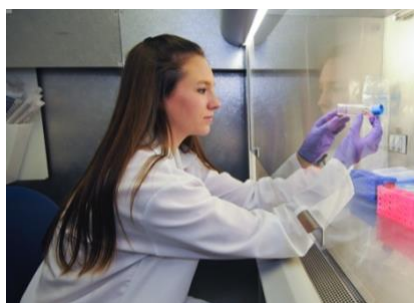


THE FUTURE OF THE MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

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



Contact: Dr. David Shaw
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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 21st 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 SOCSD 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 SOCSD-MSU Partnership School on Highway 182 that is ideally situated to host a new SOCSD high school and a new magnet school, with dual, and in some instances triple, use of these facilities to the benefit of all. SOCSD has committed up to \$86 Million of funding toward construction of new facilities. SOCSD and MSU see unlimited potential in combining an SOCSD 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 SOCSD 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 SOCSD teachers and leverage the scores of outreach activities MSU conducts already for K12 around the state.

The new SOCSD 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 SOCSD 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 SOCSD 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 SOCSD are currently working with an architectural firm to develop plans for the new SOCSD 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 SOCSD are prepared to provide temporary housing and classroom facilities in the 2026-27 academic year by utilizing available space on both MSU and SOCSD 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 SOCS D 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 SOCS D 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 SOCS D. 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 SOCS D. 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 SOCS D 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 SOCS D 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 SOCS D 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 SOCS D currently work with university and Starkville police, as well as SOCS D 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 SOCS D 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 SOCS D 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 SOCS D 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 SOCS D 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 SOCS D 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 SOCS D will partner to provide MSMS:E students with access to sports fields. We will explore opportunities for MSMS:E students to participate on the SOCS D 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 SOCS D 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 10th grade, we will target 450 total students. Adding the 10th grade enhances learning by allowing students to complete basic high school requirements in 10th 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 Raspet 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

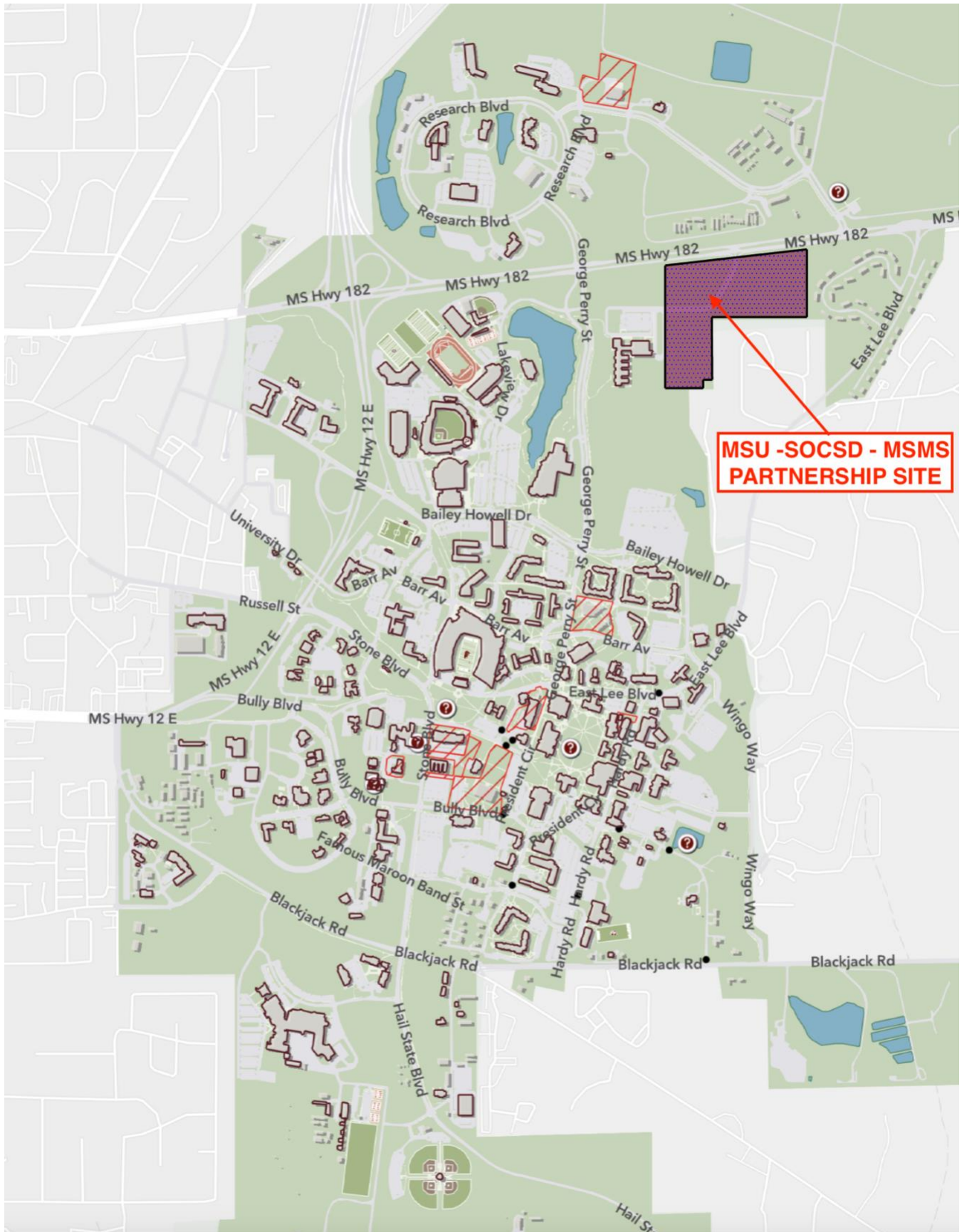
- Map showing MSMS:E location relative to the rest of campus
- Site map highlighting the new SOCSO high school and MSMS:E facilities

