

**OFFICE OF CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER**  
**Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Item**  
**Other Business**  
**March 20, 2025**

**MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

01. Action: Discussion of the RFPs submitted for the possible relocation of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science

**Executive Summary**

On February 7, the SBE invited the MUW and MSU to submit proposals that would increase enrollment opportunities and enhance educational programming for MSMS students. At the February 20<sup>th</sup> SBE meeting, the Board appointed an MSMS subcommittee to review and rate the proposals. At the subcommittee meeting on March 19, 2025, the subcommittee voted to recommend that the Board consider a proposal to relocate the MSMS to MSU, with the understanding that no changes to the location or operations of MSMS will occur without legislative action and appropriation of necessary funding.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

**A Proposal from Mississippi University for Women to Continue, and to Grow, the Partnership with  
the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science on the MUW Campus  
Submitted to the State Board of Education, February 25, 2025**

The Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) was established by an act of the Mississippi Legislature in 1987 as a “residential school for eleventh and twelfth grade high school students” for the purpose of educating “the gifted and talented students of the state.” The designated primary academic emphasis is mathematics and science, but provision is also made for an emphasis on arts and humanities. The law establishing the school specifies that it is to be located on the campus of Mississippi University for Women (MUW) and that it will be governed by the State Board of Education. The Board is also charged with developing a plan for funding the school and preparing an annual budget for the school.

**Strengths and Distinguishing Capabilities of MUW that Benefit MSMS**

**Experience.** MUW is in its 37<sup>th</sup> year of a partnership with MSMS. MUW faculty wrote the Rationale, the Proposal, and the Plan for establishing MSMS. MUW faculty and staff understand the special needs of gifted students and have worked with MSMS to establish a safe, supportive environment that will allow these special students to thrive, both academically and personally. Students are never more than five minutes by foot from their classrooms, library, dining hall, health center, and recreation center, and the campus police, in close proximity to residences and classes, know them and watch out for them. MUW will continue to work with MSMS to address the evolving needs of the MSMS students as the school grows.

**Expanded Academic Support.** MUW and MSMS have had a dual-credit and dual-enrollment partnership for almost 30 years. For the 2025-26 academic year we have increased course offerings available for dual credit/enrollment to 41. All current MSMS students are enrolled as MUW dual-credit students. MUW has always provided MSMS students with tuition waivers for all dual-credit/enrollment courses and will continue that practice. MUW will also waive tuition for summer courses for MSMS.

**Expanded research/course opportunities.** MSMS students have long had research opportunities at MUW and MSU, but MUW is also facilitating partnerships with other research institutions in the IHL system (Jackson State University, University of Mississippi, and University of Southern Mississippi) that will allow increased research, mentoring, and course opportunities for MSMS.

**New Agreements with MSMS.** MUW is proposing, among other programs, a **joint honors experience** with The W’s Ida E. Gordy Honors College; access to MUW’s **Artificial Intelligence Lab** for faculty and students; **mentorship** opportunities with various campus departments; opportunities to earn **Academic Certificates** after completing 12 semester hours of courses in a variety of specialized fields; **MSMS Saturday Institute**, a monthly enrichment program on special topics; expanded joint educational experiences in the **fine and performing arts**; and access to the **Plymouth Bluff Environmental Center**, a 190-acre nature and research facility for hands-on, field-based environmental science study.

**Facilities.** For the past two years MUW and MSMS have worked together on MUW’s new Master Plan to ensure that MSMS’s present and future needs are being addressed. Currently MUW provides MSMS with 164,519 square feet of dedicated space in ten buildings, including residence halls, classrooms, and offices for faculty, staff, and administration. There is also 242,528 square feet of shared space in six buildings. The Master Plan provides for growth for MSMS, including space for new buildings and/or renovation of existing buildings, for both residential and academic purposes. There is space for MSMS to continue to operate on the MUW campus while construction takes place so that there is no disruption to the academic year. Funding for MSMS has not kept pace with the school’s needs; MUW has space for the Board of Education and the Legislature to address the facility priorities of MSMS.

Although there is political pressure to relocate MSMS to Starkville with connections to MSU and, possibly, the Starkville-Oktibbeha schools, we urge the State Board of Education to move beyond the narrowly focused politics and act in the best interests of the MSMS students. As gifted as they are, they are still high school students. The partnership between MSMS and MUW is a proven success; the decision to keep MSMS at MUW rather than start over in another location is both fiscally responsible and academically sound and will continue to provide a safe, supportive environment in which these students can thrive and prepare themselves for lives of influence and service.

## Scope of Work/Area of Focus

### 1. Academics

Objective: Enhance the high school's academic offerings through access to adjunct faculty and additional research opportunities. Implementation should include, but is not limited to:

- *Tuition waiver for dual-credit classes*

MUW and MSMS were pioneers in dual-credit and dual-enrollment programs. Since 1998 MUW has provided MSMS students with both dual-credit and dual-enrollment options. There are no restrictions on the number of hours MSMS students may earn at MUW while enrolled at MSMS. MSMS students may enroll in any MUW course for which the student meets the prerequisites or, as appropriate, by permission of the instructor. MUW has always provided tuition waivers for MSMS students enrolled in courses for both dual credit and dual enrollment. Over the past ten years, MSMS students have earned over 16,500 credit hours with a tuition value of over \$5 million. Presently all MSMS students are enrolled at MUW for some form of college credit. MSMS students have never had to pay tuition at MUW while enrolled at MSMS, and that policy will continue as MSMS expands its enrollment and MUW expands its course offerings for MSMS. For additional information, see *Articulation agreements for coursework* below.

- *Access to professors of the arts as adjunct faculty*

When MSMS first opened, an MUW art professor served as an adjunct at MSMS. MSMS has had a full-time faculty member in art since the fourth year of the school. MSMS also has a long-time, full-time faculty member in music. However, MUW offers dual-credit and dual-enrollment in art and music classes, including studio art and music ensembles. As the need arises, MUW could consider an adjunct arrangement for designated MSMS courses. MSMS students may also participate in MUW theatre productions through the normal audition process.

- *Network support for required assessments*

MUW provides WConnect portal access to all MSMS students and staff, granting them access to essential university resources. Through WConnect, users can utilize Banner Self-Service applications; stay informed with Campus News feeds; navigate Library Resources; access Campus Maps; access Canvas (the learning management system), including assessment processes; and use the WConnect Mobile app for streamlined connectivity to university services. The W provides Office 365 and GSuite (Gmail and Google Productivity Apps) to MSMS students enrolled in MUW dual-enrollment courses. All MSMS students are presently enrolled for college credit at MUW.

- *Access to research labs*

MUW has six well-equipped science labs that support the research of seven faculty members. MSMS students have had the opportunity to work with MUW faculty on their research, and MUW faculty are eager to have MSMS students involved in their work. In addition to MUW research, MSMS students historically have had research opportunities at MSU, but new agreements will also facilitate partnerships with the University of Mississippi, Jackson State University, and the University of Southern Mississippi for research, mentoring, and courses.

- *Access to college library*

MUW's Fant Memorial Library is also the MSMS library. MSMS has full use of the 50,000-square-foot facility, including the study rooms and technology labs. The library is open seven days per week (except holidays), but students have card-swipe access to a designated space during closed hours. MUW has installed a designated WiFi network for MSMS throughout the library.

Fant Library has fourteen ADA-accessible, reservable study rooms, equipped with modular seating, whiteboards, touch screen monitors, airplay monitors, and HDMI monitors. In 2024, 4501 reservations for

study spaces were made by MSMS students. MSMS students are frequent users of the Library Fabrication Laboratory's ("FabLab") with its 3D printing and scanning technologies. MSMS Students account for about 25% of the usage of the Creator Studio (media content creation lab). They have assignments that require their use of that space, and MSMS faculty coordinate with us.

MSMS students have been given the full borrowing privileges of undergraduate students, which gives them access to the catalogs of dozens of libraries, including northeast Mississippi public libraries and libraries of Delta State University, EMCC, and Mississippi State University. Students can borrow an unlimited number of items, and there are no late fees. MSMS students have full access to interlibrary loans free of charge, and they are heavy users of the system. MSMS students who are dual enrolled have full access to our 119 online databases and thousands of proprietary and open-access journals; presently all MSMS students are dual enrolled.

MUW library faculty provide instruction to MSMS classes on request. In 2024, 16 MSMS classes (with 255 students total) requested a library instruction session, wherein a librarian taught their students how to access and use the in-person and online resources and services.

MUW Archives houses the MSMS collections. MSMS students have used the MUW Library Archives for research for their Tales from the Crypt research and presentations. Students also use the archives for research related to their "Hometown Heroes" project. For these projects, classes come to learn about the archives and how to use them before making individual research appointments.

