Talking Points Regarding MUW and MSMS

The three highest priorities for the Coalition are:

1) Support the independence of MUW, Columbus' esteemed regional university
2) Keep MSMS in Columbus on the MUW campus
3) Obtain proper funding and support for both MUW and MSMS

1) Support the independence of the Mississippi University for Women

a) **MUW is an award-winning regional university which provides an affordable, quality education to its students**. MUW graduates earn the highest median salaries in Mississippi four years after graduation and its graduates leave with the lowest debt in the state. (See Fact Sheet items 1.1 – 1.6)

b) **MUW students enjoy small class size, dedicated professors and strong academic programs**, including nursing, culinary arts, speech and hearing, education, and English.

c) **MUW is an important part of Columbus and Lowndes County educationally, culturally, and economically**. MUW currently employs 344 full-time and 114 part-time employees and is an economic force in our community. (FS 1.7, 1.8) MUW's mission has always included service to Mississippi beyond its campus. (FS 1.12 to 1.16) Both the City and the County have shown staunch and solid support for MUW. (FS 1.10, 1.11)

d) **MUW deserves adequate financial support from the state, alumni, and outside sources**. The Foundation endowment is healthy, at $75+ million the fourth largest of Mississippi public universities, indicating strong alumni and community support. (FS 1.6)

e) **Choosing the strongest President for MUW with outstanding academic credentials, proven leadership ability, and a clear, long-term vision for the future of MUW is essential**. A leader who is able to procure large grants, communicate effectively with leaders of industry, medicine, and commerce, and chart a clear path ahead would be transformational for MUW. The IHL has such a search in progress with an end date of early Spring 2027.

2) Keep MSMS in Columbus and on the MUW Campus.

a) **The Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science has had a stable, mutually beneficial relationship with MUW for 39 years.** There is no better place for MSMS students to be and by statute MSMS is located on the MUW Campus. (FS 2.1)

b) **One of the South's outstanding specialized high schools, MSMS has consistently provided a superior educational experience on a safe, manageable-size campus with easy access to research opportunities at MUW and Mississippi State University, sports activities, and free dual-enrollment classes at MUW.** (FS 2.2)

c) **The MSMS Mission is different from that of a regular high school**. MSMS is a residential school for academically gifted 11th and 12th grade students. Courses are taught on a college-type schedule,

and content is at the college level with many courses providing college credit. MSMS is funded directly by the state legislature but managed with the general education funds allotted to the State Department of Education. (*https://themsms.org/about/*)

d) **The MSMS Mission has always included programs to enhance high school instruction across the state**. (FS 2.3)

e) **MSMS students take advanced mathematics and science courses as well as courses in English, social science, world language, and the arts, offering them a well-rounded college-prep academic experience.** Additionally, the school has competitive sports teams and a wide variety of social programs and clubs providing a number of student leadership opportunities. (*https:// themsms.org/about/*)

i) Students have access to research mentorships within walking distance on the MUW campus, or a short drive away at Mississippi State University.

ii) Students may enroll in MUW classes without charge. (FS 2.2)

iii) Numerous academic honors are consistently awarded to MSMS students. (FS 2.4)

3) **Obtain proper funding and support for both MUW and MSMS.** Both MUW and MSMS deserve adequate funding and support by the state legislature. MSMS has done more than similar schools across the South while operating with funding of $16,000 less per student.

a) **Both MUW and MSMS have been underfunded for years.**

b) **MSMS was begun with little investment in the buildings where it is located**. Older, vacant buildings were renovated in 1989 for student housing, academic classes, and recreational activities. A devastating tornado on the MUW campus in 2002 destroyed the buildings used for student housing, and students were moved to more unused residential halls originally built in the mid-1960s.

c) **After 38 years in these leftover spaces, MSMS has proven that it can fulfill its mission and deserves to be housed in residence halls without structural and systemic issues, and in academic spaces with modern classrooms, labs, and performance spaces.**

d) **MSMS needs new residence and academic buildings**. Costs to renovate or build on the MUW campus are significantly less and building where they are currently located would incur less disruption and allow for a sequential, systematic plan of building.

e) **In terms of real buying power, MSMS's annual operating budget has been reduced every year since 2005.** MSMS was funded in 2005 at $5,829.243, which was $21,589.79 per student. Converted to 2026 dollars based on inflation only, that would be $9,998.360.57 and would come to $37,030.97 per students. For the 2026-2027 school year, MSMS was allocated $6,242,904.00, which comes to $26,012.10 per student. (See MSMS Budget p. 6)

f) **MUW, too, is doing more with less.** In 2008 the state allocated $15,760,396 in general support to MUW. In 2025 it provided $15,924,079. Adjusted for inflation, the 2008 amount would equal about $23.6 million in 2025 dollars. Over the same years MUW rose to No. 1 in Mississippi for graduate earnings and leads the IHL system in degrees awarded per student. (See MUW State Allocations p. 6)

