



# Maine School of Science and Mathematics

*Where Going Beyond is the Norm*

## **Annual Sustainability Report**

**Prepared for the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee**

**February 16, 2024**

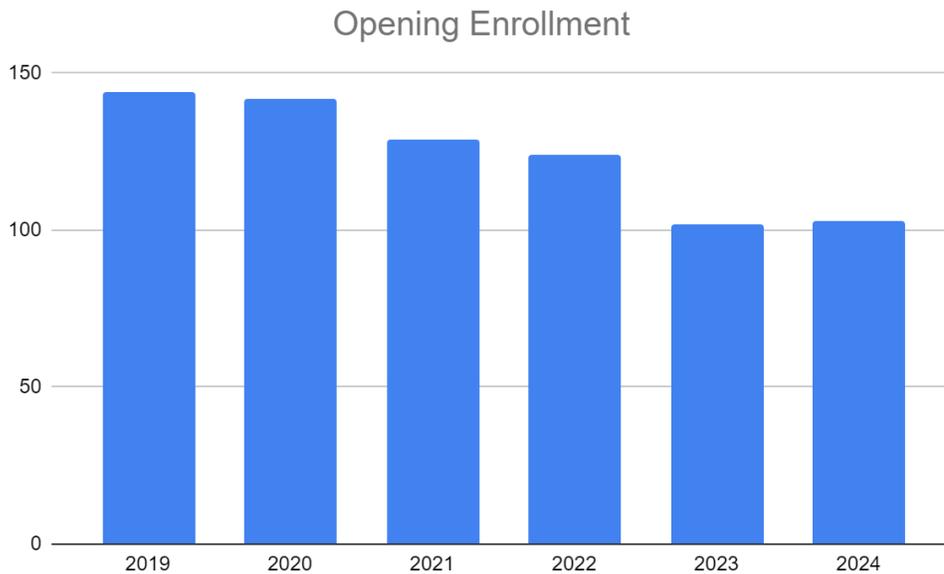
The Maine School of Science and Mathematics is pleased to submit the following annual sustainability report to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. We appreciate the ongoing support of the Committee and are happy to answer any questions on the information contained in this report or that members of the Committee may have of the School.

In addition to this report, we encourage and invite any interested Committee members to access the Administration's quarterly report prepared for the Board of Trustees. The two reports for the 2023-24 year to date are attached to this report for you.

## Enrollment

### *Opening Enrollment*

With the cuts the School has been forced to make under our static funding model, we currently maintain one full time and one part time position in our admission office. In addition to student recruitment, the full time admission staff runs our summer programming and manages the School's communication and marketing efforts. Communications and marketing are essential to a successful admission program and many schools house those efforts within the admission office - though they also usually allocate additional staff directly to those efforts.



As the above chart shows, MSSM has seen a decrease in opening enrollment since 2018. Further examination points to two windows of significant drops: year ending 2020 to year ending 2021 and year ending 2022 to year ending 2023. The first drop is primarily due to the end of the School's international student program which enrolled about 15 students. This program ended largely due to COVID but also reflects the School's clarifying its ability to issue visas to international students for only one year based on its public school status. The second drop is largely explained by a transition in a longer-term admission director and a decrease in staffing at that time. It is also important to note that the School did begin to work on better assessing students through the admission process to ensure mission-appropriateness and reduce high attrition rates and this caused the School to counsel out some students. (Discussed in the Student Attrition section below.)

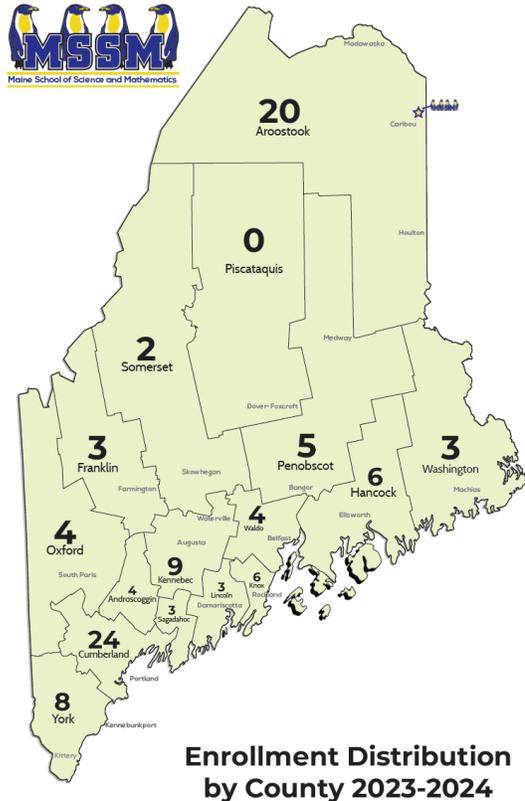
### *Geographic Distribution*

MSSM opened the 2023-24 academic year with 104 students. The map below shows the distribution of students throughout the state. While most counties are represented, this year's student population draws largely from a few regions:

- Aroostook County: 19%
- Cumberland and York Counties: 31%

- Kennebec County: 9%

In general, the student distribution today is largely coastal and Aroostook County, with far less representation in more inland counties. While we do not have accompanying maps to illustrate the change in our student body geographic distribution, we do recognize that this year represents a less distributed student body and highlights a trend toward a condensed portion of the state and Maine’s student population that MSSM is reaching and serving.