MSMS students are able to participate in the MUW Office of Undergraduate Research's annual on-campus symposium to present in-progress and completed research. Students print black and white and color prints in the library free of charge. They also have access to the wide-format printer for large posters for their research presentations. We work with the administration to cover those costs so that the students do not have to bear them.

MSMS students attend and participate in frequent (at least 2 per month) co-curricular and extra-curricular events in the library, such as "Music in the Library" concerts, author speaker series, and literacy events. MSMS students also participate in National History Day, hosted by MUW and located in the library, and students and staff have collaborated on planning campus events, such as Banned Books Week and the Community Read project.

- *Articulation agreements for coursework.*

MUW has regularly provided fourteen **dual credit** courses for MSMS students, most of which meet standard general education requirements at universities. MUW and MSMS have been working for months to expand these offerings; to date, forty-one courses have been designated as dual-credit options. MSMS students also may enroll in any MUW course for which they meet the prerequisites while at MSMS; all MSMS students receive tuition waivers for any MUW courses they choose to take.

MSMS teaches courses at the Honors level or above. MUW proposes to offer MSMS students a **joint honors experience** through the Ina E. Gordy Honors College, with a transcript honors designation if they complete three sections of HO 101 Honors Forum, a one-credit-hour evening class featuring invited speakers, films, and performances, along with special activities that expose students to the history, culture, and opportunities for engagement that exist locally and on campus.

MUW proposes to allow MSMS students and faculty to use its **Artificial Intelligence Laboratory**. The lab is equipped with workstations, each equipped with 12-core Intel Xeon W5-2545 processors, NVIDIA RAM, and 27-inch dual monitors.

Students who complete 12 credit hours through dual enrollment at MUW in a specialized field will be recognized with an **Academic Certificate**, acknowledging their focused collegiate studies. Possibilities for areas might include Biochemistry, Business Administration, Calculus, Civics, Communication Skills, Field Biology, Global Perspectives, Health Science, Inquiry-Based Learning in Biology, Inquiry-Based Learning in Chemistry/Physics, Inquiry-Based Learning in Mathematics, Music, Pre-Engineering, Research Design, Science Research, and Wellness.

The W proposes to offer the **MSMS Saturday Institute**, once-a-month enrichment opportunities for MSMS scholars during the academic year. These sessions will focus on hands-on learning, service-based

projects, and interdisciplinary exploration, allowing students to apply their knowledge in STEM, humanities, and leadership development. Possibilities for Institutes might include Mississippi's Scientific Heritage, Cybersecurity & AI Ethics, Creative Digital Arts & Storytelling, CPR, Forensics & Criminal Investigations, and others. Through its Culinary Arts Institute, The W proposes to offer 1-2 hour Saturday classes demonstrating culinary techniques.

MUW proposes to provide at least 20 MSMS students with **mentorship** opportunities across various university departments. This initiative will allow students to explore potential career fields, gain valuable insights into their intended college majors, and engage in experiential learning with university faculty and professionals. Through mentor visits, departmental engagement, and structured reflection activities, MSMS students will develop a deeper understanding of their academic and professional aspirations, ensuring they are well-prepared for future educational and career opportunities.

MUW currently allows MSMS faculty and students to utilize our **Learning Management System (LMS)**, Canvas, for all dual-enrollment courses. The W proposes to host ALL MSMS courses on this LMS. Through the LMS, MUW will extend access to its secure online testing platform, Respondus, ensuring MSMS students can complete assessments in a controlled environment that prevents unauthorized browsing and external resource use. Currently all MSMS students are enrolled in MUW courses.

MUW proposes to provide MSMS students with access to the **Plymouth Bluff Environmental Center**, a 190-acre nature and research facility located along the Tombigbee River. The center offers hands-on learning experiences in environmental science, ecology, and outdoor education, with dedicated classrooms, laboratories, and miles of trails for field-based study. By utilizing this resource, MSMS students can participate in research projects, ecological studies, and immersive learning experiences that complement their academic coursework in the sciences.

MSMS has been recognized as having the best public high school faculty in the nation. On multiple occasions, individual faculty members have been recognized at both the national and state level for teaching excellence in their disciplines. The W proposes to engage MSMS teachers with MUW's **Connie & Tom Kossen Center for Teaching & Learning**, according to their interests, to participate in faculty development workshops and to provide a space for the outreach programs to Mississippi teachers that MSMS faculty lead.

MUW's **Department of Music** welcomes MSMS students' participation in a variety of musical activities and ensembles. MSMS students have previously joined the Community Band, which is open to all participants without formal course registration. Additionally, MSMS students are invited to audition for and participate in The W's Wind Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, and Chamber Singers choir. Several MSMS students have also taken piano and voice lessons through The W, and the department offers brass, woodwind, guitar, and composition lessons, which are available to MSMS students who express interest. These opportunities allow students to develop their musical talents in a collegiate setting while engaging with experienced faculty and fellow musicians. All MSMS students enrolled in MUW music courses have access to the practice rooms in Poindexter Hall.

MUW's **Department of Theatre** has provided performance and technical support to MSMS students. The department makes its theatre space available for the MSMS spring production. Additionally, faculty and staff have assisted MSMS students with lighting, scenery, and stagecraft, including preparation for competition. Beyond performance opportunities, The W's theatre faculty have also provided mentorship in technical theatre, allowing MSMS students to gain hands-on experience in production design, stage management, and technical operations for university productions.

MUW offers the advanced mathematics and science courses that students need for applying to **engineering** programs. MSMS has a full-time instructor of engineering on staff.

## 2. Residential Life and Facilities

Objective: Provide a structured and supportive residential experience for high school students while ensuring safety and integration within the college setting. Implementation should include, but is not limited to:

- *Designated modern dorms for high school students only*

Two residential facilities continue to be designated for MSMS students. Goen and Frazer Hall are both 46,437 square feet. These facilities were built in 1967 and 1968 and can house 200 students each, including the Residential Director and Assistants. Both facilities had major bathroom renovations in the summer of 2024 with new interior paint in Goen. In the summer of 2025, Frazer will receive new interior paint.

MSMS has been an active participant throughout MUW's Master Planning process. In the Master Plan two spaces have been identified for new facilities. One or both could be residential. There are also two vacant residential facilities that could be renovated and dedicated to MSMS, Fant and Peyton Halls. The approximate cost to renovate one of these buildings is \$22 million. A new residential facility that houses approximately 400 students is estimated at \$35 million.

- *Support from the university's housing and recruitment offices for MSMS residential staff*

MSMS maintains completely separate operations from MUW's Housing and Residence Life Office. MUW and MSMS collaborate on the use of residential facilities for summer camps, and MUW has provided space for MSMS students when MSMS facilities are under construction. MUW has explored cost savings through contract sharing, but to date, no housing related contracts have been joined. MUW is open to developing a closer relationship with MSMS for residential staff.

- *Cross train MSMS residential life staff with the university's residential life staff*

MUW provides training and professional development as needed, but this is currently done in a very limited capacity. MUW is willing to expand opportunities for collaboration in training and professional development as appropriate and specific to MSMS's needs.

- *Student access to campus mental health counseling and services*

A Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner has recently joined the health center staff and is providing at least one full day of mental health resources to all those on campus, including our MSMS partners. These services are free to MSMS students. MSMS also currently contracts with an outside firm for counseling services.

The MUW Counseling Center would need additional staff to serve the MSMS population. This could be accomplished through contracting with MUW for specific services annually or through an increase to the Health Fee that is currently applied to the Campus Health Center. Either option would provide access to a licensed professional counselor dedicated to serving MSMS students and housed in MSMS facilities. Best practice standards suggest that three licensed counselors would be needed to provide full-time access and 24/7 emergency on-call response. The estimated cost is \$160,000 to cover salaries and fringe benefits of three licensed counselors (\$52,000 ea.), and an additional \$4,000 for professional development, equipment, and supplies. There would be no cost to the students.

- *Specific residential area with dedicated security*

At this time, there is not a demonstrated need to provide additional security on the MUW campus for the MSMS residential areas as they are situated in the South campus residential footprint that is patrolled by campus police. Additionally, the residence halls are staffed 24/7 with resident assistants. However, additional growth and construction could result in the need for additional staff in the coming years. As we evaluate needs annually, we are willing to add staff and/or services if MSMS secures funding required to do so. Funding for each additional certified officer would be about \$65,000.

- *Opportunity to reserve meeting spaces on campus as needed for outreach and summer activities*

In addition to MSMS's designated spaces, all university spaces are available for outreach and summer activities, as well as routine programs and special events throughout the academic year. Reservations are made through an on-line system that allows the user to see what is available and to make a request. MSMS is not charged for the use of MUW spaces for these activities. Spaces include, but are not limited to, Nissan Auditorium (seats 444); Rent Auditorium (seats 1,218); Pope Banquet Hall (capacity 225); Stark Recreation

(41,584 sq.ft. with rooms of various sizes); Pohl Gymnasium (47,662 sq.ft.); Cochran Ball Room (capacity 150); residential space for summer events; W Room event space; Plymouth Bluff Conference Center; MUW classrooms.

