

# THE CURRENT

AN ALUMNI PUBLICATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE FOUNDATION DEC. 2018 ISSUE 5

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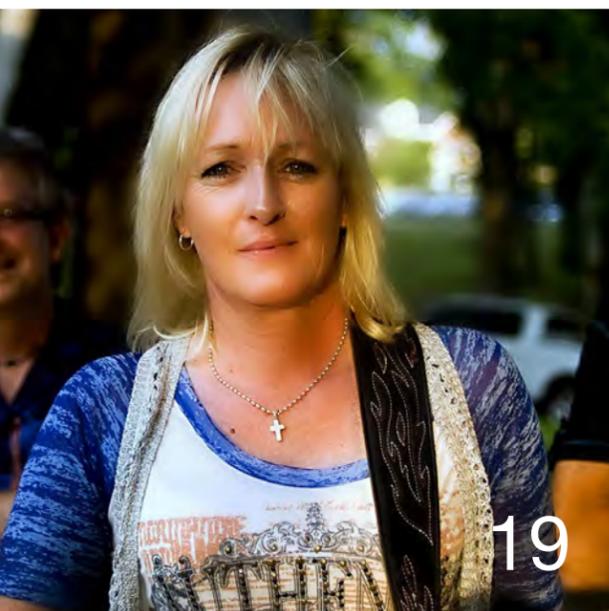
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THE CURRENT

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Greetings MSMS alumni, parents and friends. I am excited to present to you the 5th edition of *The Current*. This is a monumental achievement for the MSMS Foundation. The fact that such wonderful material is put together each year entirely by dedicated volunteers who commit their time and talent in order to help keep our alumni engaged is a testament to the positive impact of MSMS.

After only four years of serving as Director of Operations for the MSMS Foundation, I can honestly say that being a part of the MSMS family is one of the most meaningful experiences of my life. MSMS alumni are truly unique people who are passionate about staying actively engaged with MSMS. I am honored to be an intermediary for everyone who contributes their time or money to be advocates for this "Opportunity for Excellence." It is my goal to ensure that supporters are well informed of the multiple ways they can contribute as well as your incredible impact on MSMS.

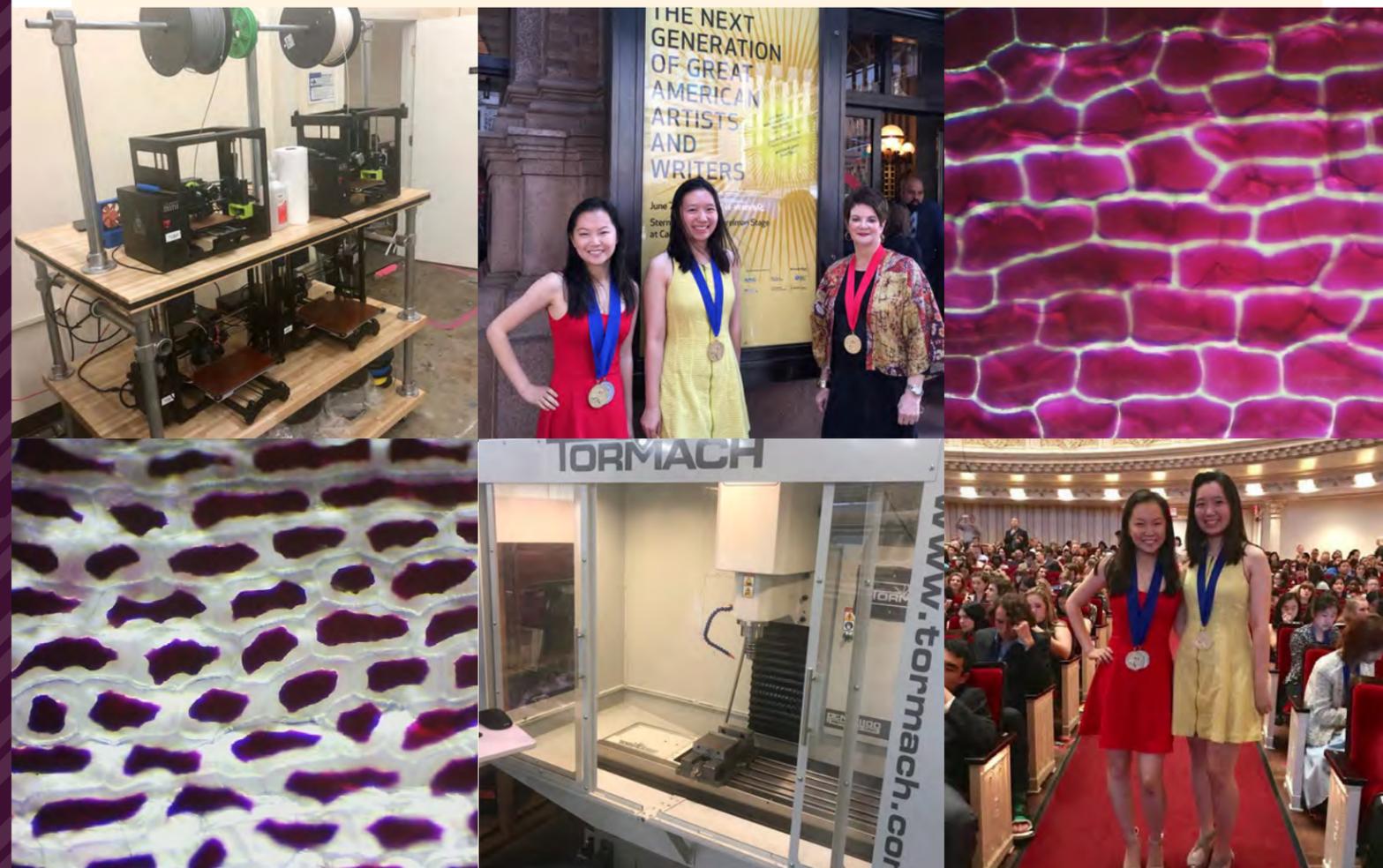
I would like to thank everyone who invested time in creating this project including writers, photographers and editors. Your hard work is greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank our supporters. Your generosity ensures that the Foundation can continue supporting the mission of MSMS.

You can stay informed by connecting with the Foundation through social media, e-newsletters and alumni events. Please enjoy the 5th edition of *The Current* and thank you again for your support.

Thank you,

Kassie Brooks  
Director of Operations, MSMS Foundation

# Foundation Highlights



Through your support last year, the MSMS Foundation has been able to award 8 scholarships, assist 14 students with room and board fees as well as sponsor trips to the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards in Washington D.C. and Carnegie Hall in New York. The Foundation has also been able to purchase a CNC machine for the Engineering Lab, four 3-D printers and housing shelf, new textbooks, new microscopes with digital cameras plus notebook computers for the student loan program!

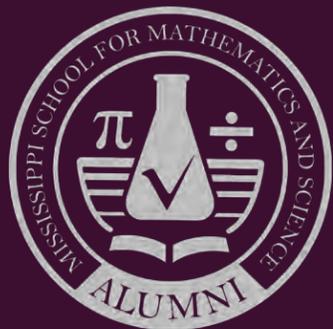
MESSAGE FROM THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



MSMSAA President Kimberly Thames Padeletti '02 has promoted "A Lifelong Journey with MSMS" in her talks over the past two years of travel to different regions across the US. "As MSMS alumni we are a truly unique network," notes Padeletti, a Houston-based Chemical Engineer with BHP Billiton. "We have an amazing group of alumni – in this edition you'll get a glimpse of alums ranging from author/speaker/engineer Larry Hawkins to Mississippi doctors Rebecca and Sean Lauderdale to their soon-to-be alumna daughter Ella (c/o 2020). It is truly inspiring to hear about their different professional career trajectories. I can't wait to see what the next chapter holds for our alumni!"

EXCELLENCE

As Yoko Ono and John Lennon often emphasized, "A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality." That sums up how I feel about the 2017 excellence campaign. What started as a "BHAG" (Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal) in a conference room snowballed into an outpouring of support from around the globe for MSMS. Thanks to you, our amazing alumni and supporters, we exceeded our goal of raising \$250,000 for the 2017 Excellence Campaign! With your help, we raised a total of \$277,229.13 – most importantly, with the **best faculty in the nation** and as the **#6 high school in the US**, we are helping to make dreams reality for the students of MSMS today. In 2018, with support from our alumni and friends of MSMS, we set an even more ambitious goal of \$350,000 for donations at <https://msmsfoundation.com/giving/>. These funds are desperately needed to help place vacancies for instructors, critical facility renovations and many other classroom needs.



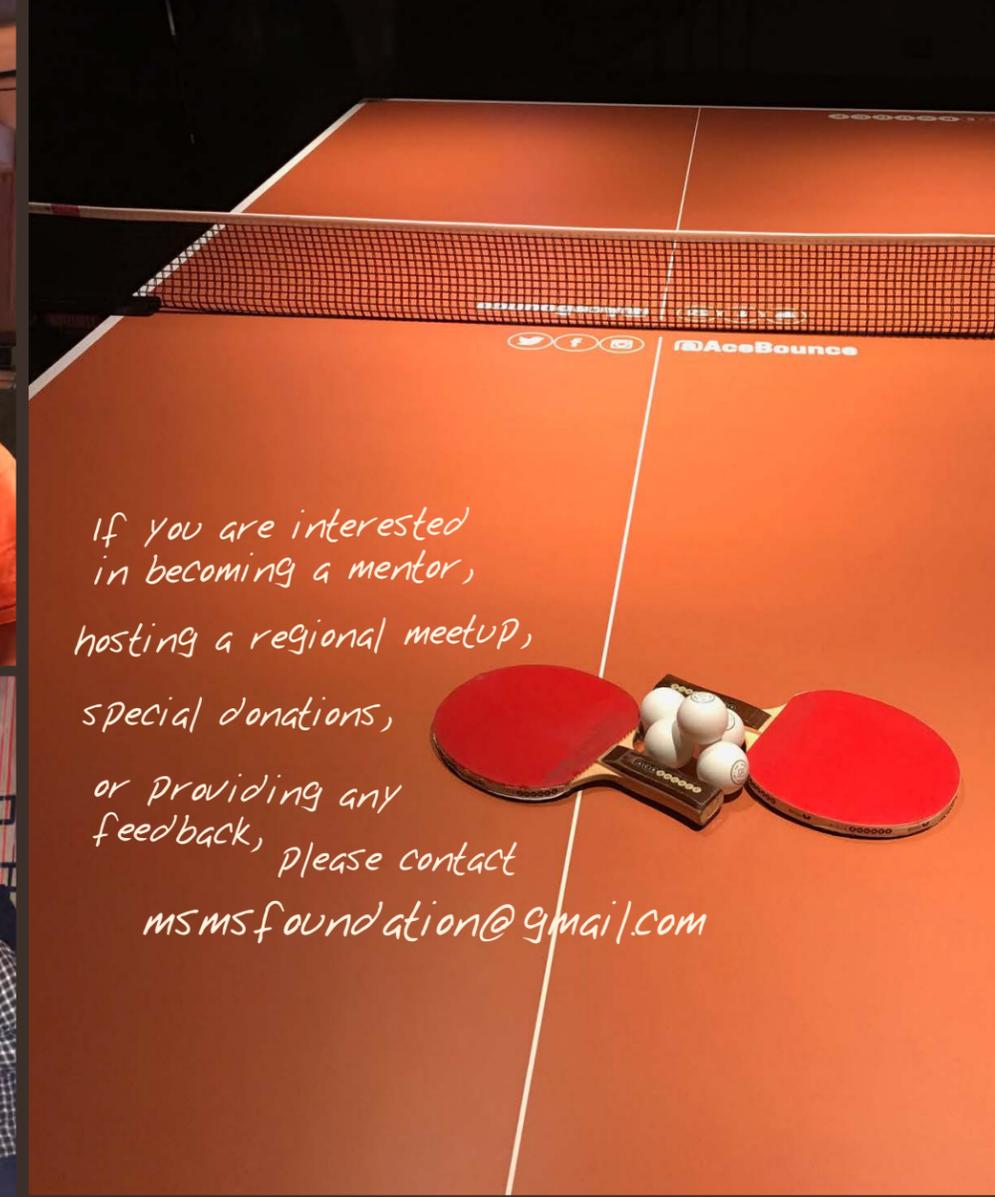
[www.msmsaa.org](http://www.msmsaa.org)

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MEETUPS

MSMSAA has plans to increase overall engagement within the alumni population and to assist in making new connections and collaborating through sharing advice, ideas, resources and experiences by region. Our MSMS alumni from the class of 1990 to the class of 2018 cover professionals in every industry and in every region. Since Padeletti started in the role, MSMSAA has held meetups in Boston, MS Gulf Coast, Houston, Jackson, Washington, DC, Portland and Chicago. Houston is scheduled for November 2018. "My hope is that alumni will greatly benefit from these local in-person networking meetups while also raising some funds for our Alma Mater."



meetups.