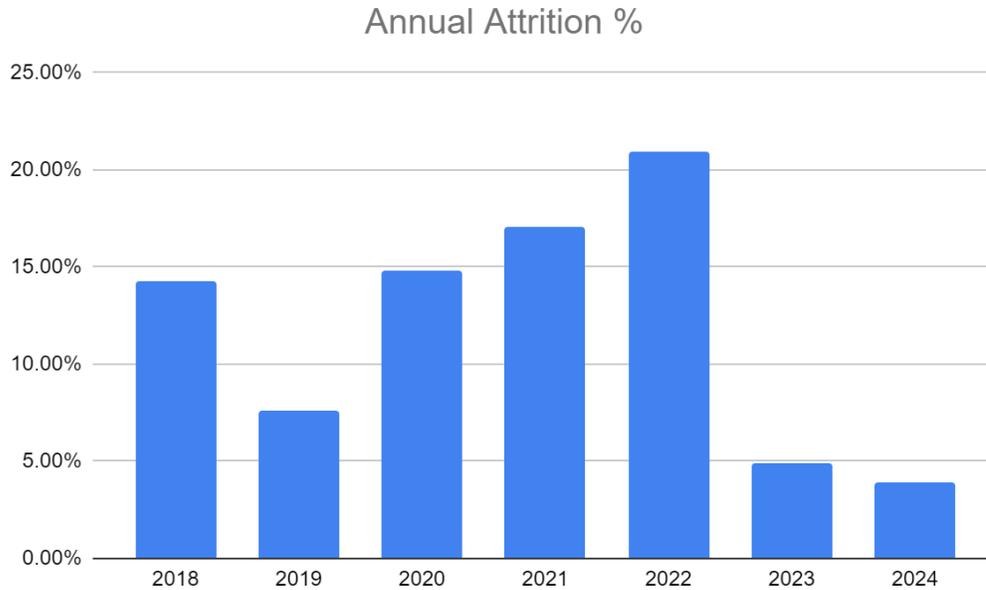
There are several factors that contribute to the decrease in our geographic distribution. A significant factor is our current room and board cost to families - \$10,300 - and the challenge of that number to many Maine families. We do allocate a portion of our state appropriation to financial aid - \$300,000 (8%) of our appropriation in this current fiscal year - but we recognize that some families likely experience “sticker shock” and do not even consider MSSM a possibility. It is also important to note that MSSM is currently maxing out our current financial aid budget, making it challenging to continue to bring in more students that require financial assistance to cover room and board costs.

We have focused our static state appropriated funds on our core deliverable - the excellent education of our students. As we’ve had to make cuts, we’ve made those in other important areas that have less immediate impact on students. Our admission payroll has decreased by \$64,663 over the past five years, even accounting for nominal raises we’ve provided staff in some of those years and the annual increases in benefits costs. This makes us less able to be present throughout the year and throughout the state, and has certainly had an impact on our ability to attract students from some of the less populous parts of Maine where our cost may be

more discouraging and there is less familiarity with the opportunities available to students at MSSM.

### *Student Attrition*

The following graph represents the School's attrition rate since 2018. We focused on this period because it represents both a pre- and post-pandemic picture to truly represent trends in student attrition. As you can see, the School has seen a reduction in student attrition over the last two years, with attrition at the lowest rates the School has seen in its history.



There are many steps the School has taken that attribute to the downward trend we are seeing in student attrition:

- 1) Improving our admission process so that we are more acutely aware of each student's needs before they enter MSSM and able to put the appropriate supports in place prior to the student's arrival.
- 2) A developing robust Student Support program that is better equipped to help students negotiate the transition to a residential rigorous educational environment. (Addressed in more detail below.)
- 3) Better awareness of the challenges students, especially gifted students, face and a broadened institutional definition of mission appropriate students and commitment to serving the full range of those students.

While it is often difficult to ascertain and record the full range of reasons that a student departs MSSM, we can share the reasons for the students that have departed this year to date:

- 1) Three students departed for personal reasons
- 2) Two departed for academic reasons
- 3) One student left for health reasons

While there is always more we can do, and we are looking at ways we can improve our

management of students considering leaving or facing dismissal for academic/disciplinary reasons, the School's administrative Leadership Team and the School's student support team have debriefed these departures to ensure that the School took all appropriate and possible steps to work with the student and family on a retention plan. We are satisfied that, in each departure this year, the appropriate steps were taken to try to retain the student.

### *Graduation Rates*

Because MSSM is a school by choice and students can be dismissed from the School if they are not meeting our academic or behavioral standards, and because of the abilities of the students we serve, it is extraordinarily rare that a student does not graduate upon completing their time at MSSM. More important than graduation rate is the attrition rate discussed above - this trend better expresses the School's ability to enroll mission-appropriate students, support students once they are enrolled, and guide gifted students through their high school education. 100% of our graduates are accepted to college, and most years 100% go on to enroll in college with an occasional student pursuing some interest for a gap year. We are working on better tracking of our graduates and their activities and success after graduation.