- *Provide facility support for plumbing, HVAC, electrical, locksmith, carpentry, custodial, technology, etc. as needed along with summer maintenance support*

MUW provides plumbing, HVAC, electrical, locksmith, carpentry, and custodial services for year-round services. Based on Association of Physical Plant Administrators (APPA) maintenance standards, the maintenance levels for the facilities available to MSMS and the age of the structures are recommended to be at a Level 2 Comprehensive Maintenance at \$6.00 a square foot with a regional adjustment of up to 5%. Level 2 maintenance is for high-use facilities and ensures preventive maintenance is present and proactive repairs. It does not include technology support.

APPA's maintenance standards focus on keeping a facility in operational condition and do not include capital improvements. Maintenance (covered in APPA levels) includes routine upkeep (e.g., HVAC servicing, plumbing repairs, painting, and lighting maintenance), preventive maintenance (e.g., inspections, filter changes, and lubrication of equipment), minor corrective repairs (e.g., fixing leaks and replacing worn-out parts), and custodial services and general upkeep. Capital Improvements (not covered in APPA levels) include major renovations or system replacements (e.g., full roof replacement and new HVAC system), structural upgrades (e.g., foundation reinforcement and seismic retrofitting), expansions, redesigns or major remodels, and energy efficiency projects requiring significant investment.

Maintenance costs (APPA levels) are operational expenses handled within the annual budget. Capital improvements are typically capital expenses requiring separate funding sources such as bonds, grants, or capital reserves.

MUW has an on-campus networking team and would be willing to discuss the needs of MSMS and how we could partner to produce efficiencies with asset sharing. MUW and MSMS have common platforms that could be leveraged as cost sharing, such as residence hall management software, and the Canvas Learning Management Systems. MUW can also provide additional network support, desktop support, Internet circuit, and VoIP support on a negotiated cost and needs basis.

- *Designated parking for students and staff including meeting the parking needs of potential expansion of enrollment in the future*

MUW provides dedicated parking spaces for residential students around student housing. MSMS students have parking in close proximity to their residence halls. Faculty and staff also have dedicated spaces that are delineated from student parking. Any new facility built on campus will include designated parking near the facility. As a result of the new Master Plan for campus, the campus will have designated pedestrian zones and will increase parking spaces by 10%.

- *Landscaping and grounds support*

MUW provides general grounds maintenance and landscaping. MUW has a Grounds department with a Grounds and Landscaping Manager and eight employees that maintain 140 acres. General maintenance is a part of the APPA maintenance levels which include routine lawn care, basic tree and shrub maintenance, and seasonal upkeep. Major landscaping renovations such as new irrigation systems, large scale tree removal, new hardscape installations, and extensive redesign are not covered in the APPA standard cost per square foot.

- *Access to the campus post office*

MUW has an on-campus, centrally located post office that provides dedicated mailboxes to MSMS and MSMS students. Post boxes are provided to MSMS students through an arrangement with MSMS so that MSMS students do not have to pay for the mailboxes. MSMS can send and receive USPS mail and

packages, purchase stamps, and send items via postal service priority packaging. The post office is also a pickup and drop off point for FedEx and UPS.

- *Support from campus police for security, emergency calls and support*

MUW employs state-certified police officers that provide 24/7 campus patrol and emergency response to the campus, which includes MSMS. Officers are members of the campus crisis action team and Health & Safety Committee (which also include MSMS representation), and they provide the campus with consultations, program partnerships, and regular safety bulletins. They provide security and parking assistance for campus events, as well as ID card services and swipe access to multiple buildings. Officers also provide after-hours security escorts upon request. Security is also supported by a campus closed-camera system. Staffing is assessed annually and adjusted as needed based on campus data. MSMS currently pays an annual Security Fee of only \$32,000. The cost of a full-time officer is \$65,000. Safety Data is available at <https://www.muw.edu/police/clery/> (Note: 2024 report isn't published until Oct. 1).

### 3. Food Services

Objective: Ensure that high school students have access to nutritious and age-appropriate meal plans. Implementation should include, but is not limited to:

- *Collaborate with college's food service provider to create a specialized meal plan for MSMS*

Food services at MUW is an outsourced enterprise with Sodexo, which has exclusive food service rights on the university campus. Meal plans can include options for students to have flex dollars in addition to cafeteria meal swipes. Sodexo can offer flex dollar usage at the Fant Memorial Library coffee shop, Common Grounds; Subway in the Hogarth Student Union; and vending areas on campus. Sodexo also provides access to a registered dietitian who will meet with students individually to determine dietary needs. Sodexo is committed to offer nutritious meals to the university community and to take extra steps for people with special dietary needs.

The cafeteria serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner Monday through Friday, and on weekends serves brunch and dinner. The lunch and dinner meals include healthy options of fresh fruit, a salad bar, a soup option, a meat and vegetable option, a grill line, a sandwich line, a selection of pizzas and pasta, and a dessert bar. In addition to the unlimited daily food options, MSMS has a variety of hot and cold beverages to choose from. A trip to the cafeteria allows the students to eat as much as they like while they are there.

Sodexo can offer different plans that include a certain number of meals in the cafeteria and some flex dollars. Meal Plan options include unlimited meals in the cafeteria, 18 meals per week and \$75 flex dollars, 15 meals per week and \$250 flex dollars, or 12 meals per week and \$375 flex dollars.

- *Establish a dining schedule that integrates into MSMS academic schedule and weekend schedule*

Sodexo is required to provide food services for residential students based on the academic calendar.

- *Consider a card swipe system for food services per meal rather than a prepaid plan*

Food services at MUW is an outsourced enterprise with Sodexo, which has exclusive food service rights on the university campus. Sodexo is willing to offer a variety of meal plans for MSMS to choose from.

- *Identify location of food services for high school students*

Food service locations on the MUW campus include the Hogarth Dining Services cafeteria, Subway, and Common Grounds. The university can continue to provide a dedicated space of 4,200 sq.ft. exclusively for MSMS in the main cafeteria. MSMS also has access to shared areas with MUW students that currently include Subway and Common Grounds.



#### 4. Student Affairs

Objective: Enrich student life through participation in extracurricular activities while maintaining high school identity and traditions. Implementation should include, but is not limited to:

- *Access to Campus ID system for students*

MUW manages ID printing services for MSMS students, ensuring they receive identification cards for use in on-campus retail spaces, including the cafeteria, coffee shop, and library. These ID cards allow students to seamlessly access campus amenities while integrating with existing university systems.

- *Access to career center*

MSMS students have full access to the comprehensive career services of MUW's Career Services and Professional Development Center (CSPD Center), including career assessments and advising, résumé and cover letter reviews, interview preparation, employer connections, and professional development workshops.

The Strong Interest Inventory is utilized to provide in-depth career assessments. This tool analyzes students' interest patterns to identify academic, vocational, and leisure pursuits aligned with their strengths and preferences.

Workshops are designed to enhance career readiness competencies as identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). Key topics include workplace communication, professionalism, networking, business etiquette, and best practices for résumés and cover letters. These workshops can be customized to meet the specific needs of various student groups.

The CSPD Center places a strong emphasis on emotional intelligence (EI), a critical set of emotional and social skills that influence self-awareness, relationship management, adaptability, and decision-making. EI has gained significant importance in the business sector, with 75% of Fortune 500 companies incorporating it into hiring and training processes. Furthermore, a Forbes study of over 2,600 hiring managers found that 71% value emotional quotient over IQ. As artificial intelligence becomes more integrated into the workforce, the importance of emotional intelligence continues to rise, as it represents a uniquely human capability. EI often serves as a key factor in promotion decisions.

In addition to workshops, students have the opportunity to enroll in a specialized course offered by the CSPD Center: *Career Readiness through Emotional Intelligence*. This course leverages the EQ-i 2.0 inventory to assess students' emotional intelligence competencies and provides training to develop these skills for practical application in the workplace. CSPD Center staff contextualize these competencies through a workforce lens, demonstrating their relevance to real-world situations.

The CSPD Center maintains strong relationships with employers around the State of Mississippi, providing students with valuable opportunities for networking, internships, and employment. Events such as career fairs, employer on-campus presentations, and visits to employer facilities are regularly organized to connect students directly with industry professionals. Through these engagements, students, faculty, and staff gain insight into industry trends, learn best practices from professionals, and develop meaningful connections that support their career growth. Employer Partners include Ingalls Shipbuilding, Columbus Air Force Base, PACCAR, The Dutch Group, Baptist Memorial Hospital – Golden Triangle, Mississippi State Capitol Visitor Services, Columbus Housing Authority, and other organizations local to Columbus, Mississippi.