/groups/MSMSAlumni

By: Joy Carino c/o 2016

“Mississippi does have distinct culture that’s palpable, unique and not anywhere else,” says Summar McGee (c/o 2016), an Edwards, Miss. native currently attending Rice University in Houston, Texas. McGee is one of several MSMS alumnae and Mississippi natives at Rice University who, together, share pieces of Mississippi culture to the Rice community. McGee described “a sisterhood” of Mississippians at Rice University: “[We had] no collective effort to form a coalition of Mississippi people but we kind of gravitated to each other.” Other MSMS alumnae in this sisterhood are Missy Lollis (c/o 2015) and Marjada Tucker (c/o 2014). Lollis said, “My ‘Mississippi Sisters’ were instrumental in helping me stay very close to my Mississippi roots.” While the three are in different stages of their lives, they all share a passion for giving back to their home state.

students in their path to medical school. Lollis said, “An important requirement of the scholarship is that scholars will serve a rural area in Mississippi for every year they received the scholarship.” By simply being herself, Lollis is giving Mississippi academic legitimacy. “I’ve served many roles at Rice: President of the Black Student Association, Research Scholar, friend, student and mentee. In every one of my roles, I speak highly about how Mississippi has reared me into the person I am.”

Tucker, a Starkville, Miss. native, graduated from Rice this past May and will soon start medical school at the University of Mississippi School of Medicine in Jackson, Miss. Tucker plans to practice rural medicine in Mississippi but also wants to do service-based work abroad. “I want to be able to treat disadvantaged populations wherever I find myself.” Tucker mentioned

## common ground

McGee is a rising junior at Rice University majoring in sociology and political studies, while petitioning to get a degree in African studies. In everything she does, she wants to do political and academic advocacy for Mississippi and Mississippi issues. McGee is president of the Black Student Association and has hosted panel discussions about black identity, shown the Mississippi roots of blues and rock & roll, and presented research about rural south issues to places like Rice, Harvard and Cornell. McGee has also worked at the Mississippi Center for Justice where she studied policies and formulated class action suits to get rid of discriminatory policies. McGee is dedicated to giving back to her Mississippi community, and she believes that many Mississippians feel the same way. She said, “deep down [you] have a desire to give back to people in your home or community or people like those in your home.” McGee hopes to earn a Ph.D. and contribute to journalism and research or write a book.

that by bringing Mississippi to Rice, she can combat stigmas about Mississippi. She says it’s very hard to hide a Mississippi accent, especially when talking to people from the western or northern U.S. Yet, when someone makes a negative remark about the public education of Mississippi, Tucker proudly says, “I am a product of public education and I still came in prepared at Rice.” Tucker uses her passion for both people and science to share her gifts and impact the communities she finds herself in.

Tucker also spoke highly of her Mississippi sisters. She said of McGee, “McGee, in her extensive writing collection, paint[s] a picture of Mississippi.” Tucker further said that McGee has a gift of writing that can move people to understanding. Tucker said that Lollis also accomplishes much through writing, going to conferences and promoting dialogue in a positive way.

By doing research, organizing educational summits, promoting positive dialogue, sharing their experiences and excelling in academics, McGee, Lollis and Tucker found common ground in Mississippi even while in Houston, TX. They are dedicated to helping their communities. While sharing the realities of the rural south and by simply being themselves, “Mississippi Sisters” and MSMS alumnae in Houston and elsewhere can always find common ground.

Lollis, a Woodville, Miss. native, is majoring in Biochemistry and Cell Biology at Rice but will explore an emergency medical technician program at Illinois Central College this semester. Lollis plans to attend medical school and practice primary care in both rural and urban locations. Lollis was accepted into the Mississippi Rural Physician Scholarship Program in May 2017, a program that provides resources for



## Sisterhood at Rice University

# ENGINEERING *THE* GATOR



“Cajun engineering: that’s what he calls it,” says Jennifer Cole (1995). The “he” in question is Isaac Toups, the celebrated New Orleans chef with whom Jennifer has just written her first book, *Chasing the Gator: Isaac Toups and the New Cajun Cooking*. Part cookbook, part cultural guide, the book will be available from Little, Brown and Company on October 23. It features evocative photographs and more than a hundred mouthwatering recipes, and it’s chock-full of anecdotes like this one:

“One time I was with Toups and we wanted to roast a pig, but we didn’t have a pit or a rotisserie or anything. We went

to the hardware store and bought rabbit wire and some rebar. Toups created an envelope out of the rabbit wire and wove the rebar through to create a handle so that you could flip the hog. Then we built a fire and put the whole thing up on some cinderblocks.” That’s an example of what Toups means by Cajun engineering: “It’s about using what you have,” Jennifer explains. “You can make do with anything on hand.”

“It’s not an Alton Brown-style science breakdown of the processes of cooking,” Jennifer says, but the spirit of Cajun engineering pervades the book. “There’s step-by-step stuff, like how to make sausages, how to clean a

crab, how to shuck oysters. There’s little snippets of Isaac telling you how to throw tomahawks, or about a time when he went deer hunting and couldn’t shoot a deer to save his life. But on the way back to the camp he randomly shot a rabbit, and he wanted to use the whole thing, so he made this godawful purse for his wife out of the rabbit hide.

“We go in pretty deep on how to make roux, which is the backbone of any Cajun food,” Jennifer notes. “Cajun food is born of necessity. It came from what was growing or living in the area. Most people were pretty poor—it’s not a wealthy populace.” Once again, Jennifer points to the ingenuity—and flavor!—born of people making do with what they have. “A roux really goes to the heart of that, because it can give body to your gravies and sauces even if you don’t have meat. It emulsifies and holds the sauces together. It helps stretch, it helps flavor . . . we go pretty deep into

blond roux, brick roux, dark roux and white roux and the differences.”

Jennifer’s love of food goes way back. “It’s such a primary part of Southern identity and culture,” she points out. But she didn’t always know she wanted to be a food writer. After graduating from MSMS, she went to Auburn University and triple majored in economics, French and German. “In my mind,” she laughs, “I was going to do international business, whatever that means.” When Jennifer finished at Auburn, she moved to New York City and got a job at *Time magazine*—“but on the marketing side,” she specifies. “I was running numbers, building projection models, crunching numbers constantly. It was fun, and I was good at it, but I didn’t love it.”

That’s when Jennifer began to take stock. “I realized that my favorite part of the job was when I would craft emails. I thought, this is crazy! Nobody loves writing emails! But I loved really breaking

everything down for everyone. I met someone whose girlfriend was a travel writer for *The Wall Street Journal* and I thought, that’s a job? You can do that?”

“*Time* was downsizing,” Jennifer continues, “so I convinced my boss to include me in the layoffs so that I would get severance, which I wouldn’t have gotten if I quit. I got an introduction to the managing editor of *Travel + Leisure*. I created an internship for myself. I told them I had no editorial experience, but I said, ‘I speak these languages and I’ve done these things.’ And three months into my working for free for them, they had an assistant editor leave who spoke French and German, and so I took over that job. It was primarily fact checking.”

“But I’d always been into food, so I started focusing on that little by little. I left *Travel and Leisure* because *Southern Living* recruited me. They wanted somebody who knew and

loved the South but had New York experience.” Summing up that trajectory, Jennifer laughs. Her career “just somehow evolved.”

Jennifer describes the Southern food scene as intimate. She had eaten in Isaac Toups’s restaurants and knew him from festivals before he and his literary agent approached her about collaborating on a book. “It was right around the time I was leaving *Southern Living*,” Jennifer recalls, “so it was great to have a big project to jump into as a freelancer. I went down to New Orleans, and we cooked gumbo, sat around the fire and told stories. I met his wife and kids, and we got to know each other.”

Writing a book, Jennifer points out, “is a long process. From my first conversation with Toups about the book until now has been three years. I would hang out in the kitchen, he would cook, and I would video it, documenting his every move. We went duck hunting, which was my first



time ever going hunting in my life. We went and did a boucherie—a community butchering—with other chefs and cooks in southern Louisiana. It was a very immersive experience. If I don’t get invited to a Toups family reunion, my feelings are gonna be hurt, because I feel like I’m that much part of the family at this point!”

With her first book project finished, Jennifer’s adventures have only just begun. “I’m continuing to do freelance editing and writing—even some tech writing,” she reports. “I’ve got a couple of collaboration projects with other chefs in development.”

Even more exciting than what Jennifer is doing? Where. “I put all my stuff in storage, sold my house and I’ve been traveling since last April,” Jennifer says. “Obviously I have to be in the place to do the research I’m writing about, but the actual writing I can do anywhere. So my home is my suitcase. Last year I went completely around the world, chasing the summer. I was in Europe, and as it got cooler, I kept dropping farther down, from the Netherlands to France, Italy, Spain to Tel Aviv to Beirut to Dubai, Thailand, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Cambodia, Hawaii and then down to Mexico.”

Jennifer says she’s “slowed it down” this year: “Mostly



I’m bouncing between Sicily and Mexico. In Sicily, the sun is brighter, the light is more intense, the landscape is more intense, There’s a volcano, there’s the sea, there’s rolling hillsides. The flavors are more robust. To me, it’s almost like heaven.” I can hear the excitement in Jennifer’s voice

as she describes each of these places: Sicily; Mexico City; Louisiana’s Atchafalaya Basin. When she talks, I can almost smell the spices and the rich, bubbling sauces. I’ve got my copy of *Chasing the Gator* pre-ordered, and I can’t wait to taste what she’ll write about next.

# A FAMILY AFFAIR

MSMS CAN FEEL LIKE A GRAND SOCIAL EXPERIMENT, BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU THROW SIBLINGS INTO THE MIX?

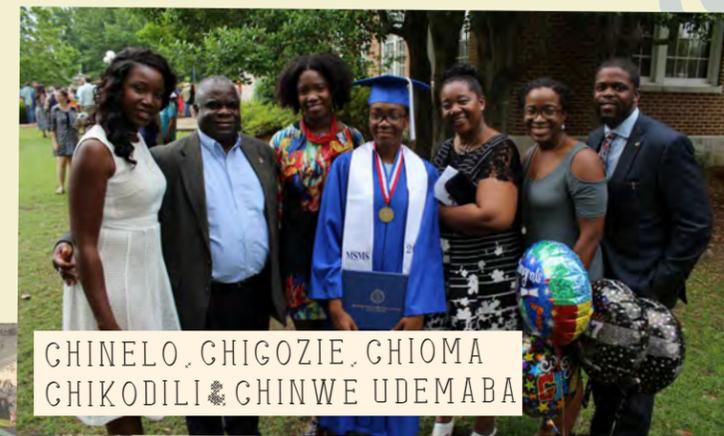
By: Virginia H. Harris c/o 2008

On move-in weekend of junior year, the usual get-to-know-you conversations among classmates included a few questions: Where are you from? What high school did you go to? How did you hear about MSMS?

That last question had a few different answers – some students attended a Super Night, others talked with MSMS recruiters at their home high school, or a favorite teacher recommended a student check out the application. But for a significant percentage of MSMS students, a sibling introduced MSMS to their family. We thought hearing from a few of those MSMS siblings would be a fun way to look at the MSMS experience. So here’s our Q & A with three sets of siblings:



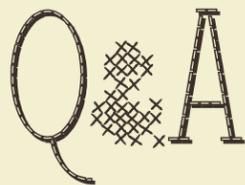
LIB & MICHAEL MORGAN



CHINELE, CHIGOZIE, CHIOMA  
CHIKODILI & CHINWE UDEMABA



CHERYL SEE MCLAURIN &  
KATHLEEN SEE



Responses have been lightly edited for clarity and space.

### How did you first hear about MSMS? Why did you apply?



**Michael Morgan ('93):** I applied for the challenge of learning as much as possible in high school. Also, I felt stuck in my home school with slim prospects of improvement.

**Lib Morgan ('95):** I applied because I was bored out of my mind at my home high school and was tired of being labeled a nerd.

**Cheryl McLaurin ('03):** Well quite honestly I wanted to get out of the house. I went to a small school and there was a bit of a stigma being a smart person, particularly a smart girl. I got tired being only known as the smart girl to cheat off of. My parents had shown us that there were bigger things than Copiah County Mississippi out there.

**Kathleen See ('08):** Our parents had done a really good job of showing us more than what was in front of us, and pushing us to do more than what our situation was.

**Chinelo Udemgba ('05):** I applied because I wanted more of a challenge in my education, to be more independent and to have better opportunities in college choices. My parents initially were resistant to the idea of going to MSMS. I didn't start my application until my mother was ok with the idea of me leaving, which was a week before it was due. Afterwards, my parents were so impressed with MSMS, my father became more involved in the recruitment process.

**Chioma Udemgba ('08):** My sophomore year of high school, they'd actually decided to discontinue offering all honors courses, so I knew I had to go to a different school to get a stronger background to better prepare me for college.

**Chinwe Udemgba ('17):** I'm the youngest sibling so by the time everyone else went, I was already expected to attend MSMS.

### Did you have any worries or concerns before you started junior year?



**Michael Morgan ('93):** Yes, I worried about whether the experience would be overwhelming. It was and in the best way.

**Cheryl McLaurin ('03):** Not really, our parents had raised us to be independent. We had been set up well to take care of ourselves...Even schoolwork, our parents did not stand over our shoulder and make us do projects. If we failed it was because we didn't do the work.

**Chinelo Udemgba ('05):** I did worry about being away from home. Not making new friends. Not being able to keep up. I think those are normal concerns for a teenager. I did like my high school prior to MSMS and would miss my friends. Fortunately, another one of my classmates was also going to MSMS, so there was some type of familiarity. The concerns quickly dissipated during the first week.

**Chigozie Udemgba ('06):** I was lucky enough to attend while my older sister was a senior, so I knew that things would go well.

**Chikodili Udemgba ('11):** I went into it thinking that if my older siblings made it, I can make it too. I think I was more concerned about keeping up with my finances since I only worked for a small check prior to starting.