### *Admission Plan*

The School's Board of Trustees and the School's new executive director recognize the importance of addressing the School's admission program and enrollment results. Our current capacity is approximately 130 students and our goal is to move the School closer to capacity. We also recognize the programmatic and financial value of selectively enrolling tuition-paying students not residing in Maine. With the School's recent leadership transition and no additional funds in the current year, there has been limited opportunity to make significant changes that will have an immediate impact on enrollment for the 2024-25 academic year.

Following is an outline of the steps the School has taken to improve our enrollment results:

- 1) We have reviewed our current practices and consulted with other admission administrators to implement best practices for data collection, tracking, analysis and reporting. While we have significant work to do, we have already professionalized our data gathering and now have an accessible enrollment management report that we update regularly throughout the admission cycle. This report tracks important admission data like enrollment numbers, student demographics, grade breakdown, financial aid, and net tuition/board revenue. Tracking this data and making it accessible to multiple administrators allows us to better shape our student body, make budget decisions based on real and projected admission outcomes, and plan for facilities use.
- 2) Recognizing that a key component of enrollment is student retention, we are focusing significant time on this important area. It is discussed in more detail below.
- 3) We have identified several opportunities for visibility - professional conferences for teachers and student activities/competitions - that allow us to promote the School to a large number of potential students and referring teachers. Given limited staff time, we identified this as an efficient way to connect with students and school personnel. This year we had an admission presence at the School Counselor conference in Augusta, First Lego Middle School Maine State Championships. We will have an admission

presence at the High School First Robotics State Championship and the Vex Robotics State Championships this spring.

- 4) While the School can only issue one year visas, we have explored the market for international students for a one year period and have begun the process to re-certify the School for international students. At the same time, we are beginning to explore the potential for creating specialized programming that will serve all of our students well but may also be especially attractive to one-year students.
- 5) Each year, many domestic students enroll in private boarding schools, with many schools located in New England. We have conducted some market research and believe that MSSM fills a unique niche in this market and may be attractive to some families searching for a boarding school experience. Through work with the Independent Educational Consultant Association and existing relationships with individual consultants, the School has begun to build connections with these consultants who are important referral sources of domestic out-of-state students. Two have visited our campus, several have had in-depth conversations to learn more about what we offer, and several have asked to be added to our regular email newsletter.
- 6) We formed a Communication Committee to ensure we were communicating regularly on-message and on-brand; launched a new website designed toward recruitment and an external audience, especially potential students and families; standardized our regular email communications and added a consistent newsletter called the “Penguin Pulse;” and are in the process of developing a focused marketing and communications plan.
- 7) We have begun to develop partnerships with key Maine organizations that can help direct students. Two good partnerships that we have already begun and are actively developing are with the Roux Institute and with Maine Seacoast Mission.

The steps we have taken required a renewed focus on our admission efforts, fresh experience to help us evaluate our past practices, and revised work expectations for our staff. While we expect that these steps will have some positive impact on our enrollment results, we know that the current level of investment we are able to make in our admission program significantly limits our outcomes. A recurring financial investment in our admission program and financial aid budget would allow us to consider:

- 1) Our current staffing structure and skill set;
- 2) Staffing and resources to support a broad outreach directly to schools, students, and families throughout the State;
- 3) The price point that limits “sticker shock” for Maine families;
- 4) The financial aid budget necessary to enroll all qualified students regardless of ability to pay
- 5) The academic factors limiting access and how MSSM can creatively make our excellent academic program available to talented students who have not otherwise had access to the prerequisites for admission to MSSM.

## Student Mental Health

### *Budget*

<b>2019/2020</b>	<i>Payroll Budget</i>	<i>Non-Payroll Budget</i>	<i>Adopted Budget</i>	
Academic Support	\$181,697.91	\$8,560.00	\$190,257.91	
Health Services	\$70,143.63	\$34,749.40	\$104,893.03	<b>\$295,150.94</b>
<b>2020/2021</b>	<i>Payroll Budget</i>	<i>Non-Payroll Budget</i>	<i>Adopted Budget</i>	
Academic Support	\$178,354.86	\$7,514.00	\$185,868.86	
Health Services	\$63,252.19	\$58,520.00	\$121,772.19	<b>\$307,641.05</b>
<b>2021/2022</b>	<i>Payroll Budget</i>	<i>Non-Payroll Budget</i>	<i>Adopted Budget</i>	
Academic Support	\$164,966.46	\$5,086.00	\$170,052.46	
Health Services	\$66,444.44	\$63,738.86	\$130,183.30	<b>\$300,235.76</b>
<b>2022/2023</b>	<i>Payroll Budget</i>	<i>Non-Payroll Budget</i>	<i>Adopted Budget</i>	
Academic Support	\$206,948.82	\$7,540.00	\$214,488.82	
Health Services	\$103,180.42	\$70,680.83	\$173,861.25	<b>\$388,350.07</b>
<b>2023/2024</b>	<i>Payroll Budget</i>	<i>Non-Payroll Budget</i>	<i>Adopted Budget</i>	
Academic Support	<b>\$197,231.24</b>	<b>\$20,821.05</b>	<b>\$218,052.29</b>	
Health Services	<b>\$99,884.07</b>	<b>\$75,492.33</b>	<b>\$175,376.40</b>	<b>\$393,428.69</b>
<b>2024/2025</b>	<i>Payroll Budget</i>	<i>Non-Payroll Budget</i>	<i>Recommended Budget</i>	
Academic Support	<b>\$170,286.30</b>	<b>\$9,060.00</b>	<b>\$179,346.30</b>	
Health Services	<b>\$89,817.51</b>	<b>\$21,103.61</b>	<b>\$110,921.12</b>	<b>\$290,267.42</b>

