focus on academic achievement is in large part because of the community we create by being separate. My daughters who went to SHS focused on music and theater and had great starts at SHS that they would not have gotten at MSMS. One is now a professional event manager and the other is a sophomore vocal performance major with parts in two operas already under her belt. However, they did not get the focus on academic achievement that my oldest child got at MSMS. My daughters at SHS thrived on the extracurriculars in music and theater. My child at MSMS was like all the other MSMS students and went there for better academics, not for extracurriculars. For a time I taught Speech and Debate and coached our competitive team. It was always understood that academics came before S&D and participation in tournaments was optional if classwork was too much that week. MSMS students often forego extracurricular opportunities in order to focus on an exam or a paper. I don't think SHS would take kindly to this attitude from team members.
- 2) The RFP asked both schools to identify funding sources outside of the legislative process. I assume you were expecting the universities to offer some financial assistance. MUW did not offer anything beyond their current services (which are in many cases inadequate) and MSU simply pawned off responsibility to the SOCSO, selling out MSMS in the process. One thing I think is perfectly clear from these proposals is that our funding is going to have to come directly from the state legislature. I hope you are working on that.

As far as I see it, the details beyond these two observations are negotiable. The big issues are our independence as a separate entity and funding for the buildings we desperately need. What was the most disappointing part of reading through these proposals was the apparent fact that neither of these universities is willing to go out on a limb for MSMS. And to date, neither has MDE or the state

legislature. Given the number of successful graduates and the students who continue to love MSMS and who are taught well and prepared to enter any university in this country, it is very disappointing not to be supported at anything but a survival level. I have a close friend from high school who teaches at the Arkansas School for Math, Science, and the Arts and I visited their school a year ago along with some of our students. Their facilities are much better than ours and they are continually building more.

I hope you can become our champions. I think we have proven that we are successful at doing what MSMS was created to do.

Lori LeVar Pierce, she/her



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## MSMS Proposals

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**From** Bradley Prewitt <brad@prewittgroup.com>

**Date** Sun 3/2/2025 7:34 AM

**To** SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>; shaw.prewitt08@gmail.com  
<shaw.prewitt08@gmail.com>; Mindy Prewitt <mindyprewitt@gmail.com>

### 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: cc Mindy Prewitt, MD (MSMS 1991) and Shaw Prewitt (MSMS 2026)

I have read through the MSU/SOCSD and MUW proposals to secure MSMS's future. My context is unique in that my son Shaw is a current 11th grader at MSMS and my wife Mindy is a 1991 MSMS graduate. Mindy was the second class at MSMS. Unfortunately, being older, there was no MSMS for me to consider, though academically and intellectually I would have been well qualified. My wife Dr. Prewitt (Tupelo internal medicine/infectious diseases specialist) is going to be PLUS president next year; PLUS is the "PTA" of MSMS. My son Shaw is going to page for Lt. Gov. Hosemann the week of March 24. He paged for Senator Wicker last year; he is very interested in public policy.

I was not surprised by the proposal from MSU/SOCSD as I talked to Dr. Keenum in the fall about it. Mark and I worked together for many years for the late Senator Cochran on the Hill. He has done a great job at MSU. I was interested in the MSU angle because MUW is such a poor partner to MSMS in accommodating its needs. Case in point is our (Shaw and me) getting a MSMS wrestling team started this school year. Shaw is a HS wrestler (had to give up football to go to MSMS) and without a team would be denied a major outlet for physical and mental attainments. So we worked closely with Ginger Tedder - who is great! - and with the meager resources available we got a used mat from Lewisburg HS and a volunteer coach and started. We just had our first state champion two weeks ago - the first in MSMS history and it's in wrestling! So how did MUW fit in ... the school could offer no place in Stark (the fitness complex) to put in a mat that breaks down. MUW is an unappreciative host. They claim in their letter all these accommodations and it is rubbish. I called the President's office weeks ago because the kids could not even work out in the weight room - that is not even used by MUW students. It's a ghost town. MUW has vacant spaces galore but MSMS was forced to put the mat in one of their two existing facilities - in a band room. MUW's fate deserves its own hearing but all the poor proposals in the letter you received you can toss those in the trash. I mean, frankly, any new offering in the letter should be given now without the impetus of this proposal. MUW dings MSMS for all sorts of cafeteria charges and such. MSMS is basically a tenant farmer on the MUW plantation. They are not respected. And the facilities are terrible. During a recent cold snap my son came home - they could not heat the building past 47F. The dorms are trash. These kids give up a lot to move to MSMS. Nearly 60 year old designs don't cut it.

That being said, MUW is a great campus for MSMS. It's quiet, safe (not so safe around it!), and slow. And it's pretty enough. There are some buildings that have POTENTIAL with some money and with MUW getting a new attitude on enabling MSMS versus having it on its dying plantation.