**Chigozie Udemgba ('06):** For the most part we were able to be ourselves and not have to live up to a sibling's reputation. I didn't give my siblings any advice, but I knew they would do well.

### Attending school together, maybe having the same teachers before MSMS - did that impact your relationship?

### Has sharing the MSMS experience impacted your relationship as siblings?



**Michael Morgan ('93):** Yes, we were only two years apart in school. MSMS was very similar for us. We had many of the same teachers, and we shared many friends because my juniors were her seniors. With Lib as MSMS faculty, she helps maintain my bond to it. I enjoy hearing from an insider what it is new as well as what is not. She also has given me perspective about our MSMS teachers.

**Lib Morgan ('95):** I think we were always fairly close, and I don't know that MSMS changed that. I do remember really missing Michael when he left for MSMS, but hearing about all the cool stuff he was doing and meeting his friends and teachers just solidified my desire to attend.

**Cheryl McLaurin ('03):** When I left for MSMS, she was still in elementary school, so she wasn't the person she was going to be. She was still my little sister. So she got to live on her own and make her own decisions and deal with those consequences. As funny as this sounds, to see her have those stumbling blocks...it was like, ok, she has the same crap to deal with. One of the big things was knowing she went through a lot of the same challenges, creates a little bit of fraternity there.

**Kathleen See ('08):** I do know going through those decisions and those consequences, whether they be good or bad, it was nice to have Cheryl so close because she was in school at Mississippi State. And to have her be able to relate to my experience in some capacity, I think that was the stepping stone to us being as close as we are now

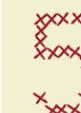
**Chinelo Udemgba ('05):** We seemed to have similar educational/career aspirations. We all ended up going to the same college and are in careers related to science/medicine. MSMS is a shared experience that has strengthened our bond.

**Chigozie Udemgba ('06):** I think that having the shared experience of attending MSMS has added to the tightness that we have together. We have stories and experiences that we all can relate to and no one is left out.

**Chioma Udemgba ('08):** We are already a very close family, it's hard not to be. So having the collective experience of going to MSMS definitely added something to our relationship. We also all went to Ole Miss too, so we just can't get enough of following each other around. We share that experience with each other and being alumni from the same institutions just shows our connectedness and adds to our relationship in a unique way that can't really be put into words.

**Chikodili Udemgba ('11):** I feel that it has made no difference in the hard work our parents ingrained in us. I always felt that completing high school at MSMS or even our undergrad at Ole Miss was something that needed to be done to go off and be great.

### What advice did you share with younger siblings about MSMS?



**Michael Morgan ('93):** I advised Lib to learn from certain great MSMS teachers, Mrs. Perry and Dr. Mac being two that stand out in my memory, and to take the hard classes.

**Cheryl McLaurin ('03):** There's help there if you need it.

**Chinelo Udemgba ('05):** Basically just gave words of encouragement. I probably said something like, "Adjustment is scary, but with time, you'll be fine". All of my siblings seemed to have good experiences at MSMS.

**Chigozie Udemgba ('06):** Take advantage of the opportunities to get acclimated to college life without the major consequences of being in college.

(continued...) **Chioma Udemgba ('08):** I think I always talked with my younger siblings about random bits of advice, from how to successfully apply to be an MSMS Emissary to figuring out how to not get too caught up in the academics and remembering to still be a high schooler.

What was a piece of good advice, or useful knowledge about MSMS life/teachers/ experience that you remember your older sibling giving you?



**Lib Morgan ('95):** Take the hard classes. Don't wimp out. Don't be afraid of making a B.

**Chigozie Udemgba ('06):** Sieze the opportunity to get a chance to have fun and being immersed in the diversity at MSMS.

**Chinwe Udemgba ('17):** My siblings weren't able to give me advice on teachers and projects because a lot of their teachers left by the time I reached MSMS. It was more of a point of nostalgia on how things have changed. Whenever they picked me up, they would comment on how buildings have changed or how the town was growing.



**Lib Morgan ('95):** When I applied to MSMS, I got to stay in Fant for the weekend with Michael's girlfriend. Charlotte Heath made a signout card for me. Friday night, they took me all over Columbus - the face house, the creepy warehouse by the railroad tracks, the Lux, Carts and Clubs and out to Lock and Dam. Most of those places are off limits or don't exist now. It was a lot of fun, and I was able to share those places with my classmates at MSMS because my brother passed them down to me.

**Cheryl McLaurin ('03):** When Kathleen was an MSMS student, I got to be the fun older sister versus the one who is constantly arguing with her. Being from MSMS, I knew how much of an ego boost it was to say "I'm going to stay with my sister at MS state this weekend. So it was fun to be the cool one.

**Chioma Udemgba ('08):** I remember when our baby sister graduated from MSMS and we all went back to attend her graduation and celebrate. It was heartbreaking. Not because I was watching the girl who's diaper I once changed walk across the stage a psuedo-adult as she got her high school diploma, but because it was going to be the last Udemgba for a while to grace the halls of MSMS. It's a silly thought to have, but we really do love MSMS and I still promote it any/every chance I get.

**Chikodili Udemgba ('11):** When Chinwe was at MSMS, I was still at Ole Miss for my Pharm.D., and I was always willing to get her to go shopping and other things. I think I enjoyed the long drives to get her back to school and keeping up with how she was managing MSMS.

**Chinwe Udemgba ('17):** Another good thing about having siblings who went to MSMS a long time before I did is that older staff liked me because I made them nostalgic of the past. Teachers having a positive view of me before I meet them makes everything easier and opens many opportunities for me.



**Chioma Udemgba ('08):** I was able to perform during *Tales from the Crypt*. Even though being in that cemetery alone between performances was terrifying, it was so great to be able to perform. My baby sister also got selected to perform, and I gave her a lot of support and advice while she prepped for the audition. Later, we got to bond a little over how spooky the experience of performing was for each of us.

**Chinwe Udemgba ('17):** Because my sister was in *Tales from the Crypt*, Mr. Yarborough kind of pushed it on me. I was terrified of it at first, but in the end, I enjoyed being a performer and it was a great thing to have on my resume.



**Michael Morgan ('93):** Two roads diverged in a yellow wood. We both took the better one.

Was there an MSMS experience you loved and cherished that you recommended to a sibling?

Any final thoughts you would want to add?

## WHERE ARE THEY TODAY?

**LIB MORGAN** is in her fifth year teaching at MSMS, after completing an undergraduate degree, graduate degree and post doc. This year she is teaching AP chemistry, organic chemistry and analytical chemistry.

**DR. MICHAEL MORGAN** is a neuro-ophthalmologist in Cleveland, Ohio.

**CHERYL SEE MCLAURIN** is the operations manager agronomist on staff for a midsize lawn care company in Austin, Texas. She completed a bachelor's degree in agronomy a master's in GIS from Mississippi State University.

**KATHLEEN SEE** is a senior account executive with 10Fold in Austin, Texas.

**DR. CHINELO UDEMGBA** is completing a fellowship in cardiology at the University of Florida Health system in Jacksonville, Florida.

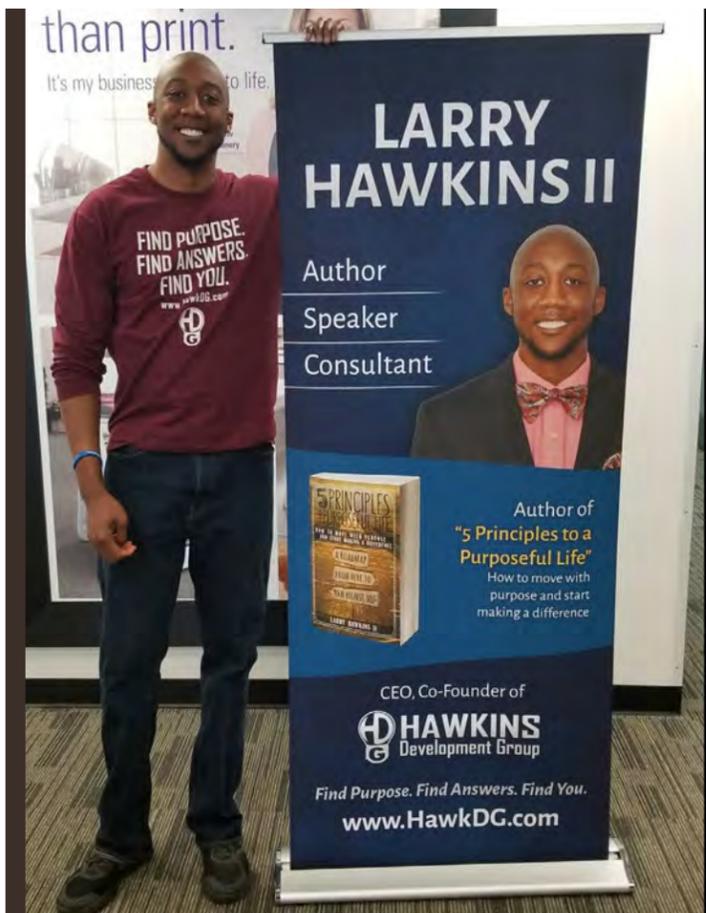
**CHIGOZIE UDEMGBA** is the director of the Comprehensive Cancer Control Program with the Mississippi Department of Health in Jackson.

**DR. CHIOMA UDEMGBA** is completing residency in Internal Medicine/Pediatrics at Tulane Medical Center in New Orleans, Louisiana.

**CHIKODILI UDEMGBA** received her Pharm. D. from the University of Mississippi in May 2018 and is currently completing a Community Residency program with Walgreens and Sullivan University College of Pharmacy in Louisville, Kentucky.

**CHINWE UDEMGBA** is a Stamp Scholar at the University of Mississippi majoring in Chemistry with an emphasis in Biochemistry.

# A PASSION FOR HELPING OTHERS



As a young boy, Larry Hawkins possessed a passion for helping others. “I grew up in the church,” Larry says. “Literally, I was in a church building every day of the week.” Watching his father, a long-time pastor in Pascagoula, Mississippi, inspired Larry with his ability to lead and motivate people. “My parents told me and my sister that our gifts are for the betterment of other people.”

Larry Hawkins II is the founder of Hawkins Development Group (he usually calls it HawkDG), through which he serves as a motivational speaker and leadership development consultant. He graduated from MSMS in 2005.

Larry’s drive to help people manifested in many ways as he grew up. At his church’s tutoring program, he became the head math tutor. On his little league basketball team, he became the loudest voice of support for his teammates. “I was not the best on the

team, but I was always the most vocal.” Eventually, Larry brought his people-focused personality to MSMS.

*“MSMS exposes you to so much outside of the bubble you grew up in,” Larry says. “Bringing in people from all over the state, you get a chance to be exposed to people who don’t look like you do and don’t think like you do, who may have a different belief system than you. But you have to learn how to relate to them.”*

It should come as no surprise that Larry served as an MSMS Emissary (the school’s student ambassadors), a distinction on which he reflects proudly. “You get a chance to be a role model and represent the school and stand for something bigger than yourself,” Larry says, adding, “I still have my Emissary shirt.”

While helping and motivating people is a big part of his life, Larry is also fascinated by computers and electronics. This led him to earn a degree in electrical engineering from Mississippi State University. After graduation, Larry had two job offers on the table. The first offer from National Instruments featured an acceptable salary far away from family, but would allow him to practice engineering while also working closely with people. The other job offer promised a more robust salary much closer to family, but would require a strict focus on engineering in a hardcore plant environment. Can you guess which one Larry selected?

“Choosing National Instruments led me on the path to start HawkDG,” Larry says. He and his wife moved ten hours away from their family to Austin, Texas to begin this new journey.

National Instruments has a program for employees called the Engineering Leadership Program. After five months, Larry became a team leader in charge of 16 of his peers. “When I inherited the team, they were last in all metrics in the department, and had the lowest team morale,” Larry remembers. Drawing on his passion for motivating people, he knew he had to improve his new team.

“That was when I created the first version of what I teach now with HawkDG. I developed a one hour seminar about the importance of having a personal brand and



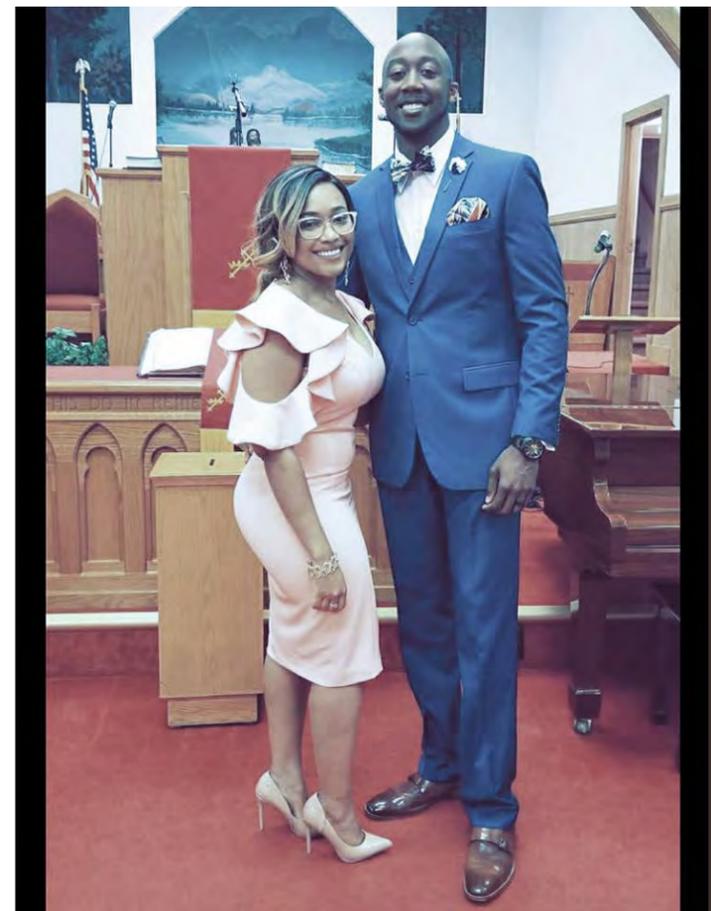
came up with a development plan for each individual person on the team. After a lot of collaboration, we came up with a brand, values and a mission statement to get us excited about being a team.”