### *Student Support Activities and Update*

The mental health needs of teens have been growing since before the pandemic, and have grown exponentially through and since that time. There is a vast body of research that documents this trend. At the same time, there is also evidence that gifted students are

susceptible to some tendencies that can impact their feeling of well-being. Our small and supportive community, while creating a welcoming and safe environment, also appeals to students with some social emotional support needs. MSSM's current Board of Trustees, administration, and our entire staff recognize the importance of understanding and supporting our student population.

As our budget illustrates, the School has invested increasingly in student physical and mental health over the last few years. There is a drop in our projected 2024-25 budget - this is due to us eliminating an academic administrative position that was held in our student support budget, not eliminating any of the direct student supports in place. Our plan was to replace that academic position with an additional direct mental health position for the 2024-25 year but we were unable to with the resources available.

The Board of Trustees recognized the need to address student well-being and formed an ad hoc Student Welfare Committee a few years ago. In its early stages, that Committee did some assessments and developed some needed policies and procedures. In its more recent meetings, that Committee has served to receive monthly updates on student well-being on campus and engage Board members, administration, and engaged parent volunteers in generative discussion on ensuring student well-being.

During the current year, the School has taken several steps to continue to improve student well-being, particularly physical and mental health:

- 1) Recognizing that an institution holds up priorities by where its administration invests its time, the executive director assumed active leadership of the Student Support Team this year - a visible sign of the School's commitment to student well-being. We have shared the message that student well-being is everyone's responsibility at MSSM.
- 2) Student Support Team membership was revised to include all of the roles essential to ensuring student success. The current membership of the School's Student Support Team consists of the executive director, school social worker, academic support coordinator, special education consultant, school nurse, director of residential life, STEM division leader, and humanities division leader. The team meets weekly to review success plans for students already receiving services and to discuss new students referred to the Student Support Team.
- 3) In September, the Executive Director worked closely with Maine Department of Education personnel to understand their newly released recommendations for mental health staffing in schools. The DOE was very helpful in developing a model of staffing appropriate for MSSM based on our residential setting and our student population. After re-evaluating the School's outsourced mental health model, we revised our outsourced services and brought on a full time school social worker - providing more hours and a consistent presence for our student body.
- 4) Our residential life team has enhanced our out of classroom programming, including a robust weekend program for varied activities for students.
- 5) The School reviewed and revised our health day policy, including required adult evaluation (by nurse for physical health and social worker for mental health) and our

notification process for parents and guardians. This new process both ensured important safety evaluations in the morning and allowed us to work with students to try to develop plans to limit lost class time when possible - using MSSM's residential campus as an advantage for our students.

- 6) The School sent a contingent of 5 employees for Gatekeeper Training, and included some training on student mental health in our faculty inservice days.
- 7) The School improved its tracking mechanisms, allowing all members of the Student Support Team to see the supports being put in place, and implemented Student Success Plans to clearly lay out student expectations and School support efforts for students, families, and staff.

While we continue to have students that experience challenges, we feel the steps we have taken have been helpful to ensuring student well-being on campus. While these steps may not eliminate issues we are confident that they position the School as best possible to identify and respond to student challenges in a way that ensures their safety and supports their success.

### **School Location**

MSSM is located in Limestone (Aroostook County) where the School owns a residence hall, 13 nearby homes to house employees, and leases academic space from the town of Limestone. The campus is accessible directly by main roads and all necessary services are readily available to the School. While we recognize there are challenges with our location (as there would be at any location), we value our Limestone location. MSSM offers much more than just classes, or dorm rooms, or sports teams - MSSM offers an experience. It is difficult to relocate an experience because place always plays an important role in creating an experience. It is no different at MSSM.

#### *Limestone Relationship*

The history of the relationship between the Town of Limestone, Limestone Community School, and MSSM has varied during the School's 30 year history. We are pleased to report that there is currently a strong and collaborative relationship between these entities. MSSM has partnered on some projects with the Town and maintains a mutually beneficial and collaborative relationship with Limestone Community School. This year, LCS and MSSM partnered to renovate the pool (including the MSSM foundation securing significant private donations to make the project affordable) which ensures a tremendous resource for the Town, LCS, and MSSM. We are currently working on an employee sharing arrangement with LCS that allows both institutions to meet their needs in the most efficient and cost effective manner. As an LCS employee recently expressed in a meeting, we are all excited to see a positive relationship between the two entities and excited for the potential that collaboration brings.