Training in emotional intelligence is a valuable complement to the rigorous academic environment of MSMS. Emotional intelligence has been identified as the strongest predictor of individual performance and leadership potential. By integrating emotional intelligence training with academic learning, the CSPD Center aims to bridge the gap between academic success and professional performance, equipping students with essential skills for the modern workforce.

- *Access to campus events*

MUW's public and student events, such as speaker series, book talks, concerts, fairs, and athletic events, are open to MSMS students at no cost, subject to approval by MSMS. MSMS has opted for programming to remain separate with limited exceptions. We have discussed the possibility of shared contracts for events through meetings with chief student affairs officer. To date, MSMS has not asked to explore this option further.

If MSMS desires to develop programming beyond the current model or enhance the MSMS leadership experience, we could create pathways for more collaboration in campus-wide events such as MSMS membership on subcommittees for the Student Programming Board. Student involvement in these elevated leadership roles can result in learning outcomes related to leadership, project and time management, critical thinking, and student advocacy. Joint sponsorship of events might require some programming funds from MSMS.

- *Access to Health Center*

The Campus Health Center is centrally located in the Eckford Building and provides health services to the University community and their families, as well as MSMS students, faculty, and staff. Ambulatory care and health education are the goals of the Campus Health Center. No fee is charged for routine visits of MSMS and MUW campus students, faculty, or staff. There is a nominal charge to cover the cost of medications, supplies, labs, and complete physical exams if needed for those using the Health Center. It is staffed by nurse practitioners who are faculty members in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. The nurse practitioners in their expanded role are licensed to diagnose and treat health-related conditions and are able to order tests, write prescriptions, and refer to specialists as needed. The protocols for treatment are developed in conjunction with the Mississippi Board of Nursing and a collaborating physician. A psychiatric nurse practitioner has recently joined the health center staff and is providing at least one full day of mental health resources to all those on campus, including our MSMS partners. The hours of operation for the Health Center are 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. The RN / Health Center Coordinator, staff, and a nurse practitioner are available during these hours of operation. The Health Center has five patient rooms, an office for the nurse practitioner on duty, a front desk, an office for the nurse coordinator, and a small laboratory for onsite testing.

Currently, the campus Health Center has a very open and supportive relationship with MSMS and its staff and students. They receive a schedule of our providers as well as communicate with the clinic regarding student appointments, referrals, and payments.

- *Access to wellness center with possible designated times and supervision for high school students*

MSMS students have full and unlimited access to the Stark Recreation Center (41,584 sq.ft.) and Pohl Gymnasium (47,662 sq.ft.) during the regular hours of operation with an option to reserve additional hours as needed. Stark Center has an indoor swimming pool, exercise equipment, free weights, and a basketball court. The gymnasium has two basketball courts and an indoor walking/running track. MSMS students have access to group fitness classes, free of charge, which are held in designated rooms in the Stark Center. Indoor facilities have accessible staff to serve all patrons during hours of operation. In FY24, MSMS students used the indoor facilities 4,746 times, which does not include times when facilities were reserved for special events, practices, and fairs. The Campus Recreation office communicates with MSMS on space utilization and assists in reservation of Recreation Center facilities. Athletics facilities used by MUW Athletics are also used by MSMS and booked through an online event management system. Campus Recreation personnel provide consultations with MSMS staff for health-related programs, such as intramurals, that are organized by MSMS.

Under the current model of operation and enrollment, there is not a demonstrated need for additional Campus Recreation staff to oversee MSMS activities. To provide designated times and supervision specifically for MSMS students would require additional personnel at an estimated cost of \$72,000.

Restricted hours and/or access would reduce this cost but would significantly limit the access to which MSMS students currently are accustomed.

- *Access to campus shuttle system*

MUW does not have a campus shuttle system, nor is there a need for one. MSMS students are never more than a five-minute walk from their residence halls to their classrooms, the library, the post office, the cafeteria, the health center, the recreation center, the gymnasium, or the MUW labs and classrooms. Facility access is both safe and convenient, and the students do not have to spend their valuable time in transit.

- *Access to sports fields for practice and events*

MSMS students have free access to the same campus sports facilities as MUW students.

## **5. Human Resources and Business Support**

Objective: Ensure appropriate staffing and administrative oversight to support high school students on a college campus. Implementation should include, but is not limited to:

- *Act as a fiscal agent for MSMS including payroll, accounts payable and purchasing cards*

MUW serves as the fiscal agent for MSMS, which includes accounts payable, accounts receivable, public procurement law processes, procurement cards, and maintaining grant financial transactions. MSMS will have access to their budget in MUW's ERP, Ellucian Banner. MSMS can request purchase requisitions in Banner based on MUW's procurement processes that adhere to Mississippi procurement laws. MUW maintains contract management software that MSMS uses to house and manage all contracts and related legal processes. MUW issues purchase cards to MSMS upon request and provides training for the proper use of such cards. As the fiscal agent, MUW processes all payroll and payments of invoices for MSMS.

- *Provide human resources support*

MUW will continue to provide human resources support for payroll, onboarding employees, offboarding employees, issue employment letters on behalf of MSMS for staff, and counsel new hires on eligible benefits. MUW can handle all payroll deductions, benefit payments, and garnishments. MUW utilizes a talent management system to post positions, track applicants and to approve hires, and perform annual performance review. Background checks incur an additional fee per individual based on the current market rate.

- *Allow staff to participate in university's employee benefits program*

MUW will continue to offer MSMS the same benefit programs as university employees. These benefits include, but are not limited to, Mississippi State and School Employee's Health Insurance, Mississippi Workers' Compensation Insurance, Mississippi employee retirement options available at the time of hire, Employee Assistance Programs, Supplemental Insurance options, Tax Deferred Annuity options, medical and child/dependent care reimbursement accounts, access to the MUW Employees' Federal Credit Union, a Sodexo meal plan ticket, access to Stark Recreation Center, on-campus Health Center, MUW Tuition Fee Waiver Plan, and Faculty/Staff Apartments. Stark Recreation Center membership is offered at a 67% discount from community rates. Faculty/Staff Apartments are available to rent at the same below-market rates MUW faculty/staff pay for the first three years. Although the Tuition Fee Waiver for faculty/staff is available to MSMS, they have chosen not to participate. A full listing of benefits can be found at <https://www.muw.edu/hr/employees/benefits/>.

- *Include MSMS staff on the campus crisis action team*

MUW operates under the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command Structure (ICS). ICS is a critical component of NIMS and is used to manage all incidents. ICS is used to organize on-scene operations for a broad spectrum of emergencies from small to complex incidents, both natural and man-made. The field response level is where emergency management/response personnel, under command

of an appropriate authority, carry out tactical decisions and activities in direct response to an incident or threat. Resources from the federal, state, tribal, or local levels, when appropriately deployed, become part of the field ICS as prescribed by the local authority. MUW has two response teams, the Crisis Action Team (CAT) and the Incident Response Team (IRT). MSMS will continue to be included in both teams. One or both teams are activated as needed to respond to all types of emergencies and scheduled campus drills. MUW also utilizes an emergency response notification system that includes text messaging that will continue to include MSMS and campus guests.

- *Identify a communication liaison from the university to MSMS*

MUW will provide a single campus liaison for planning purposes and to escalate issues that cannot be handled through primary communication channels. At a minimum, MUW will schedule quarterly meetings with MSMS leadership to assess and address any issues that may arise. Primary communication channels include the Campus Police Department, facility maintenance issues work order system, reservations request system, and the contract management system.

#### **Established timeline for implementation.**

All additions and revisions to an MUW – MSMS partnership can be implemented in the 2025-2026 academic year, with the exception of facility construction.

#### **Budget detailing funding sources outside of the annual legislative appropriation.**

MUW does not have funding sources for MSMS outside of legislative sources and funding through the State Department of Education, although the discounted services that MUW provides to MSMS should be considered as a “funding source.” MUW has provided a significant service to the State of Mississippi by partnering with MSMS on the campus of MUW, and this partnership is one that MUW greatly values. It is also a partnership that MSMS has benefited from because of MUW’s operating efficiencies and the availability of space.

MSMS’s budget for FY2025 includes a business maintenance fee to MUW of \$113,000, a health fee of \$42,075, a library fee of \$42,075, an accounting fee of \$32,000, a security fee of \$32,000, and a wellness facility fee of \$10,250. These fees were the same for FY2024. MSMS has 164,519 dedicated square footage; the **maintenance fee calculates to 69 cents per square foot**, well short of the \$6.00 per square foot recommended by the Association of Physical Plant Administrators standards. MSMS also shares 242,528 square feet of space with MUW; the 69 cents per square foot does not cover shared space. Not one of the other fees covers the cost of a full-time person in any of the areas. The overall cost of hosting MSMS is discounted by almost 90%.