After five more months, Larry’s team had surged from last in all metrics to first in nearly all metrics. “Management came to me and asked, ‘Larry, what did you do? And can you teach it to everyone else?’”

News of Larry’s methods spread throughout National Instruments, and his one-hour seminar became a formal part of company-wide career development. His session also became part of the company’s student intern program, where local high school students shadow engineers. The students returned to school talking about Larry’s career development session, inspiring school leaders to invite him to come teach juniors and seniors. “There’s this saying that you’re not a real business until someone pays you to do it,” Larry says, “and there were people who wanted to pay me!”

Not only did the school district pay Larry, they became one of the first clients of his new business, Hawkins Development Group, which he founded in January 2014. “Growing up, I always wanted to own my own business. I wanted to own a computer business,” Larry explains. “The idea of owning a business where I get to help people never crossed my mind.”

Hawkins Development Group specializes in helping people build careers by discovering their passion. “The problems I solve are very people-focused,” Larry says. For nearly four years, Larry ran HawkDG while working



at National Instruments. In November 2017, HawkDG became his full-time job. Larry has given workshops to the Mississippi Department of Transportation, various school districts and engineering firms like his former employer.

Throughout the process of becoming a motivator, Larry says there is something he did not consider: “I never intended to write a book — it was never on my list.” Once, after a four-hour workshop in 2013, Larry says he was approached by an attendee who asked, “How can I get more of this? Do you have a book or something?” He started to meet other speakers who encouraged writing a book, saying it is a great way for people to get to know you without meeting you.

Larry did not want to force a book, however, and spent the next few years with the idea in the back of his mind. He had an opening line, but not much else. After going into business for himself in late 2017, the book came

# LARRY HAWKINS II

Author  
Speaker  
Consultant

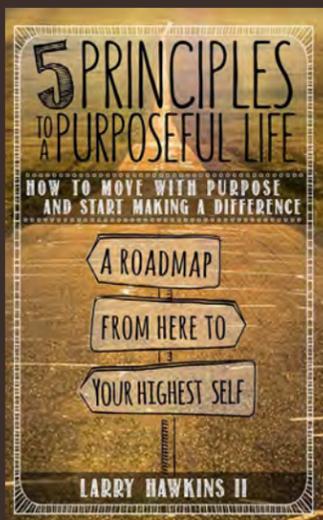


Author of  
*"5 Principles to a Purposeful Life"*  
How to move with purpose and start making a difference

CEO, Co-Founder of



Find Purpose. Find Answers. Find You.  
[www.HawkDG.com](http://www.HawkDG.com)



Larry's book can be found on **Amazon** and is available for the **Amazon Kindle**.

**HawkDG website:**  
[www.HawkDG.com](http://www.HawkDG.com)  
**HawkDG email:**  
[info@HawkDG.com](mailto:info@HawkDG.com)

back to his attention, and the timing was right to get started. "I'm going to sit down and write until inspiration stops," Larry remembers saying to himself.

A mere five days later, he had written his book. "All I did for five days was write, eat and work out," he says. His next thought was, "Now that it is done, I guess I should get it published!" Larry contacted an editor and a graphic designer. Since the book came to him so quickly, he planned an aggressive timeline to have the book ready and printed in a month. Larry is proud of his finished product, but does not recommend this timeline to everybody. "That last week was the most stressful week ever," he remembers. "We went on a family trip, and I was in the hotel room making edits during breaks. I added an extra 5,000 words to the book."

Larry's book is titled *5 Principles to a Purposeful Life*, and the graphic on the cover summarizes the book's role as being "a road map from here to your highest self." Larry set a goal to sell 500 copies of the book by the end of 2018, which proved to not be a problem. "The last time I counted, by the end of March, I had sold 560 copies."

"It was mind-blowing to see people get so excited about the book," Larry says, "and to find out it is helping people." With a business mission to help people find purpose and build a career, the book is an extension of his work with HawkDG. "There is only one me, but the book can go anywhere."

Self-publishing provides Larry a lot of freedom to give away free copies of his book. He has been known to leave signed copies on the rack at airport bookstores for lucky travelers to take. He was also proud to give a copy of his book to MSMS English teacher Emma Richardson, who helped him discover a new interest for poetry and writing.

"Until my senior year of high school, I hated English. It seemed useless to me," Larry says. "Mrs. Richardson's approach to English, her way of giving feedback, made me appreciate something I didn't naturally gravitate to."

From a young age, Larry assumed his fascination with how things work would develop into a career working with computers and electronics. Instead, he discovered a deeper passion for learning how people work. "I love to know what makes you happy, what makes you sad, what are you scared of," Larry says. "Not to be manipulative, but to help people get more in tune with their goals."

As a full-time motivational speaker and leadership development consultant with a book that guides readers through finding their purpose, there is no denying that Larry is doing exactly that: helping people.



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The MSMS Foundation Excellence Campaign



# The Science of Music, the Music of Science

By: Theo Hummer c/o 1995

Dawn Barham dreams of teaching music in a well-appointed engineering lab. “I would be like a kid in a candy shop, building guitars, tubulums, vibraphones and whatever else with these kids!” she says. “I can’t think of a better way to synthesize subjects.” Already she has collaborated with biology teacher Bill Odom to help students build steel drums for a winning Science Olympiad project. “They were far more in tune than I expected,” she admits.

A thirty-year veteran performing arts educator who joined the faculty in 1993, Ms. Barham directs MSMS’s choral, orchestral and guitar ensembles. She teaches band, music history and theory, songwriting, music and movement and music and technology, and in the past she directed MSMS students in award-winning theater productions. Based on a student nomination, she was named a quarter finalist in the inaugural Grammy Music Educator Awards.

Perhaps her proudest achievement is building MSMS’s touring *Sites and Sounds of Mississippi* program, in which MSMS student musicians “prepare an exciting and dynamic program of music, all with ties to the birthplace of America’s music—Mississippi!—then take the show on the road. In addition to performances,

we visit important sites related to the program, such as the Emmitt Till marker on the Freedom Trail, Robert Johnson’s final resting place, the African American Military Museum, the Delta Interpretive Center, Dockery Farms, Hopson Plantation and many more.”

The program is popular with students, and word of their skill has spread: they have been invited to play at the world-famous Ground Zero Blues Club in Clarksdale, Graceland in Memphis, the annual Gulf Coast Veteran’s Day Celebration, the BB King Museum, the Southern Cultural Heritage Center in Vicksburg, and the Delta Blues Museum; their audiences have included governors, legislators, mayors, presidential and vice-presidential candidates and music legends Bonnie Raitt and B.B. King. “I’ve heard,” Ms. Barham says, “that if a program survives three years, it may remain viable.” Ten years in, *Sites and Sounds* is “thriving.”

Despite this enormous workload, when Ms. Barham talks about her work, her joy is obvious and infectious. “I get to jam with my students!” she gushes, citing both MSMSers’ “desire to do more, be more” and the extra access that comes with residential status as crucial factors in the preparation and



trust-building required for young musicians to “follow a director who has both her hands on a guitar. I’m not sure that would work in another setting.” She notes that “MSMS students are daring risk takers” willing to lay their souls bare in order to deliver music authentically. “The family-like atmosphere fostered at MSMS permeates our community, allowing students to express themselves without inhibition” and teachers to “teach children rather than subject matter.”

Ms. Barham is proud of the large percentage of the student body she serves: 40% including piano and guitar students and the MSMS Blue Notes. She points out that during the past thirty years, “many school districts have been cutting arts programs.” In contrast, “we have been expanding!” And the music doesn’t stop

when students graduate. Ms. Barham calls her students “some of the most amazing folks on the planet” and is grateful for her lifelong connections and friendships with them. “Every music educator’s goal,” she declares, “is to inspire students to remain actively involved in music throughout their lives. I am proudest when former students send me recording projects, news of their performances and other successes. The freedom of expression that the MSMS community embraces makes a lasting and meaningful difference in all our lives.”

“I am blessed,” Ms. Barham says, “to work with the most dedicated colleagues in the country. They are talented, supportive, engaged, enthusiastic and highly qualified!” Her collaboration with Dr. Odom on the steel drum project is just one



of a long list of team teaching experiences. “Early on, I assisted Carl Butler with *Tales from the Crypt* as well as taught the music part of some of his history classes. In those early years, I also assisted Judy Morris with the *Roaring 20s* party. Claudia Carter and I teamed up for theater for a few semesters. She was generous with her expertise and I learned so much from her. My students performed for Julie Heintz’s *City Blocks* project, and she has been collaborating with me on the *Sites and Sounds* program since its inception. All these collaborations have been unique, bound together by a unified vision: to offer outside-the-box learning experiences for our students that illustrate the symbiotic relationship between subjects.”

These collaborations serve Ms. Barham’s visions of lifelong learning and of an MSMS community that is close-knit, yet also oriented to a larger world. Together, Ms. Barham and Ms. Heintz lead MSMS students on trips to Europe; spring break 2019 will mark their twelfth such journey. “A highlight of one of our trips to Paris,” Ms. Barham reports, “was hearing ‘Ms. Barham!’ being yelled from across a busy intersection. It turned out to be MSMS alums in Paris on study-abroad programs who had traveled with us on one of the trips!” Next thing you know, the MSMS teachers, students and alums were dancing in the street.

Ms. Barham appreciates MSMS administrators’ unusual approach to school structure, which sets faculty like her up for success. “I am allowed fluidity in my curriculum. It evolves as student demands and needs do. And MSMS faculty enjoy autonomy. I attribute that to a trusting administration that recognizes, appreciates and trusts that the teachers are the resident experts in their fields. In doing so, they inherently create a very high standard of excellence for us. It is pretty genius; more school districts should try it.”

In particular, Ms. Barham mentions two administrators who share her passion for music. “Kelly Brown, Director of Academic Affairs, has been an integral part of the *Sites and Sounds* program and shares her accompaniment skills for performances. Having a musician in that position at a STEM school is incredibly cool.” Cool, but far from unprecedented at MSMS: when Ms. Barham was first hired, the school’s director was Mike Neyman. At Ms. Barham’s job interview, Mr. Neyman “got all the business out of the way so we could talk about important stuff: guitars! Mike is a talented guitarist and educator.”

While it’s clear that Ms. Barham deeply appreciates her administrators’ approach, she gives ultimate credit even for that to the special sort of student that MSMS attracts and nurtures. “Our autonomy

and curricular freedom,” she asserts, “is made possible mostly because of our students. While they come to us from all corners of the state with varied backgrounds and experiences, they share a desire to become game changers. We keep each other on our toes. That is a beautiful thing for those of us who have a love of learning.”

As a result, “I am given support from the MSMS administration that makes many of my music colleagues envious—this at a STEM school! Unprecedented, I tell you. I attribute that support to our administration’s understanding that our students are gifted on many levels. They appreciate students’ need to express themselves outside of the STEM arena.”

MSMS’s structure does present its performing arts program with one inherent difficulty, though. “The biggest challenge,” Ms. Barham says, “is the 2-year rotation of students. Curricular demands and required courses make it especially challenging for seniors to remain in the ensembles. I depend on the ones who can juggle their schedules to remain in the program. I rely on them as leaders, and they do not disappoint. But even with those students, we have at least a 50% turnover each year. It is daunting, particularly when you must arrange much of the music for our eclectic—and ever-changing—“group of musicians.” Ms. Barham recognizes that these difficulties are ultimately

positive and productive ones. “I am concerned about funding for all schools in Mississippi and particularly for MSMS. I am hopeful that we can find more funding before programs are cut. The Foundation and alumni have been instrumental in helping to offset funding cuts so that services to our students and the MSMS tradition of excellence in education have not yet been compromised,” said Ms. Barham.

Thinking of the future, Ms. Barham says, “I would love to see MSMS realize its vision for the school: state-of-the-art facilities, the addition of an engineering curriculum and a return to full capacity. More Mississippi students need the MSMS experience.”

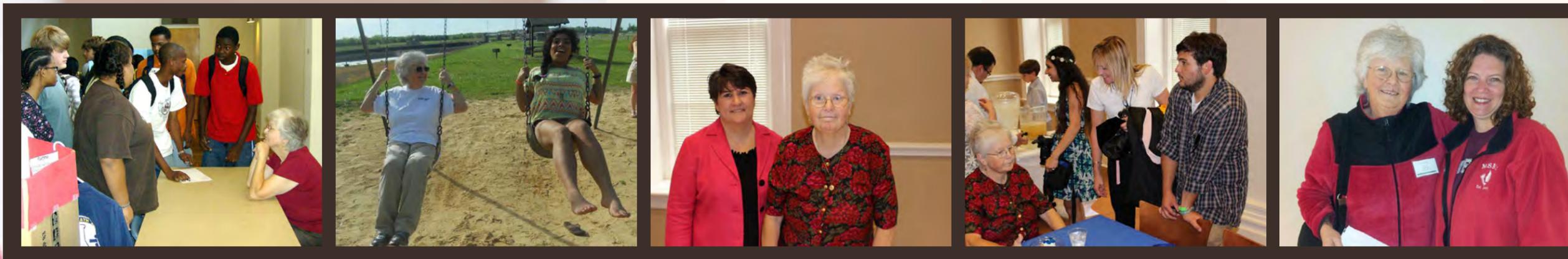
Given the funding strain, even the school’s consistently stellar national ratings strike Ms. Barham as bittersweet. “While we are celebrating our sixth-place ranking in the country, we also see the unrealized potential due to lack of funding. We can get to number one and probably would be closer to that spot if we had the necessary resources.”