As to MSU, I think the proposal is disappointing quite frankly. I know EVP Shaw, and the product is really uninspired. I would have proposed integrating MSMS closely with several of the centers, such as HPC2 and CAVS and the Vet School and the Engineering, Architecture, and other platforms. I don't see that. What I see is MSU proposing MSMS become part of SOCSO's plantation. It's just an adjunct set of buildings on the side of a new HS. Wonder whose going to help pay for SOCSO's new physical plant - the State of Mississippi. Yes, we all will chip in via MSMS. Starkville HS is an urban school district. I used to do school board law for Pascagoula MSD in a separate life. I know the legal perils of managing students and teachers. Mixing these MSMS kids in the cafeteria and sports programs is not good. MSMS kids are often unique. Shaw is well rounded - Eagle Scout, football, 4H (we have a ranch), politics, three varsity sports - but others are nerdy and quiet and quirky. Their families send them to MSMS to blossom but not be crushed by the peer pressure of an inner city school. MSMS sports are ancillary but not primary. That disappoints a student as Shaw but probably not most of the MSMS students. The study requirements are intense. The sports are mostly outlets to burn off some steam and stay in shape. Thrusting MSMS into Starkville HS activities puts them competing with one of the top public school athletic programs in MS. And the MSMS kids really don't have the time to mesh with those sports. It's obvious David Shaw had no clue as to MSMS's schedule - THEY ARE NOT ON BLOCK. Shaw has 6 to 7 classes per term. He can't go to a 130pm sports period - which counts as a class (absurd). There is no academic credit for sports at MSMS.

I think the residence on the side of SOCSO is insane. And I don't think SOCSO gets the headaches they will have with MSMS. You can't mix those populations! As to the budgets and governance, I realize the Arts School has some arrangement with Hazlehurst but this blend further emasculates MSMS and makes it truly the runt in the litter. It has no taxing authority like a district. It will have no separate property. It will have no independent budget. What this means is the MSU proposal will further erode MSMS because no parent is going to send their kids to what will be an AP residential program of Starkville HS. That's it - period. All this turns out to be a bond issue additive to Starkville's need for a new HS. More plantation - less autonomy - less "special". For the \$85M I believe is sought under this proposal, there is plenty of meat on the bone to pay for an independent MSMS campus, but of course, this does not serve SOCSO's purpose of having the state pay part of its new HS facility tab!

What MSU should have proposed is a separate campus - they have tons of land! - and tied the academic / research might of the Tier 1 university into the MSMS curriculum platform. That works - that is better. But it's apparent that know one still really gets MSMS in this realm. They don't appreciate how MSMS is attempting to pull a few kids from the frankly mediocre academic experience that most Mississippi public schools offer. What MSMS has is old fashioned learning. Fast paced classes, with very capable teachers, with loads of homework, lots of tests and deliverables, requiring lots of study time seven days per week. That sounds like my HS experience. But my experience as a parent 35 years later is the opposite. Block schedule - sports as a graded class - no homework - no pressure - slow pace - etc... Even better districts such as Tupelo have dialed it back a lot. I don't think most kids - even the best ones - come out prepared from MS public schools IF they want to go somewhere better. I am not knocking the schools but I am saying it's hard to nurture exceptionalism anywhere but MSMS. That's right - exceptionalism. No other school can squeeze that out of the students. Sure, there are National Merit Finalists at other HS situations - like Oxford. But MSMS does something no other school has. And Mississippi needs more EXCEPTIONAL students to come back here. We lack leaders. We have great people. Mississippi's problem is always at the top, though the top will never admit that.

As to MDE and MSMS, the school needs a budget worthy of its mission. The fact that the school can barely afford a singlet for the kids to wear in a wrestling meet is atrocious. The current state at MSMS reveals that MDE is perhaps not jockeying for MSMS hard enough either. But look at Alabama and peer states. Again, we are Mississippi - we have potential but do we execute? MSMS needs its own school board - enhanced governance - and adequate funding. Otherwise it will die. They are losing students now because the impoverished state of its location. And the sad thing is the two proposals don't address the problems well. MUW is an embarrassment and MSU/SOCSD relegate MSMS even further to a lackey.

I would say the best possible scenario is MUW is put to death as an institution, MSU takes over the campus, MSMS gets money to take on renovated dorms, and MSMS can occupy some better facilities. That won't happen because MS does not terminate colleges. So the second best outcome is MSMS goes to MSU but it has a much separated (by significant distance) facility - fenced and protected - that is much better integrated into the academic and research heft of MSU, and left with its own autonomy and budget. I think the MDE board should recommend further study and refinement of the MSU proposal with MSMS participation. This is the problem for MSMS - if the director talks outside his or her lane to help MSMS he or she may get fired. So MSMS has totally clipped wings and is prohibited from talking unless permitted. That is understandable but really pitiful. Again, more of this plantation emerges and MSMS is the constant sharecropper.

Sorry for the length but no one at MSMS can say anything so I will

Godspeed, Brad P.

**R. Bradley Prewitt**

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**Public Comment about MUW and MSU's Proposal Regarding MSMS's Operations and Location**

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**From** Thomas Robinson <trobinson@themsms.org>

**Date** Mon 3/3/2025 12:18 PM

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

 1 attachment (128 KB)

Letter Replying to MSMS's Future Operations and Locaton (March 2025).docx;

**External Email**

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Greetings Dr. Boone,

It is with great appreciation to have an opportunity to submit a public comment about the proposals from MUW and MSU regarding MSMS's operations and location.

A respectful perspective and unique viewpoint as a member of the MSMS community within the ResLife department is attached.

Thank you very much for your time and the service that you provide to our state!!





# The Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science

*An Opportunity for Excellence*

March 03, 2025

Dr. Donna Boone  
Chief Academic Officer

Dear Dr. Boone

As an employee with the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS), I perform duties within the ResLife department. Mainly, the duties I perform are within the residential hall for the male residents. After nine years of service, I take no position on a potential move of MSMS from its original home at the Mississippi University for Women (The W). Our staff really appreciate the State Board of Education and the Mississippi Department of Education's initiative to address the challenges occurring within our facilities constructed in 1965, to ensure their sustainability for future operations. This effort is critical toward promoting the good health and well-being of MSMS students, faculty, and the ResLife staff while supporting academic success at MSMS. When thinking about this ordeal, the three thoughts that come to mind are:

- \* In 1987, why was MSMS originally located at MUW?
- \* In 1987, why wasn't MSMS originally located at MSU?
- \* What has changed to cause a discussion about relocating MSMS from MUW to MSU?