MUW has also provided tremendous benefits to the students of MSMS through dual-credit and dual-enrollment programs for almost 30 years. Over the last 10 years, for example, MSMS students have earned 16,529 credit hours of university courses with a tuition value of \$5,071,427.

MSMS is woefully underfunded when compared with comparable programs in neighboring states; MSMS’s funding is **\$16,000 less per student** than the average funding of programs in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Alabama (2 schools). We are hopeful that the Board of Education and the Mississippi Legislature are committed to funding adequately the facilities and programs of MSMS. We are confident that MUW will be the most cost-effective place for MSMS to continue its highly-successful educational programming.

#### **Contact information for a primary point of contact within the institution.**

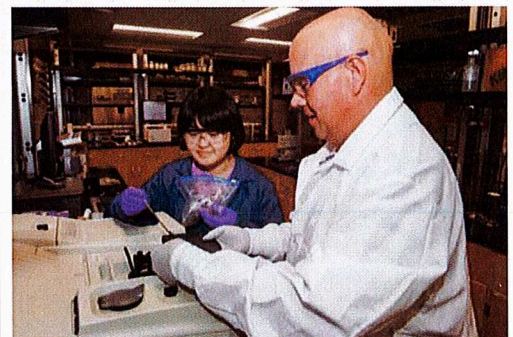
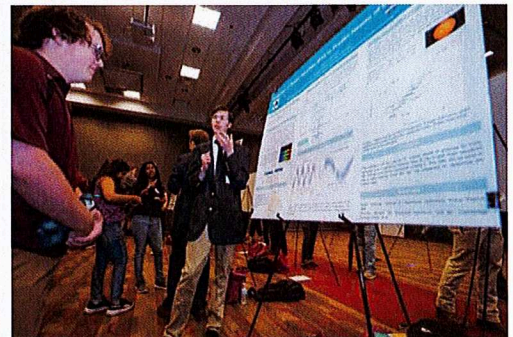
Nora Miller, President  
Mississippi University for Women  
1100 College Street—MUW 1600  
Columbus, MS 39701  
Office: (662) 329-7100  
Cell: (662) 889-2478  
nrmiller@muw.edu





# THE FUTURE OF THE MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

A Proposal for MSMS Expansion  
Submitted by Mississippi State University  
February 24, 2025



**Contact: Dr. David Shaw**  
Provost and Executive Vice President  
Mississippi State University  
Office of the Provost & Executive Vice President  
3500 Lee Hall  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
662-325-3742  
[david.shaw@msstate.edu](mailto:david.shaw@msstate.edu)





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mississippi State University (MSU) and the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District (SOCSD) seek to expand their existing partnership in a revolutionary approach to college and career readiness for the State of Mississippi. Through the Mississippi School for Math and Science Expansion (MSMS:E), MSU, SOCSD, and MSMS will be on the forefront of secondary education by partnering to house a new standard high school and a new residential magnet school focused on science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM). A new STEAM-focused specialty school adjacent to MSU's campus will provide high-achieving students from across our state the opportunity to attend a future-focused residential high school in partnership with an R-1 designated research university.

Uniquely and ideally situated adjacent to the MSU campus, MSMS:E will provide Mississippi's top high school students and future leaders rigorous, multidisciplinary courses in tailored programs of study to prepare them for careers in high-demand STEAM fields. While presented in a cross-curricular learning environment, the programs of study will be geared toward career paths that are needed to meet Mississippi's workforce development needs, such as health sciences, defense industry, cyber security, engineering, manufacturing technology, data science, biotechnology and arts in the digital age. State-of-the-art facilities – from science and engineering labs to a creative arts complex – will maximize teaching and learning as students develop the skills and knowledge needed to successfully compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

MSMS:E students will take career-focused, college-level courses while having unique research and experiential learning opportunities. They will be mentored by the top academic and research faculty at MSU who are nationally recognized in fields that the students have an interest in pursuing. MSMS:E students will have numerous dual enrollment choices at MSU in both general education and career focused courses, particularly in STEAM fields. They will also have an opportunity to be dual enrolled in the SOCSD, which will allow MSMS:E students to take Advanced Placement and other specialized courses with SOCSD students, experience extracurricular activities with SOCSD, and build relationships and comradery with SOCSD students and faculty.

MSU, with its vast array of business and industry partners, will also work to provide meaningful experiential learning and internship opportunities so that MSMS:E students can have a richer secondary school experience – exposing them to hands-on learning in fields they are interested in pursuing as a career. These experiences will forge a strong connection between MSMS:E students and Mississippi employers, which will inevitably lead to more high-achieving students staying in Mississippi after college.

MSMS:E will meet the changing and growing workforce development needs of the State of Mississippi, address brain drain by providing opportunities for our highest performing students to see tangible career options here at home and prepare our best and brightest high school students to excel in areas critical to Mississippi's future.

## INTRODUCTION

Mississippi State University (MSU) and the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District (SOCSD) made history during the school district's consolidation in 2013 by bringing together community and state leaders with university and school district leadership to create the one-of-a-kind Partnership Middle School, commonly referred to as the Partnership School. The Partnership School, which houses every sixth and seventh grade student in the newly consolidated school district on the MSU campus, has received national attention for its innovative partnership between a school district and a major research university. Through the Mississippi School for Math and Science Expansion (MSMS:E), MSU, SOCSD, and MSMS will launch a unique collaboration in a truly groundbreaking manner to further propel the State of Mississippi forward as a national leader in educational innovation.

Imagine the state's largest research institution, the local K12 schools and a statewide residential high school completely in sync, providing the most innovative secondary and post-secondary educational opportunities available. MSU, SOCSD and MSMS:E are poised to build such a partnership – an educational collaborative where families have choices among attending an A-rated college preparatory program, career-focused secondary pathways, and unique academic programs for gifted and talented students. The system allows families and students to explore all possibilities. For example, MSMS:E students could take a career/technical education (CTE) course at SOCSD, SOCSD students could take an advanced academic course at MSMS:E, and all students have access to dual credit courses at MSU. Imagine a system where enrollment is painless to navigate across institutions and state funding is maximized for the student's benefit. Imagine multiple educational institutions fully leveraging and sharing resources, minimizing duplication, and committed to decisions based on what is best for students, their futures, and the future of the state. It is a system designed to not only prepare students for jobs in Mississippi but intentionally connects them with those careers. This partnership will focus on keeping our best and brightest in Mississippi.

Since consolidation, the SOCSD has been successful in every metric, including academic achievement and enrollment. As just one measure of its success, the school district has ascended to an A-rating since consolidating with the underperforming county school district. However, these past achievements have highlighted the numerous shortcomings inherent to a dated high school facility that at present hinders growth and workforce opportunities for the district's students. The next step in pursuit of district excellence is clear: Provide a high school learning environment that fosters outstanding educational experiences in a brand-new facility. In addition to a new high school for



SOCSD, MSU and SOCSO aspire to be on the forefront of secondary education by partnering to house a new MSMS:E residential magnet school focused on science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM).

MSU has land adjacent to the current SOCSO-MSU Partnership School on Highway 182 that is ideally situated to host a new SOCSO high school and a new magnet school, with dual, and in some instances triple, use of these facilities to the benefit of all. SOCSO has committed up to \$86 Million of funding toward construction of new facilities. SOCSO and MSU see unlimited potential in combining an SOCSO high school with a new STEAM-focused magnet school. For example, the partnership would create a unique opportunity to bring an innovative facility that is well-justified by having all entities share a performing arts center. In addition, students and faculty would benefit from partnerships across the three entities, providing opportunities in the performing arts that are unparalleled. Other possibilities include sharing gymnasiums, outdoor practice fields, libraries, science labs, band hall, faculty, technology labs, counseling, career services, and wellness centers.

As is the case with the Partnership School, MSU will have classrooms and labs co-located in the new facilities which will facilitate collaboration among faculty, enhance learning for MSU students, and allow in-service teacher observation for instruction that can be brought back to their home districts. The partnership will also focus on creating dual enrollment options for SOCSO and MSMS:E students to work on early college credit and attain basic introduction to their post-secondary academic interests. Additionally, these schools will be utilized for both pre-service and in-service teacher education. Pre-service educators in MSU degree programs will observe and learn innovative practices they can bring to the schools that hire them after graduation. In-service educators will have opportunities for exchanges and internships that allow them to learn about curriculum development and teaching methodologies, which they can then apply in their home districts. One of the founding parts of MSMS's mission is to share teaching practices, curriculum, and innovative approaches with all teachers in the state. This partnership will rekindle that part of MSMS:E's mission, accelerating opportunities to work with the SOCSO teachers and leverage the scores of outreach activities MSU conducts already for K12 around the state.