Like her students, like her colleagues and administrators, Ms. Barham believes in working hard and dreaming big. I can just see that music engineering lab taking shape—vibraphones, tubulums and all—as she muses, “I mean, if we can get to six with our limitations, just imagine....”



# Remembering Dr. Nancy MacNeill, 1949 - 2018

By Crystal L. Lauderdale (% 2000) and the students, friends and family of Dr. Mac



Dr. Mac.

Nancy MacNeill.

Nancy Jean the Science Queen.

Those names spark such an array of memories among her friends, family and students, it's hard to believe one character could be so vivid. She was both a scientist and a lover of literature. She was a jokester who could talk deeply about life's challenges. She was a soprano. Music filled her classroom, her office and her life, from classic composers to classic rock. She loved Janis Joplin, the Beatles and Paul Revere and the Raiders. She also loved Mel Gibson. For years a "Braveheart" movie poster hung in her office, and once, she and her sister planned a trip to Scotland during the filming - partly to explore their heritage, of which she was so proud, and partly to catch a glimpse of Mel. She coached sports and did needlepoint. She gave generously of her time and finances to individuals and causes that touched her heart. She really loved M&Ms and s'mores, and she always beat her siblings at *Trivial Pursuit*. She knew so much.

"She wasn't just the smartest child in the family, she was the smartest person in our family," said her sister, Cindy Moon. "Our dad was a Ph.D. Mom was very smart and well read. All of us have college degrees, and some of us have graduate degrees, but Nancy was the smartest. She was the smartest person I ever knew."

Someone so smart, with aptitude for both science and art, it seems, could do anything. Dr. Nancy MacNeill poured it all into what she did best: teaching.

*Sometimes she taught by pointing to the classics.*

"She first introduced me to the Emerson quote, 'The mind, once stretched by a new idea, never returns to its original dimensions,'" recalled former student Cass Everett (% 1990). "So much of the way I see the world is because of how she taught me to reason about it."

*Sometimes she taught by demonstration.*

"I'll never forget one particular day she was discussing reactions of different metals with water," reflected Shawn Wozencraft (% 1990) "After class, she asked me to push the cart she was using back to the storage room. When we got there she said, 'Watch this,' and dropped [a] potassium nugget into the water and caused a huge explosion that peppered us both with shrapnel and water. It scared the s--t out of me, but she was laughing uncontrollably and said, 'I love doing that!'"

Jessica Catchpole (% 1999) remembers one of Dr. MacNeill's most famous (and delicious) lab exercises, "[I still] tell people about limiting reagents through the medium of s'mores."

*Sometimes she taught much more than coursework.*

"During my time in her class, I learned more than chemistry," shared Sara L. Johnson (% 2003). "I learned about being a woman in science."

"She taught me that I didn't have to be good at everything - including chemistry," said Kristin Howett (% 2015), "to be happy or successful."

*Often, she taught through humor.*

"She would spontaneously burst into song, whether it was related to class or not," wrote Dr. Elizabeth "Lib" Morgan, a member of the class of 1995 who now teaches chemistry at MSMS. "She wasn't afraid to look silly if it meant we students would better grasp whatever concept she was trying to convey."

*And always, she taught with kindness.*

"That second semester of our senior year was pure hell," Lauren Wilkes Stubblefield (% 1994), shared, recalling how Dr. Mac supported her through that challenging time. "Her office was one of the few places I could fall apart on my own terms and put myself back together without being interrupted."

"I remember her grading papers in green ink," said Anthony Thaxton (% 1990), whose passion was in art, not science. That approach was soothing to him because his chemistry papers had a lot of green ink. When Thaxton graduated Dr. MacNeill gave him a leather art portfolio because, she said, every aspiring artist needs one. To this day, he still uses it.

"She didn't teach science," Thaxton said. "She taught us."

As the oldest girl among eight siblings, Dr. MacNeill started teaching - albeit informally - at an early age.

"Her teen years [were] spent growing the rest of us up," reflected Moon. "She carried much responsibility for her younger brothers and sisters."

"Our mother was an avid reader, and Nancy followed," Linda Barrett, one of her other sisters, recalled.

"I remember Nancy reading *Black Beauty* to us younger kids each night at bedtime until we finished the book. She was probably 15 or 16."

Later in life, Dr. MacNeill tutored Barrett in organic chemistry while she was in nursing school, and she taught Barrett's husband at Mississippi State University before the couple ever met.

"She would relate her knowledge of chemistry to everyday things," wrote another of her sisters, Becky Takayesu whose son is pursuing a Ph.D. in biochemistry. "I wish she could be with my kids more growing up to help them understand the world around them."

While Dr. MacNeill's father was also an educator, he had originally hoped she would become a medical doctor.

"I think Nancy felt she disappointed our parents - our dad specifically," shared Barrett. "But she always had a quick comeback. She WAS a doctor!"

Teaching was clearly her passion and gift, and eventually her father became supportive. He helped her land her first teaching jobs. With an undergraduate degree in chemistry from the Mississippi University for Women and a Ph.D. in chemistry from Mississippi State, Dr. MacNeill first taught at Maben High School and then Wood Junior College. When the idea for a magnet high school focused on mathematics and science emerged in the late 1980s, her father encouraged her to apply.

"I think she was offered the job on the spot," said Moon.

At MSMS, she found her niche as a charter member of the faculty. She stayed for 26 years until her retirement.

"I think she liked teaching at MSMS because the students ... wanted to be there," wrote Takayesu. "They were motivated and genuinely interested in science and chemistry."



But she didn't just teach the students at MSMS, she also taught her colleagues.

When Dr. Bill Odom joined the faculty in 1996 as a biology teacher, Dr. MacNeill was one of the first colleagues he met.

"It was refreshing for me to know that caliber of faculty would be one of my peers," he said. "She taught me that it really does matter when you can engage students at a high level. She helped me understand the kind of students you all were."

Dr. Odom had the opportunity to co-teach an independent study course with Dr. MacNeill focused on pharmaceuticals. The course was called Medicinal Chemistry, and he believes it inspired a number of students to become pharmacists. On top of that, "we learned as much from each other as the students were learning," he said. "It was great."

In 2013, Dr. MacNeill was named MSMS *Teacher of the Year* and she was also inducted into the *Circle of Excellence in College Education* at Mississippi State. In 2014, she retired.

Osama Kashlan (% 2002) returned to campus for her retirement party. As a student at MSMS, he and a group of friends called themselves the Level 3 Pirates. They sat in the back of the auditorium for Dr. MacNeill's 8 a.m. class cracking jokes and doing their best to make her life miserable. Somehow, it didn't keep them from learning.

"Dr. Mac was and is the most influential person in my life," wrote Kashlan.

Close to his graduation, he received a chemistry award from Dr. MacNeill, which he still cherishes because it came from her. "It will hang in the center of my office wall for the rest of my life," he says.

At her retirement party, Kashlan tried to return the honor.

"My gift to her was a framed photo of the Level 3 Pirates," he said. "I went through every 'pirate' in that picture and the critical impact she had in the successful careers and fulfilling lives they all currently have."

It's impossible to calculate how many students - official and unofficial - Dr. MacNeill taught over the course of her life and how many people they've gone on to influence because of the lessons she shared. Kevin Cozart (% 1996) put it this way: "Dr. Mac taught 26 years of future doctors, pharmacists and teachers. Odds are pretty good that, if you live in Mississippi, you have been kept alive by and/or have been (or had/will have a child) taught by one of her former students."

Dr. Elizabeth "Lib" Morgan is one of those students. She now teaches chemistry at MSMS.

"The memory of MSMS is short," wrote Morgan. "After my first year [teaching], there were no students who knew Dr. Mac anymore, but I try to keep a little of her alive - maintaining high standards while demonstrating my love of chemistry and not being afraid of acting goofy to make a point. I hope that a little of that will stay with my students in the same way Dr. Mac's influence has stayed with me."

**Dr. Mac.**

**Nancy MacNeill.**

**Nancy Jean the Science Queen.**

She was many things, but a teacher most of all, and her students are her legacy.

*My heart is full of gratitude for having had the opportunity to be her student. And I am thankful for all the aspiring young scientists whose lives she helped shape. - Cass Everett (1990) • She's one of the big reasons I majored in Chemistry and Chemical Engineering. I am thankful I had a chance to learn from her. - Karen (Letterhog) Marucci (1992) • I had my aha! moment and became interested in pharmacy after taking her class. - April Johnson Jones • Dr. Mac inspired me to pursue chemistry. I'm a Ph.D. chemist and educator because of her. I just hope I've inspired even a fraction of the students she did. - Kristie Ruddick (1991) • I earned a Ph.D. in chemistry and teach because of Dr. Mac. What a role model, powerhouse, amazing human! - Lib Morgan (1995) • She made me adore organic chemistry because of how she saw it. - Carissa Howie • She's the reason why I am a chemist today! - Carol B. Morris • Definitely one of the reasons I was crazy enough to get a M.S. in Chemistry! - Victoria Crockett Brown • Dr. Mac taught 26 years of future doctors, pharmacists and teachers. Odds are pretty good that if you live in MS, you have been kept alive by and/or have been (had/will have a child) taught by one of her former students. - Kevin Cozart (1996) • It's thanks to her that I have such love and interest in organic chemistry. - Daianera Easley • During my time in her class, I learned much more than chemistry. I learned about being a woman in science. I'll always be grateful for her lessons. - Sara L. Johnson • Dr. Mac instilled in me a love of chemistry that has stayed with me for over 25 years. Her love for her students and her enthusiasm for teaching helped mold me into the engineer and now, engineering teacher, I am today. - Jennifer Hellums Bennett (1992) • Her love of chemistry made me enjoy chemistry. I went on to get a degree in chemistry and my job is a quality control chemist. She helped me feel like I could do anything, especially in a field pretty dominated by men. - Amanda Novotny (2006)*



**CURTIS GABRIEL "GABE" JONES** came to MSMS in the fall of 1999 from Pearl, Mississippi. He went on to graduate in the spring of 2001 and continued his education at Emory University where he completed a B.A. in finance and journalism. He joined *Teach for America* and relocated to Houston, Texas, to teach high school English. In 2008, he completed a JD at the University of Texas in Austin. He worked for Norton Rose Fulbright and then as corporate council for Sumitomo Corporation of Americas. While undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer, he continued to work to establish Sumitomo Corporation of Americas's Houston legal office and was a finalist for *Best Up and Coming Corporate Council* by the *Houston Business Journal* in 2016.

He had a passion for soccer and continued to play as long as he was able. Also a musician, he wrote and played his senior class song and continued arranging music for his acapella group in college, later playing drums and guitar at open mics around Houston. Exemplifying the MSMS ideal of service, Gabe was a caring friend and volunteer, he often offered pro bono legal services and was an active member of Neartown Church.

He married his high school sweetheart, Sara Jolly Jones, also a member of the MSMS Class of 2001, and became a father to daughter Madeline in 2014. He passed away on September 5, 2018, and was laid to rest in Houston, Texas. In his final act of service, Gabe requested that in lieu of flowers, donations are to be sent in his name to Neartown Church (<https://www.neartownchurch.org/give/>) or to the Pancreatic Cancer Network (<https://www.pancan.org>).



By: Cindy Henderson c/o 1995

## Changing Roles from Alumna to Parent

I remember Rebecca Walters Lauderdale as one of my seniors when I started at MSMS in the fall of 1993. Mostly, I remembered her as Ms. Helen Perry's work service student in charge of research projects. She was the person we submitted progress reports and, eventually, reports about our projects. Rebecca and I didn't chat a lot or hang out, but she was funny and nice and helped keep us on track. When I heard that her daughter had been admitted to the Class of 2020, I thought it was time to catch up and see where life had taken her.

Rebecca came to MSMS from Pascagoula, Mississippi. Pascagoula had a large high school, but Rebecca remembers that she still didn't really feel like she belonged there. This sense of dislocation is one many MSMS Alumni acknowledge having had at their homeschools. At the time she applied to MSMS, Rebecca was most interested in more diverse and accelerated science coursework.

Her memories of MSMS include meeting her husband. She recalled her first big experience was a trip her junior year

to Opryland. It was on that trip that she made several good friends as well as meeting Sean Lauderdale, whom she would marry eight years later. She recalled asking him to sit with a group of new friends at the Pizza Hut. Following that, she said "He didn't talk to me again for a while, so I thought I had scared him away." They ended up going to Taco Bell together a year later and the rest was history. Her Opryland-Taco Bell romance is now 25 years strong.

The MSMS academics didn't disappoint Rebecca and she vividly recalls Mrs. Helen Perry's Advanced Physics course as the one that impacted her the most. As many Perry students can empathize with, Rebecca struggled with the coursework and eventually eked out a B, but she came away from the class with strong math and physics skills. She said "I ended up taking physical chemistry and quantum mechanics in college and doing very well. I even won an award, and I attribute that to her."