Appendix 2 - Letters of Support

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

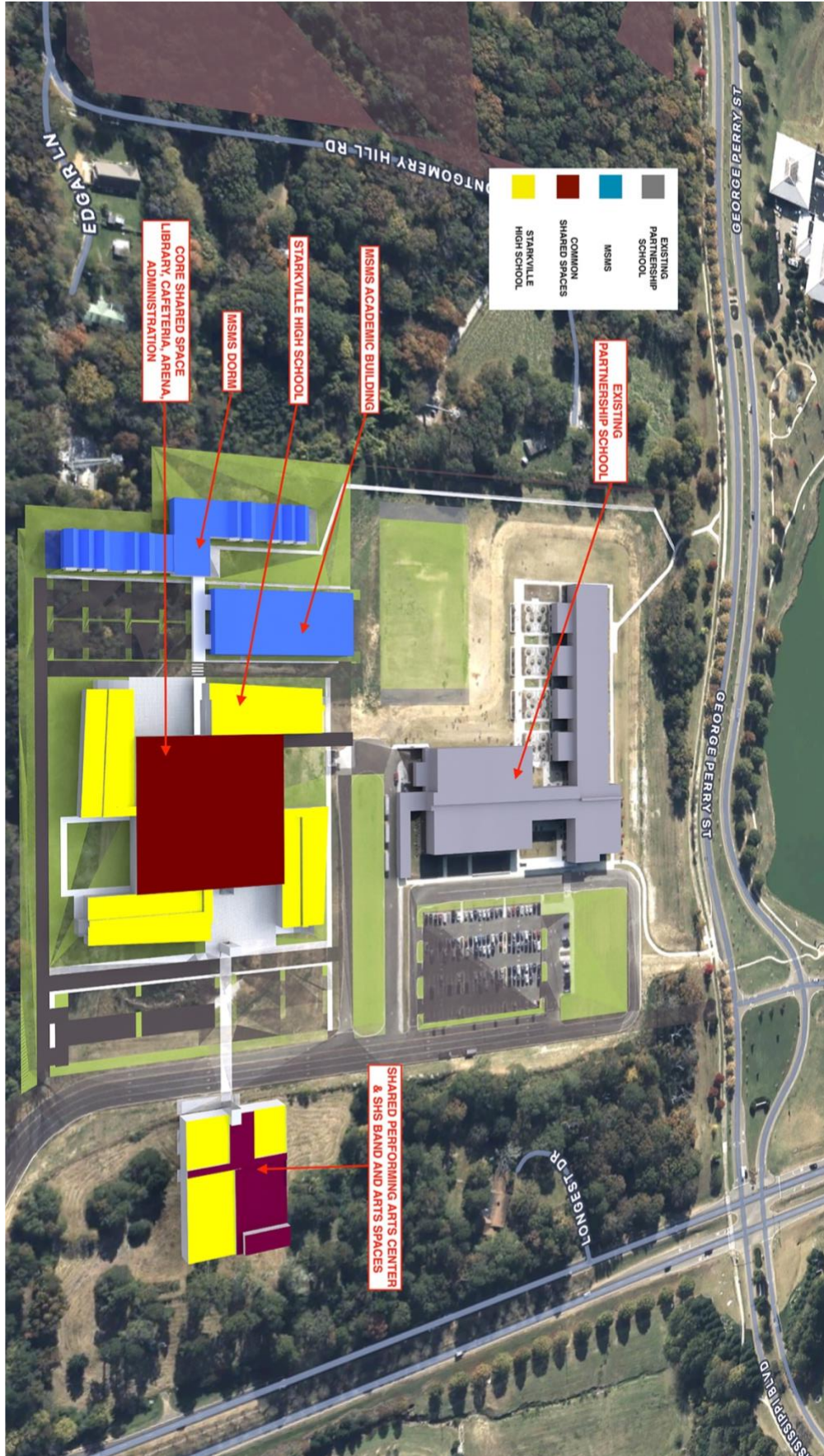


Map showing MSMS:E location relative to the rest of campus





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,

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
Fax: 662-323-4143

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