While still in the early stages, there is also potential for mutual benefit in development of the nearby Loring complex. There is a growing recognition of the potential for locating STEM based businesses in that location. MSSM is a valuable educational offering for employees that might relocate to the area; we are looking for ways to engage our students and faculty in real STEM

work that could be beneficial to growing businesses; and, those businesses provide rich learning opportunities for our students.

It is important to understand the valuable role that MSSM provides in this community that it would not in a different community. MSSM's impact, and therefore the impact of the Legislature, is outsized here in our Limestone location in a way that would likely be impossible in more populous/less remote areas. Not only does this provide value to the local community, it builds an understanding of the importance of being good community members and encourages civic engagement and a commitment to living in Maine among our student body in a way that would be difficult to replicate in many other locations.

#### *Employee Attraction and Retention*

The 2022-23 academic year saw significant transition at MSSM. When MSSM's new executive director arrived in late June 2023, the School needed to hire 7 new faculty members - including three math teachers and two science teachers. This is no easy feat that late in the cycle! However, the School was able to fill these positions with highly qualified and competent teachers who have been a wonderful addition to our School community. They are able to challenge our highest performing students academically and also enjoy engaging with students outside of the classroom. At any residential school, it is important to have adults living on campus - MSSM has some apartments in our residence hall and owns thirteen nearby homes. This is a unique opportunity that would be challenging to replicate in any other location.

There are challenges. Opportunities for employee's spouses and partners are more limited than they might be in areas with greater population which can impact retention. As the School attracts a national faculty, family connections become more distant for many employees, also impacting retention. Some staff positions that draw from the local labor market are challenging to fill in our tight regional market. We are working on ways to address some of these challenges and do not feel that they are detrimental to the School's success at this time. There are some ways we could invest in our employees with additional funding - more competitive salaries could go a long way in addressing some of these challenges, for example.

#### *Local Resources*

While MSSM is in a remote area, we also have many important local resources available to us. Caribou is a ten minute drive from MSSM, and provides necessary access to health services for students (and our employees). There is basic shopping available within walking distance for students and families, and Caribou meets most other shopping needs. Presque Isle, home to the University of Maine at Presque Isle, is about 30 minutes away and offers the amenities associated with a nearby college campus.

While MSSM does not necessarily take full advantage of this currently, there are also unique opportunities for engaging our students in research in our area. Limestone has a vibrant agricultural economy (home of the world's best potatoes, after all!), our landscape and location make us a hub for the burgeoning solar economy, we are not far from some of the sources of exciting work being done in Maine around sustainable fuel production from bio sources, and

countless others. Many organizations would value our surroundings for research opportunities and there is significant potential to develop these partnerships.

We do recognize that there are also resources we don't have that would be valuable locally. As we attract a diverse group of employees, the lack of more shopping resources limits our ability to support and celebrate that diversity. Some activities that students are excited to participate in do require us to make longer trips than we would like. Right now, there are a smaller number of local business partnership opportunities for student internships and other engagement opportunities than we would like. And...there isn't a pizza place within walking distance for the students. None of these challenges, however, are insurmountable. They also instill a closer reliance on each other, helping foster community on our campus in a way that would be difficult to replicate elsewhere.

### **Strategic Planning**

In this year's Sustainability Report, we would like to share an update on the Board's undertaking of a strategic planning process for MSSM. This is an important process for the School, but the Board recognizes that it is also important the School develops a strategic plan that is forward-looking and manageable. The Board also recognizes that it is important that the strategic plan creates a framework for institutional decision-making, is regularly reviewed, and that the Board holds the executive director accountable for ensuring progress on the strategic plan.

At their December 2023 meeting, the Board of Trustees hosted a workshop with all trustees and the School's leadership team. The goal of this workshop was to develop a shared understanding of a strategic plan and strategic plan process, recognize work that has been done before and the value of and challenges facing those past efforts, and begin to identify some of the "big questions" facing the School. Following that workshop, the Board appointed a smaller Steering Committee consisting of five board members, the chair of the MSSM Foundation board, and the executive director.

The Steering Committee has met twice since the December meeting - first to review their process with a Strategic Planning consultant and second to compile the workshop discussion into the pillars of the strategic plan. At this point the committee has identified pillars and "big questions" that will form the foundation of strategic goals, objectives, and action plans. The Steering Committee intends to present their preliminary work draft of strategic vision and strategic goals to the Board of Trustees at their March 2024 meeting for feedback. Using this feedback, the Committee will finalize the framework for final approval at the May 2024 meeting of the Board of Trustees for approval and implementation by the School.

### **Executive Director Compensation**

Given some confusion over other roles that have been included as part of the Executive

Director compensation line in our budget, we have reclassified those additional positions to other areas of the School’s budget. The following chart updates the payroll budget changes provided during the public hearing to clarify executive director compensation by removing all other positions previously included in that budget line. The following chart outlines the changes in payroll over the past five years (and projections for next year based on current funding).