With those three questions presented, ordinarily children are protected from adult controversial and conflicted discussions. Now, the concerns consider how are current students, future students, and former students dealing with the uncertainties about MSMS's operations and location. My hope and desire are that this situation will not present a long-term negative effect on the students. There is no doubt that everyone supports the safety and well-being of teenage, high school students. MUW is a small and manageable campus regarding student safety and well-being. MSU is a large and difficult to manage campus regarding student safety and well-being. A comparison between high school students and college students recognizes the former group is young and impressionable while the latter group is curious and exploring adulthood.

The parents for both groups of students, as well as other adults associated with the students' education, growth, and development, possess desires and goals for the students to become productive citizens. Basically, the desires and goals related to high school students are to protect teenagers from themselves when considering unwise decisions teenagers may make. On the other hand, the desires and goals related to college students are to lend college students support with receiving educational degrees to acquire employment. MUW and MSU presented excellent proposals regarding campus life and benefits to students related to facilities, services, amenities, and other activities. Apparently, MUW and MSU's objective for MSMS students is to succeed academically, professionally, and in life.



# The Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science

*An Opportunity for Excellence*

Since MUW and MSU presented excellent proposals that apparently possess similar objectives for MSMS students to succeed academically, professionally, and in life, it may be productive to suggest that MUW and MSU present a joint proposal that support MSMS's operations and location. This issue about MSMS's operation and location becoming a public controversy and conflict may negatively affect the teenage students in the long-term of their life. There should be an immediate resolution to this issue and an apology should probably be issued to MSMS's current students, potential future students, and former students for causing a distraction to their educational experiences. A student summit will likely restore the students' faith in our society.

Thank you very much for your time and the services you provide to the state!!



The Mississippi School  
for Mathematics and Science  
*An Opportunity for Excellence*

## **Thomas A. Robinson**

Frazer Hall Assistant Hall Director  
Frazer Hall Staff

662-329-8516  
trobinson@themsms.org  
themsms.org

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## Proposals for housing MSMS

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**From** Rebecca Scott <rebeccaberryscott@yahoo.com>

**Date** Wed 2/26/2025 9:54 PM

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

### External Email

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Dr. Boone,

I am the mother of an MSMS senior (Nora Scott '25) and I have been highly dissatisfied with the process initiated only a few weeks ago by MDE. I think that we stakeholders should have been asked first, not last, to give input about the current status of the school- its facilities, its teachers and staff, residential life, and its partnership and location at MUW.

First, I am disturbed that this attempt to secure funding for Starkville-Ok Co schools and mitigate tax liability for their residents is so thinly-veiled and that our public leaders are unabashedly promoting this sort of nepotism. The obvious ulterior motive creates an insurmountable barrier of suspicion as to whether or not this has, in fact, anything to do with improving MSMS and securing its future for another generation of Mississippi families.

As a MS taxpayer helping to fund the school, I want MSMS to remain as it was originally intended: an extraordinary, residential school separate from any other public high school and beyond the jurisdiction, control, or influence of a regular school district. MSMS teachers and administrators should have full autonomy to guide and instruct their students without political pressures or constraints.

I would like to see an investment in the current MSMS facilities on the MUW campus. Over my daughter's two years at the school, there have been numerous mechanical issues- fire alarms, carbon monoxide concerns and evacuations, as well as mechanical issues (mostly heating and air) in the classrooms. I would also like to see the state focus on maximizing the enrollment, ensuring that the maximum number of kids and families have the support necessary to make the life-changing decision to attend MSMS.

I was pleasantly surprised when Southern offered full scholarships to all MSMS graduates last spring and equally thrilled when MUW did the same this fall. I thought then- and still think- that for MSU to claim that they prioritize keeping MSMS talent in the state when they cannot even make the same scholarship offer as these smaller, less-funded universities, is a self-serving falsehood.

Finally, I believe that it is time to put these "proposals" on the back burner and convene a group of real stakeholders- parents, alumni, teachers, staff, people from the MSMS Foundation, and the MUW staff - to discuss how best to optimize MSMS for the future.

Thank you,  
Becky Scott

Sent from my iPhone

March 4, 2025

MS Department of Education:

I am writing to express my support in having the Mississippi School for Math & Science to remain on campus at Mississippi University for Women in Columbus. First let me give you my background as an explanation where my ideas come from. I am a proud alum of Mississippi State University (MSU) where I got two undergraduate degrees (class of 1997) and a master's degree (class of 2000). My master's degree is in student affairs where I took classes in student development theory among other things. For more than 20 years, I worked on multiple college campuses working directly with college students including time working at MSU, the University of Memphis, Mississippi University for Women, the University of Alabama and the University of Mississippi Medical Center. I hope you will see from my background that I understand college campuses, both big and small.

Honestly, I was surprised when I heard that anyone would ever consider moving MSMS to MSU. I've read the reports as well as other media resources about this issue over the last month or so. The RFP from MSU has multiple issues. First of all, it puts the MSMS students on a small campus with another high school. I visited MSMS in the 1990's and considered enrolling there, but I ultimately decided it wasn't for me. Part of the draw to MSMS is that it is a special and unique experience for academically talented students who have earned a spot in the prestigious school. And honestly, many of those students don't feel like they fit into their own high schools. In the MSU plan, they will be with another high school on their campus in their town. It waters down the experience for the students and certainly makes it much less prestigious. It also puts those students back the same environments that they came from in their regular high schools.