On the student life side of MSMS, Rebecca fondly recalled

Rebecca W. Lauderdale, MD  
Grettel R. Rodriguez, MD

Heather L. Richie, MD

Jason A. Fisher, DO

Ms. Dawn Barham's arrival her senior year and taking guitar class with her. This led to sessions playing *Stairway to Heaven* with David McClendon and others. She laughingly recalled that "I thought we were amazing, but I hope nobody has a video to prove me wrong."

Rebecca now has a unique view of MSMS since her daughter Ella Lauderdale was admitted to the Class of 2020. This has naturally led to Rebecca viewing the MSMS experience from the "then and now" perspective of her time there versus her daughter's. She recounts being at interview day in the Spring of 2018 with her daughter and how similar the students seemed. She said "Looking at all the kids, I could see the faces of people I went to school with 25 years ago. I swear I saw Richard Anton walking out of Hooper with green hair, but it was just a lookalike." She also said that during Ella's orientation week, the first dance has already led to a new rule that glitter is banned from all future MSMS dances. Rebecca's husband Sean made the observation "It's not a true MSMS event unless something gets added to the handbook!"

But other things have changed at MSMS. Rebecca appreciates the evolution in course selections and availability of technology. She's happy that her daughter

will get to skip the wrestling match with the residence hall printers and their off again and on again performance. Even for those suffering through the *Junior Plan* and being unable to leave campus, there is a coffee shop on campus and a food delivery service in Columbus. She observed there are also more spaces for quiet learning than she recalled and thinks the requirements for wellness hours for physical activity are great for students. She appreciates that the administration is both more sophisticated and more unified in their purpose. However, she thinks the dorms are a negative. She said, "We had the better deal [regarding dorms]; the current dorms are smaller, darker and not as homey, in my opinion."

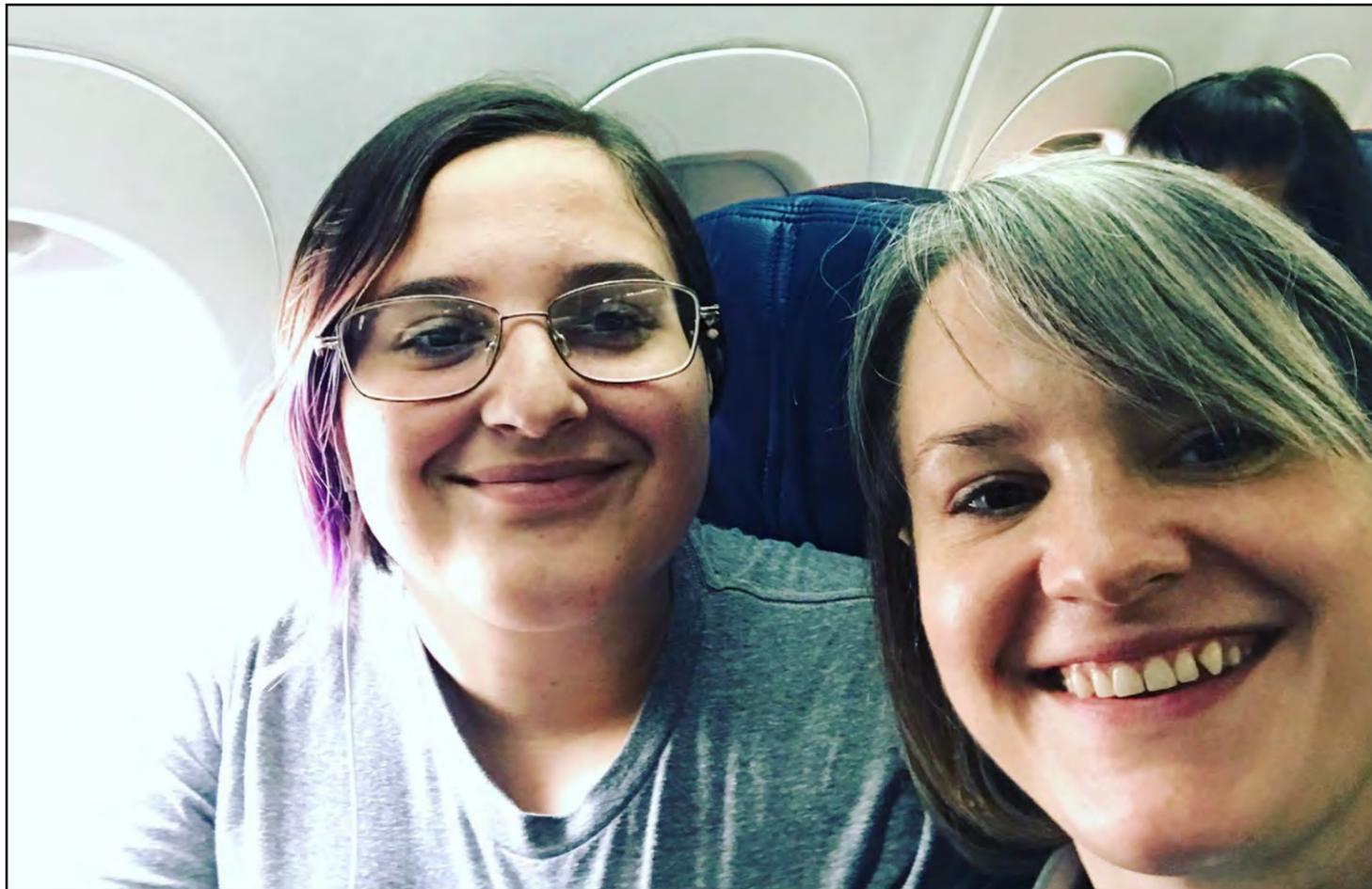
But there are things that Rebecca hopes never change at MSMS and some she hopes change very soon. She appreciated the diversity and critical thinking that are welcomed and celebrated at MSMS. She also hopes that the practices of not giving a class rank and a student culture where team work and collaboration are the norm continue for MSMS. But she expressed hope that funds can be secured for new dorms soon.

For the current MSMS students, her advice is "Don't forget to have fun! Don't shy away from something you want to do but are afraid you'll not be good at. The limits of your capabilities and interests will never become clear unless you test them, and failure is just another data point – if you learn from it, it doesn't necessarily indicate likelihood of failure later on. Did I say don't forget to



have fun?" Her hope for the MSMS Alumni is that they will run for public offices and be present at all levels of government in the future.

After graduating from MSMS in the Class of 1994, Rebecca went on to graduate from the University of Southern Mississippi, as magna cum laud with a B.S. in chemistry and an emphasis in biochemistry. She then



Impact the Future.  
Influence Generations.  
Leave a Legacy.

attended the University of Mississippi School of Medicine to obtain her medical degree and completed her residency there in internal medicine. She moved to Hattiesburg in 2007 as a practicing internist with the Hattiesburg Clinic. In 2016, she had the opportunity to launch a new venture in an outpatient setting focusing on care for medically complex Medicare patients. She is committed to providing quality healthcare for the elderly and disabled as well as patients receiving hospice services. In 2017, she was elected to the Hattiesburg Clinic Board of Directors. In her own words, "This is truly my dream job."

For other MSMS Alumni interested in pursuing her career field, Rebecca advised them that "If you're at MSMS, you probably have what it takes to get through medical school. Work hard at your core requirements in college but don't ignore your creative side. And make sure you really want to go into medicine – you need some experience working in a healthcare environment before you make the decision to do this as a profession. It's not for everyone."

Rebecca also shared that her husband Sean (c/o 1994) would like for everyone to know he has an epic beard that Rebecca loves.



Your education at MSMS prepared you for life.  
Consider leaving a legacy gift to ensure other students  
are afforded the same opportunity.



## 9-TO-5 IN THE SKIES

### The Jared Yates Story

By: Sarah Sapp c/o 1999

While most MSMS students' infamous yellow cards were full of sign-outs to the coffee house at the Princess Theater, Wal-Mart, Sonic and Lake Lowndes, Jared Yates' card was full of outings to the Lowndes County Airport.

No, he wasn't jet setting in between classes. He was in his infancy as a pilot.

"I couldn't point to a single time when I became interested in airplanes; I just always was. For my first 12 years, my dad was a full-time airplane mechanic in the Air National Guard, which was a factor, along with my grandfather's career as an engineer in the space program," said Yates, now a captain for JetBlue Airways on the ERJ-190.

While this Delta State University (DSU) graduate from Clarke County has flown over 10,000 hours in airplanes, he started small—model airplane small.

"By the time I came to MSMS, I was very involved with model airplanes. I had a few hours of undocumented full-size plane flying, which were provided by Bill Ross, the generous owner of the airport where we flew model airplanes (OMS0). He taught me how to mow his grass runways so that I could offer the sentiment of returning the favor. In my second year at MSMS, I had access to a car,

and somehow they let me sign out to the Lowndes County Airport (UBS), where I would linger around for hours at a time, chatting with the Taloneys, the fixed-base operators back then. I also had model planes with me at times while at MSMS, but I was usually confined to computer simulators due to logistical and financial barriers."

DSU, the only in-state school with a flying program, gave Yates the opportunity to get a solid education nearly debt-free. He obtained both his Bachelor of Commercial Aviation (2003) and his Master of Commercial Aviation (2004), maintaining a 4.0 throughout.

"As to the quality of the education I received at DSU, I have spent 15 years flying with and training with pilots from backgrounds including the most expensive universities and all branches of the US military, and they've never made me feel like I was any less prepared than they were," said Yates.

"A pilot's education never ends, and while the university level does provide a critical foundation, most of the learning happens in the subsequent years. So perhaps the most important gift I've been offered is the insatiable appetite for learning and the skills for how to execute that learning, which came from several institutions along the way, especially MSMS," said Yates.

Yates went on to earn pilot credentials as an airline transport pilot for single and multiengine land instrument airplanes, including the F-27, CL-65, A-320, ERJ-170, ERJ-190. Prior to his work with JetBlue since 2010, he served as CRJ-200 and CRJ-700 Captain and First

Officer for PSA Airlines (US Airways Express), Fokker F-27/ATR-42 First Officer for Mountain Air Cargo and Assistant Chief Flight Instructor at DSU. He still holds his flight instructor certificate, which is where his teachers at MSMS played a big role.

While he can't pick just one teacher who influenced him most, he can attest to all of their influence on him when he is in the teaching seat.

**"The teachers at MSMS taught me the subject matter, and they taught me how to learn, but they also set a great example for how to be a teacher. Sometimes I find myself in a teaching role and I'm thankful for having that model to aspire to,"** said Yates.

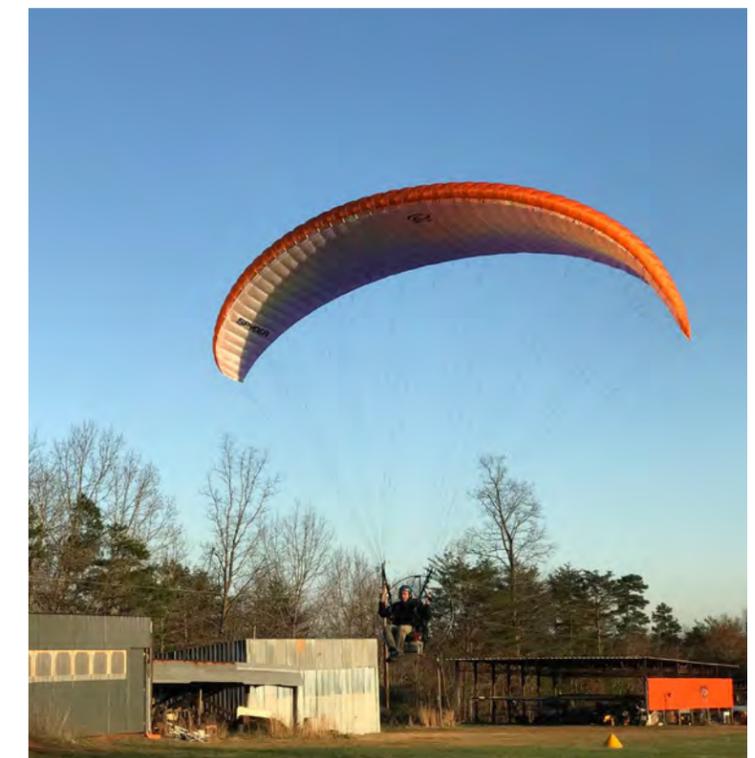
One of the best things about life as a pilot for Yates is the time off and financial freedom to immerse himself, his wife, Tabitha, and their two young daughters, Felicia and Sarah, in a bounty of their personal hobbies and interests.

From motorcycling, powered paragliding and sail boating to building and flying model airplanes and raising chickens to a small commercial level a few years ago, Yates spends his time on the ground in ways that fulfill the part of his brain he describes as the creative side. Other such creative endeavors include metal fabrication and welding, website design, residential construction and renovation, travel, gardening, outdoor activities, unicycling, all things computer and learning to speak Spanish.

Yates is also a published magazine author and

contributor, including works in *Kitplanes*, *EAA Sport Aviation* and *AOPA Pilot*. He also plays an editorial role for *The Current*.