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Academic Support	\$181,697.91	\$178,354.86	\$164,966.46	\$206,948.82	\$197,231.24	\$169,607.61
Admissions	\$143,124.58	\$151,868.37	\$166,988.00	\$132,739.28	\$123,618.31	\$78,461.13
Board of Trustees	\$31,141.55	\$22,828.70	\$40,961.19	\$41,696.52	\$35,837.26	\$41,369.10
College Counseling	\$59,500.43	\$59,257.83	\$60,906.61	\$68,242.18	\$69,237.46	\$68,724.95
Executive Director	\$120,234.89	\$134,326.09	\$120,133.52	\$129,520.22	\$172,497.93	\$173,581.15
Foundation	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$16,794.00	\$16,858.00	\$20,438.96	\$20,745.52
Health Services	\$70,143.63	\$63,252.19	\$66,444.44	\$103,180.42	\$99,884.07	\$93,517.95
ICT (Computer Technology)	\$141,401.71	\$140,559.51	\$144,937.99	\$139,671.45	\$141,053.61	\$143,464.26
Operations	\$249,686.66	\$232,066.47	\$177,573.41	\$181,838.72	\$184,585.37	\$164,402.72
Operation of School	\$31,141.55	\$22,828.70	\$40,961.19	\$41,696.52	\$35,837.26	\$41,369.10
Public Relations	\$35,806.60	\$35,540.44	\$34,415.95	\$20,738.78	\$22,874.99	\$23,114.52
Special Ed	\$28,247.36	\$27,970.01	\$28,663.39	\$29,093.34	\$49,643.43	\$5,000.00
Athletics	\$36,104.35	\$24,204.77	\$35,761.19	\$32,116.00	\$38,586.73	\$22,411.77
Student Activities	\$20,366.97	\$14,098.86	\$19,784.86	\$20,415.29	\$20,702.89	\$3,000.00
Teachers	\$1,463,390.82	\$1,287,505.19	\$1,209,750.34	\$1,231,955.55	\$1,224,223.86	\$1,244,541.84
Trafford Expenses	\$54,597.69	\$54,306.81	\$56,845.52	\$51,877.34	\$58,667.08	\$66,728.80
Transportation	\$29,205.47	\$28,197.72	\$19,501.02	\$13,403.55	\$14,991.99	\$15,312.30
Operation of Dorm	\$123,228.13	\$110,392.43	\$116,747.93	\$116,260.51	\$108,513.09	\$121,378.30
Residential Life	\$304,055.20	\$302,994.27	\$298,712.86	\$239,162.78	\$202,342.13	\$214,654.98
<b>Subtotal Payroll Budgets</b>	<b>\$3,123,075.50</b>	<b>\$2,890,553.22</b>	<b>\$2,820,849.87</b>	<b>\$2,817,415.27</b>	<b>\$2,820,767.66</b>	<b>\$2,711,386.00</b>
					Difference from 19-20 to 24-25	<b>(\$411,689.50)</b>

**Attachment A: Maine School of Science and Mathematics  
Management Report  
September 2023**

Executive Summary (Executive Director)

As the following pages outline, there has been a lot of activity at MSSM since our last Board meeting. The summer was marked by significant hiring and onboarding and we are happy with the excellent Team of faculty and staff we opened the 2023-24 academic year with. In addition to adding many new faces, we also undertook a process of establishing clear lines of responsibility and accountability - including assigning a senior leader with accountability for each of the functional areas of the School and a clear reporting structure for all employees. We meet weekly as a Leadership Team to ensure regular communication, update each other on our areas, and work collaboratively on issues facing the School. I very much appreciate the experience, skills, and collaborative spirit of the current Leadership Team.

Our new academic division structure, adeptly overseen by two strong Division Leaders, appears to be functioning well - allowing for more discipline specific and cross-discipline collaboration and better sharing of information. We have also established a Communications Committee consisting of representatives from web management, admission/communications, academics, and residential life. The Communications Committee both ensures that we are generating appropriate content and that our communications remain on brand (messaging and appearance). While both of these structures are new and we will continue to develop them, they already appear to have positive outcomes for the School.

I, with the Leadership Team, have been focused on building strong, collaborative internal and external relationships. Internally, we continue to reinforce the importance of professional collegiality as essential to us best serving students and functioning well as a School. Externally, we have worked on improving our relationship with Limestone Community School and the Town of Limestone - initiating conversations about how we can best support each other. I have also continued to work with the DOE, State Legislature, and other organizations on better understanding their vision for MSSM in the Maine educational landscape and the resources available to support that vision. This has included being more attentive to DOE reporting requirements and timelines, Legislative Committee reporting, and more broadly sharing MSSM success stories.

While the year is off to a good start, we are identifying and working on solving some of the challenges MSSM, and schools in general, face. We have unique challenges as a residential public school - identifying appropriate students and serving their social, emotional, and mental health needs in both classroom and residential life settings. As the start of this year has demonstrated, this is a crucial area for MSSM. We have increased contact expectations for our residential life staff, are exploring new training opportunities (for staff and students), and are expanding our residential life programming. We have incorporated study skills development into our evening structured study hall and expanded our advisory program. We are beginning to look

into our admission process of assessing students' readiness for MSSM. We are also carefully evaluating our student support program using the recently released Maine DOE updated guidance on staffing school-based mental health programs and a comprehensive conversation with Bear Shea, Maine DOE's Mental Health/School Counselor Specialist. It will take some time to fully transition to Maine's New Comprehensive School Counseling Program Model, but we are already exploring budgetary options to begin implementation this current year.