FACT SHEET

1. MUW is an award-winning regional university and deserves support and strengthening.
   - **1.1.** *Washington Monthly* in 2025 ranked MUW as one of the 25 Best-in-Class universities in the US. *https://washingtonmonthly.com/2025/08/24/25-best-colleges/#21-mississippi-university-for-women-*
   - **1.2.** *Washington Monthly* recognized the university at No. 14 in the South and No. 185 nationally, according to Washington Monthly's 2026 Best Colleges for Your Tuition (and Tax) Dollars. Released Monday, Aug. 31. TIME additionally recognized the W as one of America's Best Colleges of 2026-27. Both recognitions placed the university as the highest ranked institution of higher learning, private or public, in Mississippi. *https://www.muw.edu/news/the-w-recognized-among-nations-best-colleges-for-rural-america/*
   - **1.3.** *Niche.com:* Top 3% of US Nursing Schools *https://www.niche.com/colleges/mississippi-university-for-women/*
   - **1.4.** According to the US Department of Education in 2025, four years after graduation MUW graduates earn the highest median salary. In addition, MUW graduates carry the lowest student debt of any school in Mississippi. https://cdispatch.com/news/muw-ranks-first-in-state-for-median-earnings-post-graduation/
   - **1.5.** Highest degree completion rate in the state's public university system [MUW 2025-26 Fact Book p 8] *https://www.muw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/MUW-Factbook-2025_061826.pdf*
   - **1.6.** Supported by alumnae with healthy endowment of more than $75 million in 2025 [*https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/237050717*]
   - **1.7.** MUW employment [MUW 2025-26 Fact Book p 70] *https://www.muw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/MUW-Factbook-2025_061826.pdf*
   - **1.8.** In FY 2021-22, MUW added $97.9 million in income to the Golden Triangle (plus Monroe and Noxubee)1 economy, a value approximately equal to 1.5% of the region's total gross regional product (GRP). Expressed in terms of jobs, MUW's impact supported 1,567 jobs. For perspective, the activities of MUW and its students support one out of every 56 jobs in the Golden Triangle (plus Monroe and Noxubee). https://www.muw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/MUW_Regional_FY2122_EIS_FactSheet_FormattedFinal.pdf
   - **1.9.** The City of Columbus looks to partner with MUW for baseball field at Propst [Dispatch Oct. 16, 2026, p 1 - *https://cdispatch.com/news/city-looks-to-partner-with-muw-for-baseball-field-at-propst/]*
   - **1.10.** Lowndes County provides soccer facilities for MUW at the Soccer Complex.
   - **1.11.** Mississippi Teacher Residency: pays tuition, textbooks, and fees for elementary education interns who commit to teaching in Mississippi, preferably in critical-shortage districts. *https://www.muw.edu/education/mtr/*
   - **1.12.** Master of Arts in Teaching (alternate route), approved by IHL and the State Board of Education in 2025, gives career changers a path into Mississippi classrooms facing teacher shortages. *https://www.muw.edu/news/state-board-approves-the-ws-new-program-aimed-at-filling-mississippi-classrooms/*
   - **1.13.** Mississippi Earn Program with Baptist Memorial Hospital–Golden Triangle (2024): MUW associate nursing students work as paid student nurse residents, complete more than 970

hospital clinical hours before graduation, and then join Baptist full-time. *https://www.muw.edu/news/new-initiative-at-the-w-to-produce-career-ready-nurses-for-baptist-golden-triangle/*

1.14. MUW Speech & Hearing Center: speech-language evaluations and therapy for children and adults, hearing evaluations and hearing aid services, and consultation for school districts. *https://muw.edu/slp/shc*

1.15. Eudora Welty Writers' Symposium: an annual gathering of Southern writers, held for the 38th time in October 2026, free and open to the public. *https://www.muw.edu/welty/*

2. MUW is the best location for MSMS.

2.1. Mississippi Code Section 37-139-3 identifies MUW as the location of MSMS.

2.2. MUW has provided tremendous benefits to the students of MSMS through dual-credit and dual-enrollment programs for almost 30 years. Over the past 10 years, for example, MSMS students have earned 16,529 credit hours of university courses with a tuition value of $5,071,427 *https://cdispatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Proposal-for-MUW-MSMS-Partnership-on-the-MUW-Campus.pdf*

2.3. MSMS Outreach programs

2.3.1. Summer enrichment camps for rising 8th – 10th graders (*https://themsms.org/camp/summercamps/*), including one week specifically aimed at underserved students populations in STEM. (*https://themsms.org/camp/dmdstemcamp/*)

2.3.2. Science Carnival hosted annually with science demonstrations for elementary age students. In addition to the hands-on event geared towards elementary students, teachers receive a guidebook on inexpensive ways to incorporate more science-based learning into their classrooms.(https://themsms.org/camp/stem-carnival/)

2.3.3. Math Superstars competition and training for classroom teachers. (*https://themsms.org/camp/math-superstars/*)

2.3.4. A math tournament for high schools across the state. (*https://themsms.org/camp/msms-math-tournament/*)

2.3.5. MSMS teachers who participate in their state organizations and provide leadership and training to teachers around the state.