Secondly, the MSU proposal is absolutely a terrible idea because of its proximity to a large SEC school with an active Greek Life system as well as an active party culture. It is IRRESPONSIBLE of the Department of Education to even consider this option. I worked at MUW for 7 years, and I know how difficult it was to keep the students safe and segregated on that small, liberal arts campus. It would be impossible to do that on campus at MSU. I am confident that students will be harmed by this move if this is what you decide to do. And I think there are parents who would never send their students there because of that reason. These are not adults who can make adult decisions yet. They are high school kids, and that should be considered. It is a reckless decision to be sure.

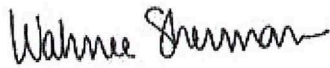
Finally, the MSU proposal costs more than twice what the proposal at MUW costs. The state has HABITUALLY underfunded MSMS at MUW. So many of the issues I've heard folks (including many legislators) complain about in terms of residence halls and other facilities could be fixed with more funding. But that funding has never come to MUW. The idea that the State Legislature and the Department of Education would consider giving such a huge sum of money to MSU to build new facilities when they won't even help to renovate

buildings at MUW is a slap in the face to the taxpayers of Mississippi and especially to the MUW campus.

I almost didn't write this letter because, honestly, it seems as though minds are already made up and that the process has been rigged from the beginning to favor MSU. If this was truly an open process that was about finding the best location for MSMS and doing what is best for those students, then why wasn't the RFP process open to all 8 IHL institutions? Why not allow everyone to write a proposal of what they could offer? It just seems as though that wasn't allowed because the Department of Education had already decided that MSU was to be the home of MSMS. Otherwise the decision to only allow two schools to submit an RFP is incredibly problematic.

As I said from the beginning, I am a proud alum of Mississippi State University. I also spent 7 years working at Mississippi University for Women. I understand both places and their culture and what they have to offer. MSU is not the place for MSMS, and it is NOT what is best for those high achieving high school students. Please don't let politics play into what is best for MSMS and its future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wahnee Sherman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Wahnee Sherman, Ed.D.  
MSU Class of 1997  
MSU Class of 2000

Alan Stancill, PhD, CPA  
105 Cypress Pointe Rd  
Starkville, MS 39759

March 4, 2025

Dr. Donna Boone  
Chief Academic Officer  
Mississippi Department of Education  
359 North West Street  
Jackson, MS 39205

Dear Dr. Boone,

I am writing as a parent of an MSMS senior. First, let me say that I am encouraged that MDE and the state legislature are taking steps to address the facilities issues with MSMS. I say facilities because that, in my opinion, is the main concern with the school. Despite these facility limitations, the faculty and staff are providing a superior education for the students who choose to attend. I know MDE is already aware of the excellent performance by MSMS students on comparable metrics, like the number National Merit Finalists, relative to neighboring math and science schools in Alabama, Louisiana, and Arkansas, despite those schools spending double or more per student compared to Mississippi.

From a parent perspective, my son has had an excellent experience throughout his time at MSMS, and I am grateful for his opportunity to attend such a great school. He is thriving there, and I believe he finally found "his people". MSMS has challenged him both academically and personally, leaving him well-prepared for the transition to college. It has afforded him opportunities to engage in activities and experiences that would not have been available in a traditional school setting.

I have reviewed both proposals and find them somewhat lacking, but I think that is likely a result of the short timeframe provided for proposals. To me, the MUW proposal is largely a status quo with a few enhancements, but with adequate funding. It is a model that has worked for over 30 years and would continue to work if properly supported by the state. Because MUW is the "known quantity" in this scenario, I will spend more time addressing my concerns with the MSU proposal.

I believe the MSU proposal completely misses the spirit and culture of MSMS. Spend some time on the MSMS campus and around its students, and you quickly learn that MSMS is not just a school, but a community. My fear is that community would be lost with the MSMS-SHS hybrid proposed by MSU. The proposal says it offers MSMS students the opportunity of a traditional high school experience. I would argue that if they wanted a traditional experience, they would have stayed at their home school. But these students are looking for more, and the experience they want would be diluted with this partnership. The idea of having them dual enrolled in SOCS and taking classes at SHS, while also allowing SHS students to take MSMS classes, makes this sound more like a residential annex of the state's top students by SHS. This is further insinuated by the proposed joint extracurricular activities between the two schools. This does not sound like a proposal for a new school but rather a merger of two schools. As a parent, this is not an arrangement that I find attractive. I would not send my child to MSMS under this joint school proposal.

I do understand the benefits of having MSMS adjacent to the MSU campus and its facilities. But I also understand the complicated logistics of high school students living on a major college campus. One such limitation is the limited access to library and recreational facilities that MSMS students would have at MSU versus the more open access they have now at MUW. Overall, I would view the MSU proposal much more favorably if the new facility were completely separate from any SOCSO facilities.

Although my son is graduating in a few months, I am fully committed to supporting MSMS and its mission to help Mississippi's best and brightest reach their potential. Ultimately, the most important result of this process is the long-term success of MSMS, wherever it may end up. I believe it is an invaluable, and in some cases life-changing, opportunity for Mississippi's best and brightest and I am glad that the legislature and MDE are finally paying attention.