"If there is a continuum with creation/synthesis on one end, and maintenance on the other, airline flying is far into the maintenance side. We do things the same way every time, and except in the extremely rare "Sully" situation, we do not innovate," said Yates.





the last flight on a trip, I set the parking brake, run the parking checklist, and my work is completely done until I show up for the next trip. I'm gone from home all day and night for 4-5 days at a time 3-4 times a month, but when I'm home, I'm home all day and night. Living outside of the 9-5 five day footprint means being out of town for lots of holidays and weekend functions, but it also means frequently being free during the week when most working people are not. I joke that many of my friends are retired people, since we have the same work schedule."

Now a resident of Hickory, North Carolina, his love for the skies runs in the family. His wife, an occupational therapist by trade, flies her own single-seat paramotor and can drive the small airplane their family built over four years from a kit (which provided an initial flight Yates admits was the most exciting and scariest experience he has in the sky to date). Now that their kids are reaching school age, they hope to spend time on her airplane flight training and certification.

"Our older daughter, Felicia, was born almost two years before our small plane was flying, but by the time of her first small plane ride, she was already a frequent air traveler, including a 2012 trip to Iceland. Sarah was born just after the first flight of our little plane, and she was about 11 weeks old when she went for her first ride in it. They are both still frequent flyers in small planes and airline planes since we have access to discount standby travel benefits on JetBlue and most other airlines," said Yates.

"We are usually able to take a handful of family airplane trips each year, and camping trips are our favorite. The girls have started learning to fly model airplanes, but I won't be able to teach them to fly full-size airplanes until their feet get low enough to reach the pedals. Until then we're working on what the FAA calls 'Aeronautical Decision Making,' which is a crucial skill independent of leg length."

"To my brain, the creation side of the spectrum is where the candy is, and the maintenance side is where the vegetables are. The flying job requires searching for motivation to stay interested in doing things the way the company specifies, the same way every time, day after day. For example, at the last place I worked, I logged 1,750 landings at Charlotte in five years. The first 10 required creating new skills. The other 1,740 required real effort to develop the discipline to strive for continued compliance, and appreciate microscopic performance improvements," Yates continued.

"Early on I realized that the career was not going to offer fulfillment of my desire to create new things. I could choose a different job that would scratch that itch, or I could stay with flying. I'm happy with that decision so far. Any of our non-pilot peers who have a comparable lifestyle are working all the time, and most are expected to be available even when they aren't at work. After

# SUMMMER ENRICHMENT CAMP

MSMS Summer Enrichment camps, held annually in June, are open to middle and high school students from across the nation!

Applications available Dec. 4 online at [www.themsms.org/summercamp](http://www.themsms.org/summercamp)



# The Geographical Chemistry of Ari Esters

By: Lamees El-Sadek c/o 2007

In the 1940s and 50s, record companies recruited blues and jazz talent from Greenville, Mississippi. Known as the *Heart and Soul of the Delta*, Greenville is home to over 34,000 residents, 76% of whom are black. An economy that once flourished on its cotton and slave dependent industry, Greenville now sits in one of the state's seven poorest counties. Its public education system has similarly suffered. Of Greenville High School students, only 3% perform proficient or above on state mathematics exams, while 14% perform at least proficient on state reading exams. Niche, the same company that ranked MSMS as the best public Mississippi high school, ranked Greenville High 233rd out of 251 high schools.

Ari Esters is a 2011 MSMS graduate and considers Greenville home, despite moving across Mississippi three times. It is the land of his grandparents and where Esters feels most at ease. Still, Esters does not fit the broad-stroked narrative that's often imposed on sons and daughters of the Mississippi Delta. After graduating from MSMS, Esters attended Stanford University, America's #7 ranked university, graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering in 2015. Working for a year at Cellular Research, a biotech startup that had recently been acquired by Becton, Dickinson and Company,

Esters realized that his scientific passion lay elsewhere and decided to switch to electrical engineering. Esters is now attending the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) to earn a Master of Science in Electrical Engineering and is set to graduate from this fourth-highest nationally ranked program this December.

Esters was originally fascinated with chemistry, because he enjoyed learning how to change material properties by designing structures on the molecular level. But, after a year working in the field, he realized his undergraduate chemical engineering program had not taught him to build tangibles. His current electrical engineering Master program allows him to manipulate structures at the micro and nano-scale to determine structure-property relationships, while also building physical devices.

Esters went from chemical to electrical engineering, two very different fields, because he realized his passion and his curiosity laid somewhere different from what he initially envisioned. And one of the deepest insights one takes from communicating with Esters is that he envisions his end goal and then develops the process along the way. Esters approach to learning and personal meaning in work imparts life lessons: stop thinking about how long, how much,

or how tedious the journey may be but instead focus on the goal—where passion and curiosity lay—and the stuff in the middle will fall in place.

Despite his many successes, Esters still considers enrolling in MSMS as his best decision to-date. **“Everything from my current career path to the way I interact with others is a product of MSMS. The amount of perspective I’ve gained from attending this school is indescribable.”**

**Here is a profile of this exceptional MSMSer, intent on finding his place and his contribution in the scientific world.**

**What is your professional goal?**

To develop new and better technologies with meaningful applications in biotechnology, energy and space exploration. These are the three frontiers that mean the most to me today.

**What is your professional dream?**

There are three device innovations that are becoming increasingly relevant to every industry: connectivity (Internet-of-Things), miniaturization (micro/nanotechnology) and sustainability (renewable energy). I want to be a leading influential figure in the nanotechnology and renewable energy industries. One vision I’ve always had is to lead my own company or research-and-development group to design, build and test new sensors.

**As a black Mississippi man, what has been your experience to study and work in a STEM profession?**

As a black man, no one ever expects you to be at the top of the math and science class. No one expects you to be one of the more intelligent or capable students in the engineering class or in the workplace. I’ve found this both frustrating and liberating. On the one hand, I am judged from the start and I constantly have to prove myself to others. On the other hand, if others assume I’m not noteworthy, everything I do will prove them wrong.

**What are your hobbies?**

In my free time, I like to exercise, play video games, read and tinker with my electronics. I have a box of electronic components for building and prototyping circuits of different kinds. I spend quite a bit of time on personal projects trying to automate simple tasks in my life and pick up new skills along the way.

**What motivated you to attend MSMS?**

Actually, I did not initially intend to enroll in MSMS. By sophomore year of high school, I had already moved across Mississippi three times in four years, and I was tired of moving from school to school. However, my mom decided that we would be moving back to Greenville later that year. Greenville is home to me, but unfortunately the Greenville public school curriculum is not at all challenging. I decided that if I was forced to move anyway, MSMS was the better option. Seven years after graduating from MSMS, I still consider enrolling as the best decision I’ve made in my life.





**How do you think MSMS has impacted your education, career and overall life?**

Before MSMS, I was earning A's in my math and science classes but getting C's and D's in easy elective classes like "Word Processing" and "Health." Though I could've earned higher scores in these electives, I was unmotivated to complete assignments in these classes, because they did not interest or challenge me nearly as much as the math and sciences. After attending MSMS, I was again motivated to perform at my best, because I was surrounded by peers who also loved to be challenged and tried their hardest to achieve their goals.

Additionally, MSMS revitalized my social lifestyle and how I interact with others. In early high school, I failed to form meaningful relationships with other people in spite of trying really hard to do so. Thus, when I first arrived at MSMS, I was cynical, antisocial and even antagonistic towards other students. Interacting and forming relationships with students and teachers at MSMS showed me that I didn't have to project apathy to hide my weaknesses and that I didn't have to deal with all of my issues on my own. I learned a lot from my peers and it has completely changed my life for the better.

**What do you wish you knew when you were 15, starting MSMS, that you know now?**

Nothing in the real world functions as it does in school. When I was 15, adults mentioned this all the time, but I did not understand this on an intuitive level until recently. By the time I was halfway through college, my grades and coursework had already become

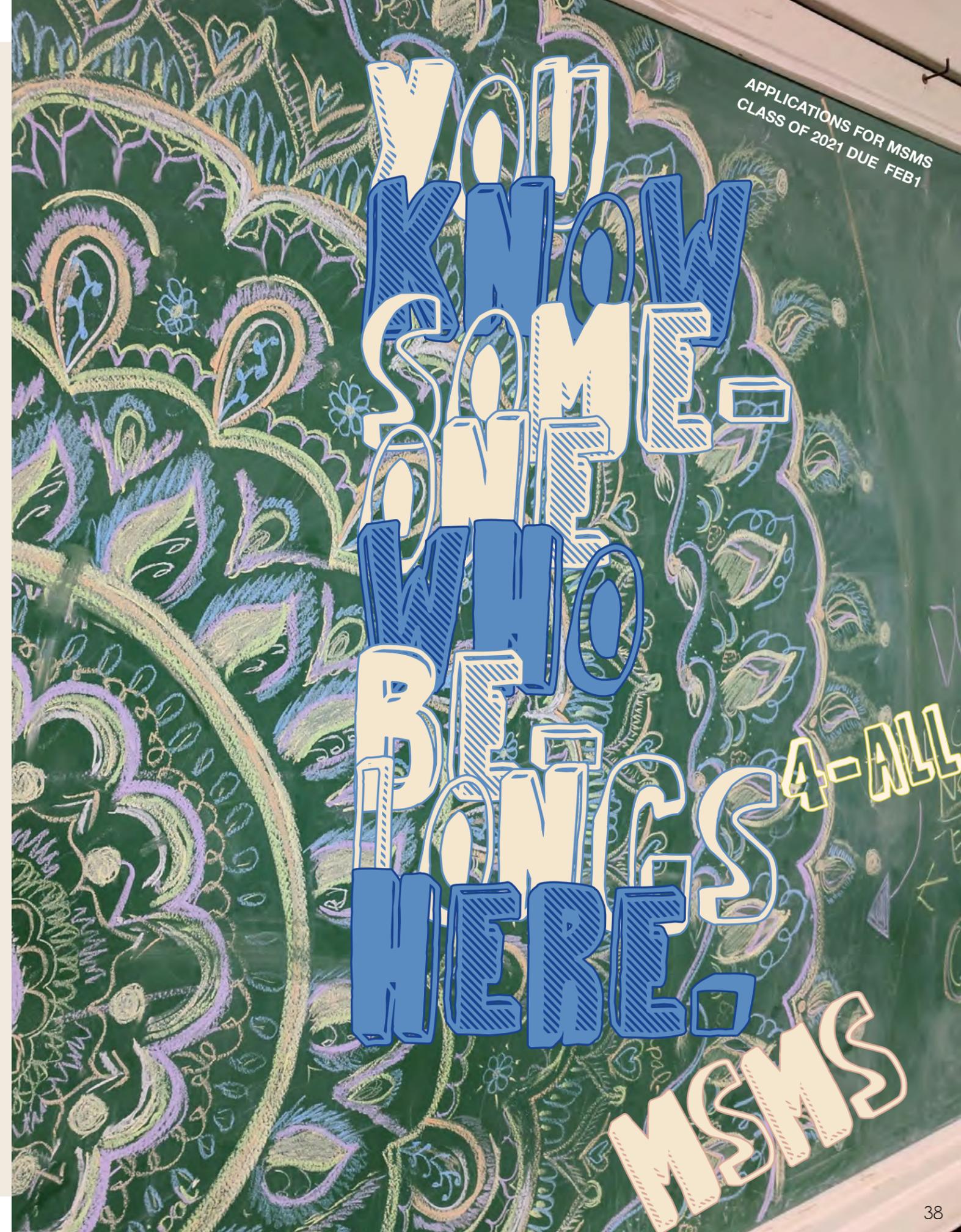
significantly less relevant. Employers and graduate schools (and undergraduate schools, as well) measure their candidates by the magnitude and variety of their experience. I wish I had started doing personal projects much earlier, so that I could refine my interests and experience at a much younger age.

**What's some of the most important advice you would like to share with MSMS students?**

Don't be afraid to ask others for help, inside or outside the classroom. Almost everything we learn is learned from others. We take classes taught by teachers, we read books written by authors and we read Wiki or news articles posted by writers. Don't be too proud to seek that same help from your classmates. Though you're all the same age, you can learn much from each other.

**What do you think MSMS' role is in Mississippi?**

I think the role of MSMS is to unite people across the state of Mississippi with different backgrounds, beliefs and mindsets. When I lived on the MSMS campus, I met those who loved math and science and those who preferred art and literature. I met students from a wide range of different religions. I met conservatives and liberals with different world views. I met those who felt disowned by Mississippi and those who felt like they would never leave Mississippi. And yet when I graduated, I felt a special connection to each and every one of my classmates. I think the role of MSMS is to make Mississippians realize that, despite our rough and divided history, any and everyone in Mississippi can get along and grow to like each other.



# School Update



## INNOVATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES



By: Office of Advancement & Admissions

When Executive Director, Dr. Germain McConnell, first arrived on the MSMS campus in the spring of 2011, he was excited about the potential of MSMS. His recurring message to faculty and staff has been that MSMS cannot afford to be good; it must be great.

“We must be great,” he indicated, “because the amazing students who choose to spend their last two years of high school here come to us with a desire for more of a challenging experience to help them accomplish extraordinary things in their futures.”

According to Dr. McConnell, parents send their children because they are confident that MSMS will provide the best possible experience for them.

For the second year in a row, MSMS has been

listed as one of the top 10 best public high schools in the nation according to Niche, moving up two spots this year to #6; and the faculty has been ranked as the #1 best faculty in the United States in consecutive years. MSMS graduates continue to show that they are among the most talented in the nation, with the 104 graduates of the class of 2018 securing close to \$9.7 million in scholarships.