2.4. MSMS Student Achievements

2.4.1. 67 National merit semi-finalists in the last five years

2.4.2. 23 MDE Student Advisory Council members since 2024

2.4.3. 60% of the graduating class of 2026 earned a 30 or better composite score on the ACT

2.4.4. Students who earn awards competing with undergraduates at Mississippi State in their undergraduate research symposium.

2.4.5. State and national awards in the National History Day competition

2.4.6. Tales from the Crypt program has students research local citizens and create skits about their lives and has received state and national attention and awards.

2.4.7. Two 2026 graduates earned extended trips to Europe from NSLI-Y and the National German Exam for their excellent world language skills. Each year, numerous MSMS world language students earn medals (including gold medals) on national exams and competitions in French, German, Latin, and Russian.

2.4.8. National winners of the Scholastic Awards, presented by The Alliance for Young Artists & Writers in Carnegie Hall in NYC.

2.4.9. Since 2022, 24 students have earned a Seal of Biliteracy in Chinese, Spanish, Russian, Korean, French, or German.

2.4.10. State champion Robotics team

2.4.11. Multiple teams have won state and represented Mississippi at the National Science Bowl competition

2.5. MSMS funding is **$16,000 less per student than the average funding of programs in Arkansas, Louisiana, and the two schools in Alabama.**

2.6. The MSMS budget for FY2025, the same as 2024, had a total of $271,400 in fees paid to MUW. This included a maintenance fee of $113,000. As 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. Thus, the overall cost of hosting MSMS is discounted by almost 90%.
https://cdispatch.com/news/proposals-show-msms-would-cost-50m-more-to-relocate-to-msu/
The MUW Proposal.

MUW State Funding

FY 2008 - $15,760,396 – the 2025 inflation-adjusted equivalent would be $23,580,000.

FY 2009 - $15,624,113

FY 2025 - $15,924,079

FY 2026 - $15,801,938 (estimated)

FY 2027 - $16,025,472 (requested)

MSMS Annual Funding – allocated by the Mississippi Legislature with inflation-adjusted numbers

	2027 Total	2026 Total	2025 Total	2024 Total
Number of Students	240	237	250	240
Total Allocation	**$ 6,242,904.00**	**$ 6,164,775.00**	**$ 6,141,210.00**	**$ 5,715,088.00**
In 2026 Dollars			$ 6,389,896.74	$ 6,102,987.92
Per Student Actual	**$ 26,012.10**	**$ 25,686.56**	**$ 24,564.84**	**$ 22,860.35**
Per Student 2026 $$			$ 25,559.59	$ 24,411.95

	2023 Total	2019 Total	2010 Total	2009 Total
Number of Students	240	240	260	270
Total Allocation	**$ 5,164,615.00**	**$ 4,837,000.00**	**$ 4,975,510.00**	**$ 4,974,510.00**
In 2026 Dollars	$ 5,677,818.76	$ 6,337,781.72	$ 7,643,432.60	$ 7,731,207.91
Per Student Actual	**$ 21,519.23**	**$ 20,154.17**	**$ 19,136.58**	**$ 18,424.11**
Per Student 2026 $$	$ 23,657.58	$ 26,407.42	$ 29,397.82	$ 28,634.10

	2008 Total	2007 Total	2006 Total	2005 Total
Number of Students	250	270	270	270
Total Allocation	**$ 4,941,477.00**	**$ 5,243,590.00**	**$ 5,243,590.00**	**$ 5,829,243.00**
In 2026 Dollars	$ 7,688,215.98	$ 8,473,216.49	$ 8,712,786.60	$ 9,998,360.57
Per Student Actual	**$ 19,765.91**	**$ 19,420.70**	**$ 19,420.70**	**$ 21,589.79**
Per Student 2026 $$	$ 30,752.86	$ 31,382.28	$ 32,269.58	$ 37,030.97

	1989
Number of Students	136
Total Allocation	**$ 2,000,000.00**
In 2026 Dollars	$ 5,402,903.23
Per Student Actual	**$ 14,705.88**
Per Student 2026 $$	$ 39,727.23