Thank you for taking the time to read my thoughts on this matter. I am excited about the future of MSMS and what its students and faculty can achieve with appropriate funding and facilities. Please contact me if you would like further comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Stancill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A" and "S".

Alan Stancill

March 3rd, 2025

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

Dear Dr. Boone:

I am an alumnus of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS), a long-time educator of gifted students, and a mental health professional. I am writing to you to voice my thoughts about the proposals from Mississippi University for Women (MUW) and Mississippi State University (MSU) regarding the future of MSMS. From my background and current positions, I do not find either plan to be particularly satisfying, but I believe the facts, evidence, and likely outcomes lead to the conclusion that one plan is dangerous to the very existence of MSMS and has the potential to stagnate its future growth and educational programming. The MSU proposal alters not only the location of MSMS—which is not critical in my opinion—but more importantly its identity in a substantial way. As seen in the MSMS Student Handbook, publicly available online, Mississippi’s only residential high school for gifted youth operates on the ideals of Scholarship, Service, Creativity, and Community, so I shall frame my remarks using those principles.

### **Scholarship**

When I was a student at MSMS many years ago, I greatly benefited from the curricular knowledge gained in my classes there, but the true long-term benefit was learning *how to learn* and conduct research to engage in informed problem-solving. Learning can certainly take place both in and outside the classroom, but my experience as an educator and the research literature indicate that gifted students thrive when around other gifted students who are highly motivated to learn. I recall an MSMS student from a few years ago raising his pre-MSMS ACT composite score by 11 points before he graduated; he attributed his great success to being in a motivating and supportive environment that he did not have at his former school. A major concern I have is that the MSU proposal seems to advocate for a good deal of “sharing” that seems markedly beneficial to Starkville-Oktibbeha Consolidated School District (SOCSD) more so than MSMS. By having mixed MSMS and SOCSD classes, it puts the gifted MSMS students back in a situation not unlike their former schools, and I imagine their academic motivation will suffer. In time, this result would likely decrease applications to MSMS rather than increase them.

On a similar note, I think a major issue of fairness occurs with the MSU proposal that would allow SOCSD students to take advanced coursework at MSMS. If several hundred students go through the effort to apply, be interviewed, and compete to become a member of an approximate MSMS class size of 120, how would it be fair to suddenly allow SOCSD pupils to take MSMS classes without going through that process? I am sure that there would be gifted students in the

Mississippi Delta, DeSoto County, the Gulf Coast area, etc. that either did not apply or were not accepted into MSMS who would love to take classes not offered at their school that MSMS specializes in, but they would not be able to do so simply because they are not in close proximity to MSMS the way that SOCS D students would be in the MSU proposal. Another matter of fairness arises when one considers unvetted students being allowed to take the rigorous courses at MSMS. What if SOCS D students enroll in MSMS classes that they later find themselves woefully unprepared for and suffer academically with poor grades? That is not fair for these aspiring SOCS D students. As a mental health professional, I do not want to see these kids set up for failure and all the negative consequences from excessive stress levels.

My understanding is that the proposals from MUW and MSU were also supposed to include information about enhancing the numbers of the student body at MSMS. However, I am seriously concerned that MSU's plan might actually decrease applications to and enrollment at MSMS. I believe that MSMS accepts a dozen or so students each year from Starkville. That figure corresponds to approximately 10% of an average class size of 120. However, if students in SOCS D do not have to apply but can still take MSMS classes, then why would they choose to be subjected to the rigorous application process? What if they think they are only interested in advanced biology courses but have no desire to take MSMS's required classes in physics? Losing 10% of a class of adequately prepared students from SOCS D would severely harm recruitment at MSMS. In addition, local SOCS D students who attend MSMS might be more tempted to withdraw from MSMS when the academic pressures become very real to them towards the end of the first semester of junior year at MSMS. It is much easier to leave by walking across the street—quite literally based on the proposals—than to suffer a bit and receive encouragement through resilience when there is a more extensive withdrawal process.

## **Service**

MSMS students pride themselves on being active in many community service activities each year, and I am sure that would continue in either Columbus or Starkville. However, I fear that the MSU proposal would actually decrease MSMS students' opportunities for service and leadership in clubs and sports in the long-run. As a former MSMS student, I still remember the appeal of being able to essentially form any club as long as I could find a faculty sponsor. I think it is very possible that the joint administrations of MSMS and SOCS D might feasibly want to consolidate some resources that might mean more joint clubs rather than separate ones for both MSMS and SOCS D. For example, it might be projected that there is not enough demand to have a student branch of Habitat for Humanity for both institutions, so a combined one is formed. Suddenly, an MSMS student who wants to be club president is competing with 1,400 students from Starkville High School rather than only the 240 at MSMS. As most people would agree, most high school elections are far more about popularity than ability to lead, so MSMS students would be at an inherent disadvantage in this scenario. A similar issue relates to athletics where I think the MSU proposal is naive or inadequately thought-out at best. MSMS students are not really known for winning state athletic competitions, but MSMS does occasionally enroll a star competitor or two within a cohort. It was not until the year after I graduated that MSMS won its first basketball game! It seems likely that most MSMS students would not make it through team tryouts in most sports competing with SOCS D students, so the number of MSMS students getting exercise for their mental wellness and the experience of comradery of being on a team

would greatly diminish. It would be unfortunate to stymie a young person's enjoyment and passion for a sport in this manner. I also am afraid that most public school coaches would not fully understand the academic rigors of MSMS and why students might not be able to attend practice because they needed to study for the Calculus III test the next day.