The new SOCSO high school and MSMS:E located at the front door to MSU's campus will be transformational as one of its central design tenants is to be highly visible from the connecting transportation infrastructure and the MSU campus. The SOCSO high school/MSMS:E complex will be on the corner of George Perry Drive and Highway 182, which is the primary northern gateway to campus and the Thad Cochran Research, Technology, and Economic Development Park entrance. This location not only provides direct vehicular connectivity to various local and state roads and the core of campus, but allows direct access to campus, the Research Park, and the City of Starkville via bike lanes, sidewalks, multi-use paths, and the Starkville-MSU Area Rapid Transit (SMART) system.

SMART is an award-winning public transit system with over 6.5 million riders in the last 10 years. Currently, the Partnership School is a stop on the MSU North Route with service 12 months a year, five days a week from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. With the addition of MSMS:E, it is understood that additional service times will be needed to meet the transportation needs of the students, providing them access directly to the core of campus as well as the other retail, healthcare, and civic options that are served by SMART.

In addition to the various modes of transportation infrastructure that currently exist, the MSU Master Plan includes plans for improved bike and pedestrian infrastructure north through the Research Park to connect a potential rails-to-trails development connecting to downtown Starkville. Furthermore, given the recent annexation of the area east of the proposed site into the City of Starkville, MSU and city officials are exploring improvements along East Lee Boulevard that will include various multimodal improvements from the east side of campus to Highway 182, with specific discussions about bike and pedestrian connections to the Partnership School and proposed high school/MSMS:E complex. These proposed plans along with existing infrastructure will give users of the school complex various methods and routes for connectivity. In its 35+ years, MSMS students have never had access to this type of public transportation nor the extensive sidewalk and bike path system. This alone is a key component of how being at MSU significantly improves the quality of life and experience for the MSMS students and families.

## IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

MSU and SOCSO will initiate construction immediately upon provision of funds from the Legislature, with the goal of the new facility being completed by the start of the 2027-28 academic year. MSU and SOCSO are currently working with an architectural firm to develop plans for the new SOCSO facility on MSU property. It will be easy to expand the scope of the engagement to include MSMS:E.

If so desired by MDE, MSU and SOCSO are prepared to provide temporary housing and classroom facilities in the 2026-27 academic year by utilizing available space on both MSU and SOCSO campuses for housing and classrooms.

## BUDGET

SOCSD currently has \$86 million in bonding capacity that is committed to their new facility. MSU is providing land valued at \$5 million for utilization in this project. State funding of \$85 million is needed to construct new facilities for MSMS:E that its students need and deserve.





## SCOPE OF WORK/IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

### 1. Academics

**Objective:** Enhance the high school's academic offerings through access to adjunct faculty and additional research opportunities.

**Tuition waiver for dual credit classes:** Yes. Courses taught by MSMS:E faculty certified by MSU as instructors can teach dual credit courses at no additional cost to the students or the state.

**Access to professors of the arts as adjunct faculty:** Yes. MSU and SOCSO already have a strong track record of joint faculty hires in music education, and will expand that into additional faculty offerings across the spectrum of courses offered by MSMS:E.

**Network support for required assessments:** MSU and SOCSO currently work together seamlessly to provide network support for the Partnership School, and this support will be provided in the same way to MSMS:E. Not only will having MSU provide internet access improve the bandwidth available for MSMS:E, MSU will not charge MSMS:E for access, a cost savings for MSMS's annual budget.

**Access to research labs:** MSU already involves dozens of MSMS students in research laboratories (recent examples shown on the cover) and will enhance the opportunities with co-location. These offerings will be across the spectrum in all colleges and research centers. This initiative is carefully curated and managed to ensure a positive experience for the student and the MSU faculty. Students may also participate in annual research symposia and many other research events at MSU.

**Access to college library:** MSMS:E students will receive MSU- MSMS:E identification cards that provide direct access to library facilities.

**Articulation agreements for coursework:** MSU will enter into necessary articulation agreements with MSMS:E and SOCSO. Most, if not all, such agreements are currently in place but will need updating.

### 2. Residential Life and Facilities

**Objective:** Provide a structured and supportive residential experience for high school students while ensuring safety and integration within the college setting.

**Designated modern dorms for high school students only:** Upon a commitment of funding, MSU will construct a new modern residence hall exclusively for MSMS:E students. Facilities will include kitchen space, dining, and community spaces for students to gather for studying and leisure activities. This facility will be immediately adjacent to MSMS:E classrooms and the joint facilities with SOCSO. The residence hall will be completely separate from the MSU campus and residence halls by a residential neighborhood serving as a buffer.

**Support from the university's housing and recruitment offices for MSMS residential life staff:** MSU will offer support from the university's housing and recruitment offices to assist MSMS:E residential life staff.

**Crosstrain MSMS residential life staff with the university's residential life staff:** MSU will cross-train MSMS:E residential life staff with the university's residential life staff allowing for appropriate age-related differences in management.

**Student access to campus mental health counseling and services:** MSU will ensure that students have access to mental health counseling and services.

**Specific residential area with dedicated security:** MSU will provide a specific residential area with dedicated security. The MSMS:E residence hall will not be in close proximity to MSU's general student residence halls.

**Opportunity to reserve meeting spaces on campus as needed for outreach and summer activities:** MSU and SOCSO will offer the opportunity to reserve meeting spaces on campus for outreach and summer activities.

**Provide facility support for plumbing, HVAC, electrical, locksmith, carpentry, custodial, technology, etc. as needed along with summer maintenance support:** MSU and SOCSO will coordinate to provide all necessary facility and related maintenance needs, including support for plumbing, HVAC, electrical, locksmith, carpentry, custodial, technology, etc., along with summer maintenance support.

**Designated parking for students and staff including meeting the parking needs of potential expansion of enrollment in the future:** Designated parking will be available for MSMS:E students and staff, including addressing the parking needs of potential future enrollment expansion.



**Landscaping and grounds support:** MSU and SOCSO will coordinate to provide landscaping and grounds support, as is currently done with the Partnership School.

**Access to the campus post office:** MSU will ensure access to the campus post office.

**Support from campus police for security, emergency calls, and support:** MSU and SOCSO currently work with university and Starkville police, as well as SOCSO security personnel at the Partnership School. This arrangement has worked seamlessly, and will be expanded to include MSMS:E.

### 3. Food Services

**Objective:** Ensure that high school students have access to nutritious and age-appropriate meal plans.

**Collaborate with the college's food service provider to create a specialized meal plan for MSMS:** Both MSU and SOCSO have food services available. During the planning year we can finalize the approach for a specialized plan for MSMS:E students and staff.

**Establish a dining schedule that integrates into MSMS academic schedule and weekend schedule:** MSU and SOCSO will establish a dining schedule that integrates into the MSMS academic and weekend schedules.

**Consider a card swipe system for food services per meal rather than a prepaid plan:** MSU and SOCSO will explore implementing a card swipe system for food services per meal instead of a prepaid plan.

**Identify the location of food services for high school students:** The food services for MSMS:E will be on the site of the MSMS:E or SOCSO facilities, separate from MSU dining halls. Students would additionally have access to retail dining options in the MSU student union and other satellite locations on campus, such as the library.

### 4. Student Affairs

**Objective:** Enrich student life through participation in extracurricular activities while maintaining high school identity and traditions.

**Access to campus ID system for students:** MSU and SOCSO will provide access to the campus ID system for students. The ID design will visibly differentiate MSMS students from regular MSU students while providing them access to approved facilities.

**Access to career center:** MSU will provide access to the MSU Career Center, and students will have access to online resources and in-person career events.

**Access to campus events:** MSU will provide access to select campus events. Some campus events are only available with additional fees such as athletic events and concerts.

**Access to health center:** MSU will ensure access to the MSU health center. The Longest Student Health Center operates Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Medical emergencies or those taking place outside of normal business hours will be referred to OCH Regional Medical Center or another healthcare facility.

**Access to wellness center with possible designated times and supervision for high school students:** MSU will provide access to the wellness center with possible designated times and supervision for high school students. This includes access on evenings and weekends when the Sanderson Center, MSU's student recreation center, is open.

**Access to campus shuttle system:** MSU already has a shuttle stop at the Partnership School and will modify service times as needed to meet the needs of MSMS:E.

**Access to sports fields for practice and events:** MSU and SOCSO will partner to provide MSMS:E students with access to sports fields. We will explore opportunities for MSMS:E students to participate on the SOCSO teams for MHSAA competition sports.

### 5. Human Resources and Business Support

**Objective:** Ensure appropriate staffing and administrative oversight to support high school students on a college campus.

**Act as a fiscal agent for MSMS including payroll, accounts payable, and purchasing cards:** MSU and SOCSO will collaborate to develop a plan for serving as the "fiscal agent" for MSMS:E, including handling payroll, accounts payable, and purchasing cards. The details of this plan will be developed through the Planning Committee proposed below.



**Provide human resources support:** MSU and SOCS D will work together to provide human resources support, including access to professional development and support services.