Looking forward to the work facing MSSM, there are a few key areas for the Board and administration to focus on. First, while the School has done some good work on developing its portrait of a graduate and defining the mission appropriate student, we need to translate these into more measurable qualities and outcomes. This will allow us to evaluate our admission process and our academic and residential life programs more carefully to ensure we are attracting mission appropriate students and achieving the outcomes we intend. It will also allow us to ensure that we are using relevant and realistic qualities and outcomes in our evaluations - an important consideration given vast changes in education, demographics, economy, and politics since the School's founding.

Second, it is important that the School develops a manageable strategic plan that carefully evaluates current conditions and identifies key strategic priorities that position the School for continued success. While aspirational, these strategic priorities should be achievable. The School will then need to translate the priorities into measurable operational goals, taking into consideration financial and human resource costs. The goal is to create a Strategic Plan based on a current assessment of internal and external factors that truly guides institutional decision-making and governance oversight for the next 5 years.

## Academic Report (Division Leaders)

### Introduction

Fall semester began with a lot of new challenges: new programs, new courses, new faculty (who comprise roughly 40% of academic personnel), new staff, and all of that was in addition to the typical challenges of a new cohort of first-year students (who are roughly 40% of the student body). However, the entirely new team of Math instructors has been able to continue the MSSM tradition of high quality, intense math instruction, and under the experienced guidance of Ms. Vanda Madore, the long tradition of Math Team continues to thrive. Though the science faculty doesn't quite have a full roster yet, between part-time instruction by one University of Maine Presque Isle faculty member and an asynchronous online college course, students are still getting their science education. In English and social sciences, new instructors have enabled the addition of courses in AP Literature and geography. Another first is a new piano lab course, made possible by a grant that purchased ten new electric pianos.

Ahead, PSAT day will be on Wednesday, October 11. Ms. Erica Jortberg will be able to administer the test for juniors and any interested ninth and tenth graders electronically, eliminating the need for in-person proctoring by other faculty. This means there will be more help available that morning to support seniors who want to have their college essays proofread, or to help Residential staff with activities for the freshmen and sophomores who aren't taking the test.

J-term is shaping up. Already, twenty-eight students have reached out to Mr. Josh Primiano and Ms. Cindy Dubois about internships. For other students, there will be two travel options available, one to Peru with Ms. Peggy Carson and Dr. Greg Hamlin, and a physics/chemistry excursion to New York with Dr. Kwang Rim. On campus, students have a broad selection of ten academic and/or hands-on courses. [Link to J-Term course descriptions.](#)

### Highlights

- ❖ Dual Enrollment - We have taken several steps to address concerns we've heard about the dual enrollment and degree programs with UMPI. We very much appreciate all of the work UMPI's Director of Early College Teri St. Pierre has done to inform our students, our families, and our faculty about the program and her direct work with our students and registrar to make sure the program is functioning smoothly
- ❖ Dual Enrollment by the Numbers
  - 2023-2024: 87
  - 2022-2023: 70
  - 2021-2022: 86
- ❖ Students Enrolled in Associates Degree Program
  - 2023-2024: 58, with 8 on track to graduate
  - 2022-2023: 63, with 6 graduating
  - 2021-2023: 44

## Challenges

- ❖ A few conditions have coalesced to present a unique set of difficulties. First of all, because MSSM is not a typical school with a typical student population, new faculty always have to adapt their pace and methods for delivering content. This year, having so many new faculty members means that students are experiencing this adaptation phase more intensely.
- ❖ Another challenge is class size, especially at the upper levels. Though Admissions did a phenomenal job by recruiting a large number of first-year students, some classes of sophomores, juniors and seniors have rosters of less than a half dozen. This can diminish the experience of some activities and projects.
- ❖ The biggest challenge, however, centers around the Learning Commons and Structured Study. The majority of first-year students are freshmen, which is not unusual, but this year the faculty and leadership decided that everyone on mandatory Structured Study—all first-year students and some other students who struggled academically last year—would spend that time in the Learning Commons. This had the effect of swelling the numbers in the Learning Commons, and according to faculty in that space, a lot of the new students lack the study skills and social skills to understand how to self-direct, focus, and generally behave in a “study hall” environment. The impact has been of great concern to faculty and others, who worry specifically whether the Learning Commons is a space where students will be able to focus and complete their work in the short term, and whether students will be able to learn those study skills and social skills they will need to remain at MSSM in the long term.

## Residential Life Report (Director of Residential Life)

### Introduction

The Res Life Team strives to make a family community while attending MSSM. We have implemented a new dorm family structure to our program which is having a positive outcome so far. This will be my first full year as the DORL and I am excited to work with the strong team that I currently have.