### MSMS RANKED

**#1** Public High School Faculty

**#6** Public High School

With this level of success, it is easy to become complacent, but MSMS administrators understand the importance of remaining focused on enhancing the opportunities and experiences provided for students. Not only must MSMS focus on innovative learning experiences,

but to fulfill the mission of “enhancing the future of Mississippi,” the school also seeks to expand its reach and impact through quality educational leadership and aggressive outreach programs.

The real strength of MSMS lies in its human resources. Despite inconsistent funding through the years, faculty and staff have continued to provide the highest quality learning experiences and leadership development for students. As the pillars of the MSMS academic community have retired, MSMS administrators have taken great care to identify potential replacements who understand the mission of MSMS and the commitment needed to continue the great legacy of academic excellence.

According to Ms. Kelly Brown, Director for Academic Affairs, the Division of Academic Affairs conducts an annual assessment of course offerings, and departments are encouraged to modify courses that reflect both their interests and the interests of students. “In science this year, Introduction to Epidemiology will be taught for the first time,” stated Brown, “because Dr. Tina Gibson has research interests in this area.” In physics, Astronomy and Electronics have been introduced back as options. In mathematics, a few revisions have been made such as Linear Algebra being reinserted as an offering.

In addition to the revisions in the mathematics and science courses, three new courses have been added to the fine arts offerings: Photography, 2D Design and 3D Design. These new art courses reflect the interests of the new visual arts teacher, Mr. Andy Snyder,” stated Ms. Brown. “We are excited about Mr. Snyder sharing his interests with students.”

*The Entrepreneurship Program* continues to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate the needs of Mississippi communities and to explore what it takes to

start a new business. On March 6, 2018, the first *MSMS Business Plan Competition* was witnessed by the entire student body. Five teams composed of two to three members competed for significant monetary prizes of \$3,000, \$1,500 and \$750. The statewide leadership of Regions Bank sponsored the prizes during the inaugural competition and helped secure four business leaders who served as mentors and judges.

For the second annual competition to be held on February 26, 2019, BankTEL, which is headed by an MSMS alumnus Boyce Adams, will sponsor the prizes for each team. This year MSMS will include additional business leaders and the Center for Entrepreneurship located at Mississippi State University. “In addition to providing access to coaching on how to revise and improve their plans,” Dr. Hester inserted, “participants will also receive guidance on how to deliver their plan in an engaging way to an audience.”

Despite limited funding for the engineering program, MSMS has been able to provide students with opportunities to learn about engineering through Introduction to Engineering, a dual credit course taught on the campus of Mississippi State University. Because MSMS lacks an engineering instructor, it has not been able to offer a second dual credit engineering course planned to be taught on the MSMS campus. In addition to these courses, Mr. Josh Crowson, Engineering Club sponsor, has helped the MSMS Engineering Club with activities such as *Santa’s Workshop*, where they designed and used the 3-D printers to create toys for local children. The club also set up an escape room for alumni and students during *Alumni Weekend*.

# LEADERSHIP



Another component of the MSMS mission is to provide quality educational leadership through involvement in the community, the state and the nation. Once again, MSMS's #1 faculty has met that standard by remaining active in professional organizations, presenting at state and national conferences, mentoring colleagues in a variety of programs, and sponsoring clubs and student activities throughout the year. Last year faculty and staff members were involved in more than 25 different leadership opportunities across the state and nation, sharing their expertise in content knowledge and pedagogy with other educators. This year MSMS will host three very important conferences.

*The Mississippi Council for Teachers of Mathematics Conference* was held in October 2018. This annual conference attracts approximately 250 mathematics teachers of all grade levels to share best practices and learn new ideas. MSMS math teacher Mrs. Lauren Zarandona, who also currently serves as a state officer for MCTM, expressed great excitement. "We are delighted to serve as host and share our students and unique educational environment with teachers from across Mississippi!" she exclaimed.

MSMS will also host the *Mississippi Junior Classical League Convention*. World language instructor Mrs. Lori Pierce asserted, "Hosting the *MJCL Convention* gives our students the opportunity to embody the Roman tradition of hospitality as they host students from around Mississippi who come to celebrate classical traditions and culture, test their knowledge of Latin and enjoy ancient Roman entertainment such as chariot races and gladiator fights."

As a member of the National Consortium of Secondary Stem Schools (NCSSS), MSMS students are invited to participate in the organization's annual research conference. In June of 2019, MSMS will also serve as the host of this prestigious national conference. Dr. Elizabeth Morgan noted, "Two years ago, the students who attended the symposium in Boston had a wonderful experience." Current students are excited for the opportunity to share their research at a national meeting. When asked about the benefits of hosting such a conference here at MSMS, Dr. Bill Odom added, "Northeast Mississippi has unique opportunities for outdoor recreational and educational excursions during the *NCSSS Student Research Symposium*."



# OUTREACH



In addition to directly serving around 240 students annually, MSMS relies heavily on outreach initiatives to expand its reach and increase STEM literacy and enthusiasm among all public school students in the state of Mississippi. A variety of innovative programs that provide Mississippi students and educators with opportunities for hands-on experiences in STEM subjects are organized and carried out each year by faculty and students. During the 2017-18 school year, more than 6,500 students and nearly 200 teachers across the state were impacted through various outreach programs.

One outreach program that has been gaining in popularity over the past few years is *Math Superstars*, which was conceived by MSMS mathematics instructor Lauren Zarandona. Throughout the early fall, MSMS students coordinate and facilitate classroom-based math competitions for elementary students in participating schools. The students who rank the highest among their peers are then invited to participate in the *Math Superstars* competition held at MSMS. "In addition to the experience and exposure gained by the students themselves," stated Ms.

Zarandona, "we provide training for interested teachers on how to incorporate higher order thinking into their classroom models and how to stimulate increased interest in mathematics learning." This event has outgrown the MSMS facilities and will now be hosted in the Trotter Convention Center.

MSMS also continues to expand on its beloved *Science Carnival*, which annually reaches roughly 1,000 students with the hopes of encouraging scientific exploration in younger children. Last year, MSMS partnered with the Mississippi Development Authority's Energy and Natural Resources Division to conduct a modified version on the *Science Carnival* for the *Energy Awareness Day* in Jackson. MSMS also collaborated with Toyota-Mississippi and Tupelo Young Professionals to host a *Traveling STEM* carnival for the 4th graders in the Tupelo School District.

In the future, MSMS would like to create an Office of Outreach to provide even better learning experiences for both teachers and students in Mississippi. With so many amazing students and faculty members, MSMS has the potential to impact thousands more students.



# THE FUTURE



As stated earlier in this article, MSMS has thrived because of the dedicated faculty and staff members who have understood the unique nature of the student population and academic environment. To enhance this extraordinary learning environment, more of an investment in the human resources is needed. It is evident that faculty are valued because of the salary schedule that ensures they will receive pay increases according to their levels of education and years of experience. Likewise, MSMS administrators are investigating a process for consistent pay raises for staff members.

In addition to pay increases for staff members, MSMS seeks to secure funding for an engineering instructor and an outreach coordinator. Additional faculty will be needed to fill the 300-seat capacity.

To maximize student experiences, MSMS administrators have also begun to focus on facilities. Small improvements have been made such as renovating Shackelford Auditorium, initiating the engineering lab and converting the Hooper computer lab into a study lounge. Future plans include:

- New academic and administration building
- New residence halls with collaborative spaces
- Expansion and redesign of the engineering lab
- New classroom furniture that allows for more flexibility in student interactions

According to Dr. McConnell, MSMS must have more investments from both public and private sources to fully realize its potential to impact future leaders of this state. “Part of my job is to listen to what our faculty and staff members need to provide the best possible experiences for our students,” McConnell contended. “Then, it is my responsibility to work with legislators, alumni, alumni parents, statewide businesses and other constituents to secure the resources.” MSMS will launch a monthly newsletter this year. Subscribe by visiting [www.themsms.org](http://www.themsms.org).

The legislative priorities for next fiscal year are summarized as follows:

**PRIORITY 1: Enhance the Engineering and Computer Science program**

- Additional engineering staff, equipment and supplies: \$100,000

**PRIORITY 2: Increase student enrollment**

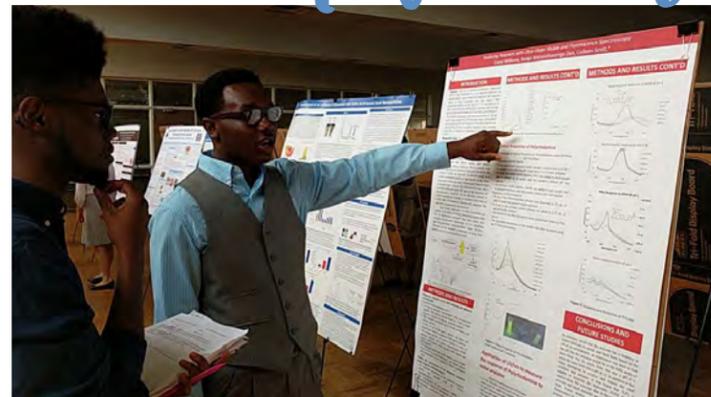
- Additional faculty and staff positions and additional resources: \$500,000

**PRIORITY 3: Improve outdated facilities**

- New Residence Halls
- New Administrative and Academic Building



*Our future starts here*



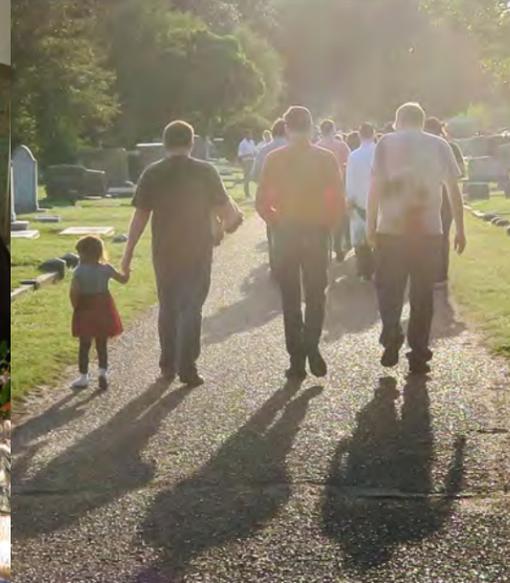


# ALUMNI WEEKEND 2018



MILESTONE CLASSES HONORED: 1993 • 1998 • 2003 • 2008 • 2013





SAVE THE DATE

MARCH 29-30, 2019

# ALUMNI WEEKEND

Details: [www.msmsaa.org/events](http://www.msmsaa.org/events)

Open to all Alumni.

MILESTONE CLASSES:  
1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014

# THANK YOU.

The MSMS Foundation is honored to receive support during 2017 from the following individuals, businesses and foundations. Thank you! You are enabling MSMS to provide Mississippi's students with an amazing *“Opportunity for Excellence.”*

## LEGACY LEVEL

Anonymous

## EXCELLENCE LEVEL

Chad Edmonson  
Neeka Johnson  
Laura Lindeman  
Grady Morgan  
Rachel Sams

## LEADERSHIP LEVEL

Dillon Allen  
Lyle & Anna Barbato  
Anna Beth Bell  
Patricia Biesiot  
Brian Black  
Wesley Bond  
Erik Brown  
Jack & Claudia Carter  
Kevin Casto  
Charles Cates  
Nathaniel &  
Mattie Clay  
Courtney Collins  
Andrea Collins  
Scott Colom  
Amanda Cunningham  
John Davis  
Kendall & Kim Dunkelberg-  
Whitehead  
Cass & Cindy Everitt  
Thomas Hayden  
Stark Hayden  
Mark & Leslie Henderson  
Cynthia Henderson  
Lynn Joe  
Micheal Joyce  
Lara Kauchak  
Ryan Kelly  
Aziz Khanifar  
Clayton Kittrell  
Anisha Kumar  
Deborah Levine  
Alicia & Michael Melton  
Sepideh Baghahi &  
Todd Miller  
Kimberly Padeletti  
Shalin Patel  
Mukesh Patel  
Aaron Piletz

Sarah Prather  
Tom & Emma Richardson  
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Jamie Saxon  
Sonya Sharp  
Jennifer Sloan Ziegler  
Laura Amye Smith  
Tracy Steckler  
Joshua Stone  
Ryder Taff  
Philip Taff  
Emily Taff  
Anuj Tewari  
Lauren & Matthew  
Vanlandingham  
Rosemary Weathersby  
Kurt & Susan Weiger  
Erik Wheeler  
Mary Alissa Willis  
Jaime Winton  
Bryan Youngblood  
Joyce Youngblood

## BLUE WAVE LEVEL

Brian Allen  
Erica Balthrop  
Matthew Bell  
Blair Bingham  
Edward Blaney  
Amy Boggan  
Joseph Boggess  
Jim & Kate Borsig  
Edea Anne Baldwin  
Tiffany Castricone William  
Randy Coker  
H. J. Davidson  
Linda Davis  
Damien Gibbs  
Marleen Hansen  
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2018

2019

## NOVEMBER

**02** MSMS Fall  
Preview Day

### Super Nights:

**06** Pascagoula  
**08** Bay St. Louis  
**13** Hattiesburg  
**15** McComb

## DECEMBER

**04** Enrichment  
Camp Application  
Availability

## JANUARY

**18** Request for  
application review  
volunteers

**29** Capitol Day

## FEBRUARY

**01** Applications  
for MSMS Class of  
2021 due

Application review  
begins

## MARCH

**29-30**  
MSMS Alumni  
Weekend

**23** MSMS  
Application  
Interview

## APRIL

**27** MSMS  
Class of 2021  
Orientation