**Allow staff to participate in the university's employee benefits program:** MSU and SOCS D will work together to allow staff to participate in the appropriate employee benefits program.

**Include MSMS staff on the campus crisis action team:** MSU and SOCS D will include MSMS:E staff on the appropriate campus crisis action team.

**Identify a communication liaison from the university to MSMS:** MSU will identify a communication liaison from the university to MSMS:E. This has already been done with the Partnership School, with a dedicated full-time MSU staff member assigned to the Partnership School. This person is more than a communication liaison and is empowered to solve problems on a daily basis to ensure the best experience for all parties.

## MDE AND MSMS GOALS

### 1. Increasing Enrollment

MSU is dedicated to increasing enrollment at MSMS:E by leveraging our existing recruiting activities, outreach programs and partnerships with high schools across the state. MSU and MSMS:E will partner in existing targeted recruitment strategies, including informational sessions, campus tours, and engagement with prospective students and their families. By partnering MSMS:E recruiting efforts with those of MSU, we aim to enhance visibility and reach across the state, ensuring that more students are aware of the opportunities available at MSMS. Furthermore, MSU will explore a long-term goal of adding a 10th grade class to the current 11th and 12th grades. The most immediate goal is to reach 300 students in grades 11 and 12. By adding 10<sup>th</sup> grade, we will target 450 total students. Adding the 10th grade enhances learning by allowing students to complete basic high school requirements in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and providing more time in years 11 and 12 to take advanced courses, as well as experiential learning and expand applied research opportunities.

### 2. Providing Cutting-Edge Research

MSU is the leading research institution in Mississippi, with over 50% of the total research in the entire state. MSU has state-of-the-art facilities and a strong emphasis on applied, hands-on technology innovation. MSU and MSMS have had a 30+ year partnership providing laboratory-based research opportunities for MSMS students. MSU is currently hosting 26 students for Spring 2025. The disciplines involved include Agricultural and Biological Engineering, Aerospace Engineering, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, and more. However, proximity matters. With MSMS students adjacent to the main campus and our research facilities, we can significantly expand access for many more students to experience innovative basic and applied research in the fields of mathematics, science, engineering, social sciences, and more. This hands-on experience will prepare students for future academic and professional success. MSMS has plans to develop academic programs in data science, bioengineering, and cyber security. At MSU, research centers are engaged in cutting-edge, applied work related to those programs. These include the Rasket Flight Research Lab, the Center for Advanced Vehicular Systems (CAVS), the Advanced Composites Institute, National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center (NSPARC), the Center for Cyber Innovations, the Agricultural Autonomy Institute, and the Athlete Engineering Institute. These centers specifically complement the targeted growth areas in MSMS's plans.

### 3. Enhancing Educational Programming and Enriching Academic Experiences

MSU is already supporting MSMS's existing plans to develop academic opportunities in data science, while discussing support for cyber security and bioengineering. Easy access to adjunct faculty in data science, cyber security and bioengineering courses is the perfect way to leverage MSU's capabilities to enhance academic opportunities and reduce costs. In addition to courses, MSU has research underway in all three MSMS growth areas that would complement and extend academic classes. Opportunities for further collaboration to expand activities would also exist with SOCS D.

For bioengineering, the Athlete Engineering Institute and the Agricultural Autonomy Institute are perfect complements from a research engagement standpoint. MSU is one of the highest ranked universities nationally in cyber security and could provide numerous academic and research opportunities to MSMS:E students.

Additionally, MSU will create opportunities for students that support leadership development and provide a deep understanding of career options in Mississippi. We will integrate MSU's values of integrity, hard work and respect for others into our programs – ensuring that students are well-prepared for their future careers and leadership roles.

### 4. Collaboration with MSMS Leaders and MDE (Governance)

MSU and SOCS D are committed to working collaboratively with MDE and MSMS:E leaders to operate the school while respecting MSMS:E's autonomy. Upon selection, MSU will appoint a full-time leader to guide the planning. With approval from MDE, MSU will immediately convene a joint 7-member planning team to include the MDE State Superintendent and a designee, SOCS D Superintendent



and a designee, MSU Provost and a designee, and MSMS's Executive Director. The planning team will be charged with providing monthly updates to the State Board of Education and no later than October 31, 2025, a detailed operational and governance plan.

### **5. Safety and Security**

The proposed location of the MSMS:E campus (see Appendix 2) is ideally suited for access to MSU, being close by but isolated from the MSU campus. Situated adjacent to the Partnership School, it is readily accessible and highly visible from Highway 182, Lee Boulevard, and George Perry Boulevard. While convenient to MSU, it is not on campus. It would actually be buffered by a long-standing, quiet, and safe residential neighborhood to the south, and the agricultural research farm and the Research and Technology Park to the north. Thus, MSMS:E students will have ready access to MSU research, arts, and cultural spaces by shuttle or pedestrian walkways, but will be separated from MSU students and daily activities spatially.

MSU facilitates campus safety and security with a multifaceted approach. The university maintains a fully trained, nationally accredited, 40 officer, K-9 unit equipped, police force less than one mile from the proposed MSMS:E site. MSU PD was the first institutionally based department to receive such an accreditation in the state of Mississippi and maintains the highest designation within the accreditation standards.

Additionally, MSU operates a unified command infrastructure for campus emergency response made up of the Crisis Action Team (CAT) and a policy group of executive leadership called the Crisis Incident Response Team (CIRT). We interface with local first responders including the Oktibbeha County Sheriff's Office, Starkville Police Department, Starkville Fire Department, SOCSO resource officers, local ambulance services, and county and state emergency management agencies. MSU routinely conducts training exercises involving campus, city, county, state, and federal law enforcement and emergency agencies to remain in a state of readiness to deal with emergency situations.

MSU maintains an extensive integrated safety infrastructure utilizing cameras, access control, and license plate readers across campus facilities. MSU maintains access control and security surveillance for the existing Partnership School. MSU would expect MSMS:E to participate in the safety infrastructure and will work with the governance process in determining emergency response protocols for MSMS:E sites. MSMS:E students and staff would be expected to participate in regular education and training activities related to these protocols. Additionally all MSMS:E students and staff will need their MSU provided ID cards on their person to ensure access and identification as requested.

## **CONCLUSION**

Workforce development is one of the most pressing issues facing our state, and new and different approaches must be developed if we are to address these critical needs. MSMS:E, SOCSO and MSU all have essential roles to play. This proposed partnership will inspire secondary and undergraduate students to career fields that are in highest demand and build upon the workforce development efforts of AccelerateMS and the Legislature.

Adding it all up, this proposed MSMS:E, SOCSO, MSU partnership will be a highly efficient and effective use of local and state tax dollars and bring a high return on the local community's and the State of Mississippi's investments. This partnership will be a reason for people to move to our state, it will support and boost economic development, be a model for others in the state, and most importantly, create a fantastic learning environment for the state's best and brightest students.