### **Creativity**

Regarding creativity in the arts, there might be an advantage for MSMS students being able to make use of the much larger visual and performing arts courses available to SOCSO students due to their having significantly more than the two art/music teachers MSMS has. However, current MSMS students can take any MUW arts class with permission and as long as it fits within their schedule, so I do not think they are impeded in these pursuits at their current location in Columbus. I am concerned that the current MSU proposal might actually harm MSMS students' intellectual/academic creativity, though. I found their plan to strikingly emphasize career/technical education (CTE) and workforce development throughout, and that is neither the focus of MSMS nor the reason why students choose to apply and enroll at MSMS. It certainly seems that whoever put together MSU's proposal lacked a good understanding of the identity and culture of MSMS. CTE certainly has a place in our state and with many of its students, but the academically gifted students of MSMS need the broad educational background and STEM-centered curriculum to fuel their interests and to achieve their academic and career goals. I can certainly see that many MSMS students may need the knowledge to change a tire on their vehicles, but that does not mean they need to go to a shop class to learn how to problem solve in that manner.

### **Community**

For those of us who had the opportunity to attend MSMS, we usually all tell a similar story about how we applied because of the appealing advanced academics, but we stayed and are more strongly impacted to this day by the community we found at MSMS focused around a mutual love of learning. Without a doubt, expert faculty who were actually passionate about teaching in their subjects and late night conversations with fellow students with similar interests still resonate with me many years after crossing the stage with my diploma cover in hand. Those of us who call ourselves MSMS alumni can all share our trials and tribulations we endured—and hopefully persevered through—during two of the most influential years of our lives. We may be years apart in age, but it never fails that this shared bond forms a connection that enables us to have a conversation that usually leads to thoughtful reminiscences and reflections of or about MSMS. As is probably no surprise, I enjoy discussing MSMS and extolling its virtues whenever and wherever I have the chance. In January of this year, I had the chance to talk about MSMS with a school counselor from a school only a couple of counties away from its current home in Lowndes County and less than an hour's drive away. Unfortunately, she had never heard of MSMS, and I tried for approximately half an hour to explain its structure, purpose, location, and community/culture. It seems that she initially had trouble wrapping her head around the idea that MSMS was not the Math and Science Department at MUW but a separate high school located on their campus. Fortunately, I think I finally helped her have a better understanding, and she seemed to think that MSMS was a good thing for the state to have for its young people. This exchange became much more relevant after I had read both the proposals from MUW and MSU

about the future of MSMS. I have begun to wonder that if I had difficulty differentiating MSMS from its host campus of MUW, how on earth would I be able to provide distinction among MSMS, SOCSO, and MSU if the MSU proposal were to become reality. For example, I imagine the conversation might go something like this with a hypothetical person I may meet at a conference on the Gulf Coast: “MSMS partners with Starkville High School on the campus of Mississippi State University.” “So, that school is run by the University?” “Well, no. MSMS has some of their own buildings but shares others with Starkville.” “Oh, I see. They are like an Academy or Academic Institute within SOCSO like those that Gulfport has.” “No, MSMS’s autonomy is respected.” “Ah...I’m sorry, but I am still confused and don’t quite get it.” [Silently, to myself: “Me, too.”]. This potential confusion paves the way to make MSMS student recruitment more challenging as we would be seen as less unique and a subsidiary of much larger partner institutions. If MSMS cannot adequately explain who they are and how they operate, then that would likely make potential parents and students less willing to investigate further or ultimately matriculate to MSMS. “Why would I send my kid to Starkville High School when we have AP classes here? Besides, our team beat their team this past year anyway!” While it may sound nice for MSMS students participating on Starkville High School’s athletic teams or clubs, I think this idea only confuses MSMS’s identity and autonomy even more. Unfortunately, the current MSU proposal provides little in elucidating who is responsible for what (e.g., human resources management and business support) in the three-way partnership and merely states that a planning committee will decide later. A *committee* does not decide the *community* of an institution.

## Conclusion

In summary, I believe there are many problems with the MSU proposal for the future of MSMS as it seems that it will likely deteriorate the identity of MSMS and ultimately impede its future growth and educational programming. If these are the only two options, it seems much better for MSMS to remain on the MUW campus. However, I would advocate for a third option: allow MDE more time to consider MSMS’s future and consider asking MSU to provide an alternate proposal that does not essentially combine MSMS with SOCSO. In fact, I would love to hear an option where MSMS’s new facilities are built across Highway 182 at the Research Park, which would greatly benefit the young scientists at MSMS. MSU is fortunate to have a lot of land, so I suspect there is probably space on the other side of campus close to the Veterinary School on Blackjack Road. Honestly, I think the best location option in Starkville would be one that mirrors the benefits of the smaller MUW campus: MSMS having space on the central part of MSU’s campus such that all vital areas are within easy walking distance without the need for shuttles. Of course, I have no doubt that there are logistical challenges to these alternate proposals as well. I simply do not think a fair comparison exists to make a good recommendation to the state legislature at this point that maintains MSMS’s identity and provides for its long term growth and sustainability.