### **Appendix 1 - Preliminary Site Plan**

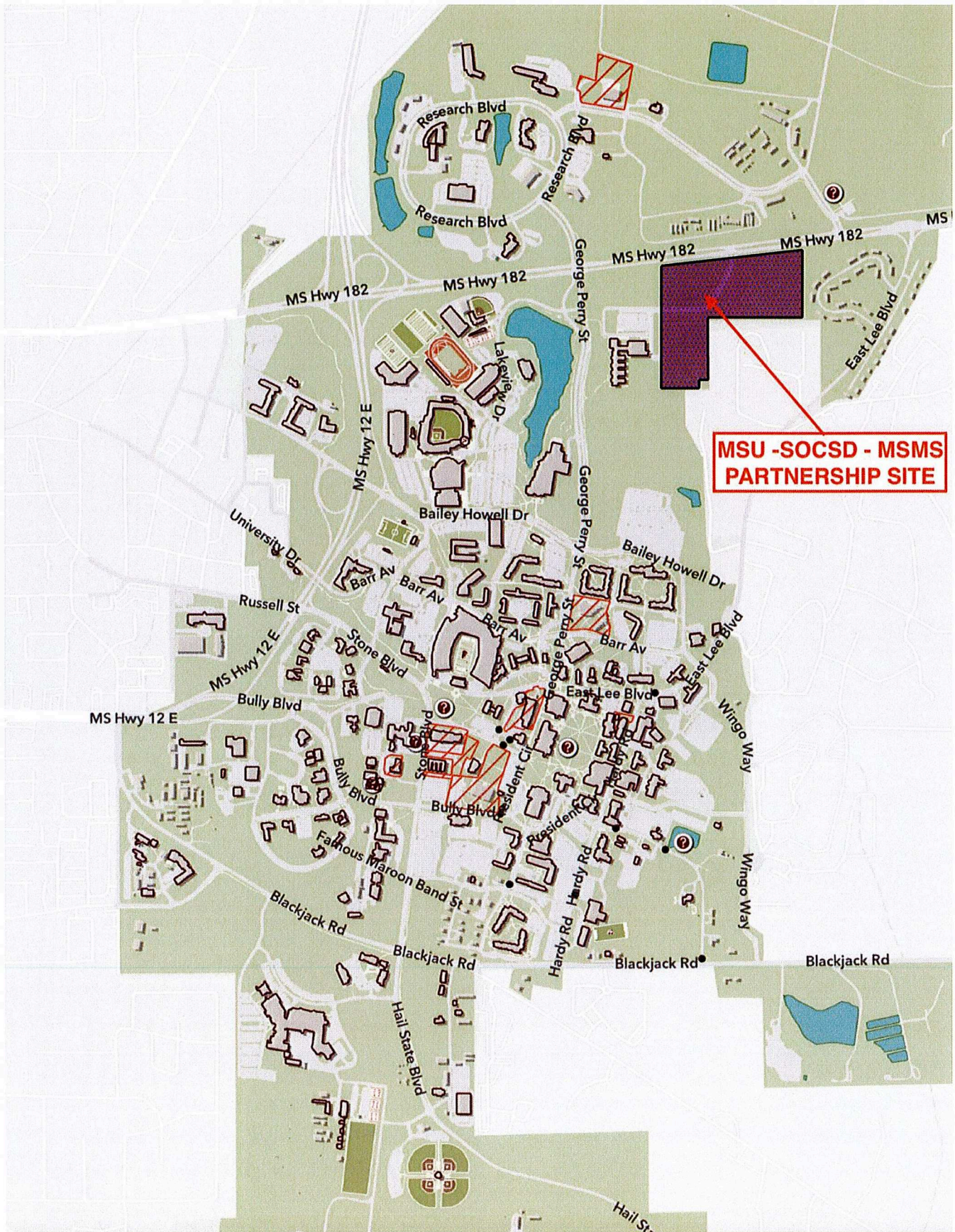
- Map showing MSMS:E location relative to the rest of campus
- Site map highlighting the new SOCSO high school and MSMS:E facilities

### **Appendix 2 - Letters of Support**

- Mike Tagert, Greater Starkville Development Partnership
- Tony McGee, SOCSO Superintendent
- Lynn Spruill, Mayor



Map showing MSMS:E location relative to the rest of campus





Site map highlighting the new SOCSO high school and MSMS:E facilities





CHAMBER • ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT • MAIN STREET • TOURISM



February 16, 2025

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

Subject: Proposal for MSMS Expansion

To whom it may concern:

The Greater Starkville Development Partnership is Oktibbeha County's community and economic development organization comprised of our local Chamber of Commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureau, Main Street Association, and our county-wide economic development authority. Our mission includes the promotion and support of activities that foster economic growth, specifically in the areas of infrastructure, public safety, healthcare, and education. To that end, I am pleased to offer our support for Mississippi State University's (MSU) proposal to house and operate the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science Expansion (MSMS:E) on their campus. Students of MSMS:E will find a welcoming community on the campus of MSU and within the City of Starkville.

Our community is safe, rich in cultural assets, and thriving with commerce. Our city, county, and MSU law enforcement agencies are accredited at both the state and national levels. As a national leader in research, the University has an extensive library system, numerous museums, and attractions located throughout the campus to provide opportunities for students of all ages and interests. The City of Starkville is a growing and vibrant small town. Our thriving economy includes many options for dining, shopping, lodging, and recreation. Students and their families will enjoy the lively and dynamic atmosphere of the "Best Small Town in the South" (USA Today).

Please accept our support and our commitment to assist in any way possible. Our organization is proud to support MSU's proposal. Please call on me if I can answer any questions regarding our community and its support. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mike Tagert

Mike Tagert
President & Chief Executive Officer



**STARKVILLE OKTIBBEHA CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

GREENSBORO CENTER, 401 GREENSBORO STREET  
STARKVILLE, MS 39759



TONY McGEE, Ph.D.  
SUPERINTENDENT

TELEPHONE (662) 324-4050  
FACSIMILE (662) 324-4068

Tony McGee  
Superintendent of Education  
Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District

February 21, 2025

Dr. Lance Evans,

I am writing to express my support for the partnership between Mississippi State University (MSU) and the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District (SOCSD) in the establishment of the Mississippi School for Math and Science Expansion (MSMS-E). This collaboration represents a visionary step forward in addressing the educational and workforce development needs of the State of Mississippi by creating an innovative, STEAM-focused residential high school.

As an advocate for educational excellence, I am deeply impressed by the plan to integrate the resources of MSU, an R-1 designated research university, with the local school district to create a unique educational environment for high-achieving students across the state. By providing access to world-class academic and research faculty, state-of-the-art facilities, and a multidisciplinary curriculum, MSMS-E will not only prepare students for careers in high-demand fields such as cyber security, engineering, data science, health sciences, and manufacturing technology, but also position them to contribute directly to Mississippi's growing workforce needs.

The location of the school on MSU's campus, combined with the dual enrollment opportunities it offers, will give students an unparalleled opportunity to engage in rigorous, college-level coursework while still in high school. Additionally, the experiential learning and internship opportunities offered through the program will allow students to gain practical, hands-on experience in the fields they are passionate about. This kind of educational innovation will undoubtedly benefit both the students who attend and the Mississippi economy.

The partnership between MSU and SOCSD has already proven successful with the creation of the Partnership School, which has garnered national attention for its collaborative approach to K-12 education. The proposed MSMS-E builds on this success and promises to take Mississippi's educational landscape to new heights, providing a sustainable model for collaboration between a public university and a local school district.

In addition to providing students with exceptional educational opportunities, the MSMS-E will foster a sense of community and connection by encouraging meaningful interactions between students from both MSU and SOCSD. This will be further enhanced by shared facilities such as the performing arts center, which will benefit students, faculty, and the wider community. Furthermore, the infrastructure plans for the site will ensure that the new complex is fully integrated with the surrounding transportation networks, providing convenient access for students and faculty alike.

I wholeheartedly support the MSU-SOCSD partnership and the establishment of MSMS-E. This groundbreaking initiative will not only prepare Mississippi's brightest young minds for success in STEAM fields, but it will also contribute to the retention of highly skilled individuals within the state, ultimately benefiting both the local economy and the state as a whole. I look forward to the continued progress of this exciting project and the positive impact it will have on our community and beyond.

Thank you for your attention to this critical endeavor. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further support or information.

Sincerely,

Tony McGee  
Superintendent  
Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District

*Expect Excellence Every Day*





**THE CITY OF STARKVILLE**  
Mayor's Office  
CITY HALL, 110 W. MAIN STREET  
STARKVILLE, MISSISSIPPI 39759

Phone: 662-323-2525 Ext.3100  
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**D. LYNN SPRUILL**  
Mayor

February 16, 2025

Mississippi Department of Education  
Attn: Dr. Donna Boone  
Chief Academic Officer  
359 N. West Street  
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

Subject: Proposal for MSMS Expansion

Dear Dr. Boone:

I am writing to provide support for Mississippi State University's (MSU) proposal to house and operate the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science Expansion (MSMS:E) on their campus adjacent to the City of Starkville.

I believe the City of Starkville offers the perfect location for the newly expanded school. With our emphasis on quality of life, the students would find a safe, comfortable, and welcoming community. Many of the MSMS students have historically been residents of Starkville and continue to be a major part of those in attendance at the existing facility.

The existing Partnership School located on the MSU campus property offers an incredible learning experience that serves as a model for the excellence MSU assets bring to the learning experience. As we look toward the construction of a new high school for Starkville that might also be co-located on the MSU campus, the addition of the critically acclaimed MSMS expansion would provide a learning environment unparalleled in the country for students of all capabilities.

Our community works continually to provide the best overall services to our residents and visitors alike. Our award-winning public transit system provides students of all ages the needed access to classrooms and labs, as well as residential and recreational properties.

Our state and nationally-accredited law enforcement agencies (City, County, and MSU) provide the highest level of safety and first-responder security. But, most importantly it's the people of our community that make it successful. We would welcome the students and be proud for them to call Starkville "home" during their time at the school.

MSU is nationally recognized as a leader in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics and is already a strong partner with MSMS in their educational experience through their regular trips to the MSU campus and the Starkville community.

Starkville is a vibrant, growing community and has recently been recognized as the "Best Small Town in the South" by USA Today. I can think of no better place or opportunity for the very best and brightest students of our state to experience a powerful learning environment.

As Mayor of our city, I look forward to welcoming and supporting the students of MSMS:E.

Please call on me if I can answer any questions regarding our community and its support for the MSU proposal. Thank you for your consideration.

D. Lynn Spruill  
Mayor, City of Starkville

[www.cityofstarkville.org](http://www.cityofstarkville.org)