Whether MUW or MSU hosts MSMS in the future, I assume there will need to be some sort of planning committee for new facilities similar to what is outlined in the MSU proposal towards the end of the document. In that one, I was deeply concerned and confused about why the 7-member committee supposedly focusing on the future of MSMS only included a single MSMS representative, the Executive Director. Why would the other three entities in this “partnership”

have twice as much say in matters than the institution that is the sole reason for the committee's existence? Any MSMS alumnus would tell you that while the friendships made at MSMS are important, the "heart and soul" or "lifeblood" of the school is its faculty, so why are they not represented on a committee deciding what the state's most academically emphasized school looks like and how it functions? At the very least, I think there should be equal representation for MSMS on a Future of MSMS planning committee, but there is certainly an argument that the more relevant stakeholders should compose a higher percentage of the advisory group.

Finally, I wanted to say a simple "thank you" to Dr. Boone and MDE for allowing alumni, educators, and concerned Mississippians a chance to provide feedback about the proposals for the future of MSMS. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heath Stevens".

Heath Stevens, Ph.D., LSC, NCC, NCSC, ACS

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## MSMS proposals

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**From** Philip Taff <philipctaff@gmail.com>

**Date** Tue 3/4/2025 3:59 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.

Dr. Donna Boone,

After reading the MSU and MUW proposals for the future of MSMS, I have a lot of remaining questions about which would be better for future MSMS students.

A major question to me is how the physical separation between MSMS and MSU would affect future MSMS students. The proposal emphasizes this as a benefit for student safety. But it also makes it more difficult to use some of the other possible benefits of the MSU proposal. For example, MUW's proposal shows just how much MSMS students make use of their library and gym. Having those college facilities a bus ride away (vs. the very short walk at MUW) would likely discourage students from making as much use of them. Or perhaps it will result in MSMS students spending much more of their time on the MSU campus, eroding the safety benefit.

I don't see much in either proposal about MSMS faculty. The excellent teachers at MSMS were a huge part of what made my time there a wonderful experience. How would either proposal affect recruiting, retention, and support for the top notch MSMS faculty?

One item in the MSU proposal sounds particularly concerning. Giving MSMS only one representative on the seven-member Planning Committee does not sound likely to result in an outcome that sufficiently takes into account the needs of MSMS students. SOCD gets more representatives and though they are supporting more students they are not residential students who will spend their evenings, nights, and weekends here. MSU gets more representatives even though its role is that of a supporting partner. Is this proposal for MSMS's benefit or MSU's?

Some shortcomings of the MSU proposal would be easy to fix. Using the MSU post office would be very inconvenient. For example, MSMS students who may be awaiting care packages from home needing to make the trek over to MSU to receive it. But that could be solved by including a mailroom and package locker in the MSMS dorm.

MSMS is a Mississippi gem. I hope the state increases support and develops a strong plan to build on that tradition of excellence for future MSMS students.

- Philip Taff  
MSMS class of 2003

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## MSMS proposal comments-alumni

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**From** Katrina Vizzini <katvizzini@gmail.com>  
**Date** Tue 3/4/2025 4:07 PM  
**To** SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>

### External Email

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

Hello Mississippi Legislators!

My name is Katrina Vizzini and I am a proud alumnus of the MSMS class of 2006. I would like to start by thanking all of you and the state for founding, funding, and continuing to support MSMS all these years.

I have seen the proposals put forth by MUW and MSU and I have some concerns. Namely: the proposed shared space with Starkville High School. I have the story about why below, but have also made some points at the very end addressing some particular economic impacts my attending MSMS provided the state.

MSMS is a school that is meant to enrich the entire state, not one county in particular. I believe the current proposal provides extensive benefits to the Starkville/Oktibbeha county school district while providing obstacles to MSMS in maintaining its culture, its experience, and overall, its existence.

By sharing classrooms, common areas, and other facilities with non-MSMS students, you remove one of the biggest drivers of MSMS's success: fellowship. Exclusively having classmates that are just as eager to learn and research as you yourself are allow students, like myself, to have identities outside of being the "smart kid." It allows kids a reprieve from bullying-something myself and most of my classmates experienced in hefty doses at our home schools. And it fosters a sense of healthy competition: you are no longer running a race with people in a different league, limiting how much you push yourself, you're running with the best of the best and you have bigger targets and aspirations.

I have the somewhat-specific experience of having attended both SHS and MSMS. Starkville High was, to put it mildly, not a pleasant experience. It was so bad that after one semester I left Starkville High to finish up my sophomore year as a home school student before making my way to MSMS. I cannot imagine MSMS being able to thrive with the SHS environment enmeshed within it.

Financial impacts:

Had MSMS not existed as it was, I am unsure if my family would have moved to Mississippi at all. The public non-MSMS schools available did not meet my parents' requirements for academic excellence when they were considering the employment opportunity. Myself and my younger brother Sean Vizzini are both alumni and my older brother, Anthony Vizzini, would likely have attended if we moved before

the application deadline for his junior year. Instead, my brother was forced to dual enroll in MSU his junior year of highschool to maintain academic rigor.

My father, Dr. Tony Vizzini, was employed as a state employee, serving nearly 7 years as the department head for Mississippi State University's Aerospace Engineering department. While there, he was instrumental in getting businesses to work with Raspet Flight Research Laboratory-bringing in significant tax dollars for the state as well as hundreds of jobs. Additionally, I attended MSU, as did both of my brothers.

I currently work as composite materials engineer for a government contractor in Huntsville, AL serving our nation's defense needs. I also work with my industry's professional society and am always looking for ways to collaborate with the facilities and faculty I got to know at Mississippi State University. Previously, I worked at Toray Composites in their research laboratory where we had research projects that we funded with the USM polymer science department. A connection I already had due to collaborations between USM and MSMS.

While I may no longer reside in Mississippi, my time at MSMS is cherished and impacts the career path I walk, continuing the ties I have to the state. It continues to influence decisions I make, that in turn, benefit the state of Mississippi. Knowing the classmates I had at MSMS and their potential, I can only imagine the impact the class of 2006 has on the state, let alone what ALL the graduates of MSMS have done.

Please: keep funding MSMS. Protect this absolute gem of an institution. Whether the state deems it better to keep MSMS at MUW and revitalize the buildings, or move it to MSU, I do not have an opinion and defer to your expertise. All I ask is to please not ruin it by merging it with a traditional high school. I thank you for your time and for the opportunity to provide feedback.

Thank you,

Katrina Vizzini  
MSMS Class of 2006  
662-648-8064

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## The Future of MSMS

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**From** Keyana Washington <keyanawashington@gmail.com>  
**Date** Tue 3/4/2025 4:14 PM  
**To** SecondaryEducation <secondaryeducation@mdek12.org>  
**Cc** cedric washington <cedric.washington@gmail.com>

### 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,

We are writing as proud graduates of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science, class of 1998, to express our deep concern for the state of our alma mater. When we visited 2 years ago, we were shocked and dismayed to see the state of the facilities of the best high school in Mississippi and one of the top high schools in the country. This cannot continue to be the case. MSMS requires immediate upgrades to its facilities in order to continue to produce competitive students who will go on to be doctors, engineers, scientists, professors, dentists, attorneys, politicians, and agriculture specialists. We are glad to know that you have requested proposals from MUW and Mississippi State. We are opposed to combining MSMS with any other high school, including Starkville High School, in any way. One of the unique elements of MSMS is its independence from other high schools and ability to draw talented students from all over the state. MSMS needs full, adequate funding earmarked by the legislature to bring it up to standards of neighboring schools. We urge you to work to preserve one of the very best things that Mississippi has going for it - ensure MSMS is fully funded now and in the future.

We currently live in Buford, GA and are zoned for Seckinger High School, which is a very impressive public high school focused on STEM and AI. We would be happy to help arrange a site visit as plans are being developed to renovate and build new academic spaces at MSMS. If there is any other way we can assist, please let us know.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Keyana Washington, MSMS c/o 1998  
Cedric Washington, MSMS c/o 1998

--

Keyana R. Washington, MD, MPH  
[keyanawashington@gmail.com](mailto:keyanawashington@gmail.com)  
(404) 375-7296 - mobile

"You only get to live life once but if you do it right, once is enough" -Unknown

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## MSMS - proposals

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From Brandy Williams <brandywilliamsrn@bellsouth.net>

Date Sun 3/2/2025 4:40 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 writing to you with concern for the future of MSMS. I have reviewed both proposals and have thoughts regarding both.

To preface my comments, I have a son that graduated from MSMS in May of 2024. I have a daughter who is interviewing March 22nd with the interest of being accepted to MSMS for her junior year (August 2025), and I have a 7th grader that admires both of her older siblings and aspires to become a graduate of MSMS herself. I am a single mother of three academically gifted children. I have strived to teach them to do their best, achieve their goals, and to be fiercely independent in being successful and happy in their lives.

MSMS has a proven track record for guiding academically gifted children to reach their goals. This educational institution deserves the funding from the state to sustain the best environment for these students. The residence halls on the MUW campus are outdated and need serious renovations. My son could care less about the residence hall, the 1960 shared bathroom facilities, the mold in the ceiling by the elevators and the HVAC issues. It was a shame to see these things. I encourage you and your colleagues to make a visit to both Goen and Frazer residence halls and imagine your child living there for 2 years of their lives. What funds would you allocate to correct the facility issues?

MSMS has the absolute best faculty and student culture that one could want for their child. This is why my son thrived and achieved his academic goals. He scored a 35 on his ACT, earned the honor of being named a STAR student, and a National Merit recipient. He has moved on to attend Mississippi State University where he continues to thrive. He began with 20 credit hours earned at MSMS with dual credit and AP classes. He is mature, intelligent and extremely happy. He maintains a 4.0, offers to tutor others that need extra help, and stays in touch with the lifelong friends across many cultures, ethnicities, from various regions of the state that have moved off to other states to further their college education. MSMS is the major contributing factor for my son's success in academics and some of his closest friendships. For this, I am forever grateful. I am hopeful to afford my other two children this rich academic and social experience to foster their future success and happiness.

MUW - this campus is small and charming. It was a safe and quaint environment for high school students to integrate into. The resident hall facilities were very dated and in need of renovations. The classrooms were fine, but likely in need of updates as well. The shared spaces on the MUW campus were nice. Proper funding could make the MUW campus a sustainable location for the future of MSMS.

MSU - this proposal was surprising with the integration into the Starkville High campus. I think this is a bad idea and part of what makes MSMS culture special. MSMS kids are academically different and more focused on academic success than traditional students. MSMS kids are interested in escaping the stereotypes, the high school drama, and excited for a learning environment with more students like them and being pushed by the caliber of faculty MSMS maintains. MSU location, not integrated with Starkville High, would provide more interest and acceptance from parents considering to allow their child to enroll at MSMS.

Please do your best to make the best decision for some of the state's most academically talented students and the high caliber faculty. MSMS deserves adequate funding, with a mix of students from all areas of the state. Please reach out for any additional information that I may provide.

MSMS has my full support.

Sincerely,

Brandy Williams

Mother of Jackson, Allison, and Carly

15034 East Shadow Creek Drive  
Biloxi, MS 39532  
228-243-1374