### Highlights and Significant Accomplishments Since Last Board Meeting

\*The Res Life team is more involved with overall function of MSSM

- helping with Structured Study Sunday-Thursday
- having a rotating schedule of staff attending and eating at Advisory Lunch

\*We now have eight dorm families: each Res Life staff member has 12-13 students in their Family. Dorm Families provide a more personal connection between groups of students and adults (birthday celebrations, special outings) and fosters more regular and personalized communication with families. Teaching faculty are also invited to participate in Dorm Family activities as another way to connect the academic and residential programs

\*The Resident Assistants (RA's) are playing more of significant role at MSSM

- duty nights they are in the LC helping with structured
- providing activities on their duty nights after structured
- helping new students transition at MSSM
- being more present for the student body

\*Drivers Ed Course

- worked with Aroostook Driving Company is working with MSSM for students to provide Driver's Education course for our students. Will offer in fall and spring
- Good response - first group has 14 students
- Students are able to conveniently complete driving hours during off times, as well.

Magnus Student Health: <https://magnushealth.com/>

- implemented on-line medical management program this year. Some kinks with first year but working through them and parent response has been mostly positive

REACH Student Life Management: <https://reach.cloud/>

- launched after student break, REACH is an electronic sign/it out system employed by many boarding schools that makes parental permission process easier and allows for better tracking of students that are off-campus.
- staff duty reports - documented history of residential reports
- mobile application allows for access to students' on trips and off-campus anywhere

\*Working closely with our new school nurse to ensure our students are being provided with the care needed

- she has improved our medication distribution system and implemented Magnus record keeping system for medication logging
- Kristin has done a fantastic job improving the health program

**Challenges and New Initiatives Identified Since Last Board Meeting**

\*We have faced some challenges during structured study given the abilities of our incoming students and our goals for that time.

\*Mental Health structure based primarily on external contract with AMHC, creating some challenges for how we respond to and address student mental health needs.

\*Need for better communication and coordination between student support and residential life programs

## **Enrollment Report (Director of Admission)**

### **Introduction**

We are enthusiastic about the upcoming year and aim to maintain our low attrition rate. Last year's initiatives were all successful, and we plan to refine and expand upon them. This year, we've introduced a new interview strategy, designed to turn inquiries into applications and sustain the interest of prospective students. Additionally, we're creating more touchpoints and streamlining our promotional materials. We've also redirected a larger portion of our advertising budget towards internet searches, as this was the predominant way new students discovered us. Summer camps were the second most popular source.

### **Highlights and Significant Accomplishments Since Last Board Meeting**

- Our Admissions team enrolled 103 students, surpassing the budgeted goal by three.
- A generous donation from the Foundation has paved the way for the launch of our new website, scheduled for mid-October. We extend a heartfelt thanks to Tadd Devoe from IT for his significant efforts on the website's backend and to Jeff Candura for his invaluable writing contributions.
- To streamline communications, we've initiated twice-monthly email newsletters aimed at driving website traffic. Moving forward, there will be a unified newsletter, replacing multiple departmental communications. I have been working with Tadd Devoe getting the format properly aligned for the Penguin Pulse newsletter. The first issue went out September 14<sup>th</sup> at 4 PM. Excluding holidays, the newsletter will go out every two weeks on Thursdays.
- We've established a Communications Committee responsible for ensuring consistency in our branding—this includes uniformity in colors, fonts, logos, and, most importantly, messaging.
- To enhance engagement, we are introducing near-monthly touchpoints, like the "42 Things to Do at MSSM Before You Graduate" poster—a concept inspired by Deb McGann's observation of a similar initiative at UMaine.
- Cyndi Trapnell and Ryan McDonald are slated to present a workshop at the National Consortium of Secondary STEM Schools Professional Conference in November. Their topic is: "Fostering Community Engagement: Integrating Admissions, Residential Life, and Student Involvement to Boost Enrollment."

## **Challenges and New Initiatives Identified Since Last Board Meeting**

- Instead of producing four separate viewbooks, we're consolidating into a single, comprehensive, and high-quality viewbook without specific dates.
- We've made a strategic shift in our application process: the essay segment has been relocated from the primary application to the acknowledgement email. This approach provides a clearer perspective on in-progress applications, as students previously delayed submission until their essays were perfected. We've informed families that clicking "submit" now initiates the application, rather than concluding it.
- A revamped feature of our application process offers prospective students an interactive chat with Cyndi Trapnell and current MSSM students. This not only facilitates direct inquiries but also fosters early community immersion. This initiative underpins our upcoming presentation at NCSSS.
- We're reimagining our April's Exploration Day: it will now be an "Accepted Students Day" in late March. Following their admission decisions on PI Day (3-14 at 1:59 PM), this event ensures prospective students evaluate the compatibility of our institution with their aspirations.
- Our Penguin Emporium school store remains active online at [www.MSSM.org/store](http://www.MSSM.org/store). This year, we've diversified the roles of our work assignment students concerning the store. While they won't handle financial aspects, they'll collaborate with select local vendors.
- MSSM is proud to announce its major sponsorship at the 2023 Maine School Counselor Association (MESCA) Annual Conference in Augusta Civic Center this October. This sponsorship will be synergized with our school visits in the vicinity.
- We recognize that our current admission process and evaluation could improve to assess student student readiness for our whole program, including residential life.

## **Finance and Facilities Report (Director of Finance and Operations)**

### **Introduction**

It's been a bustling summer and start of the school year for everyone involved with finance and facilities! We are grateful for dedicated employees who committed to keeping these running smoothly and are always looking for ways to improve processes and make MSSM a better place for our students to live and learn successfully.

### **Highlights and Significant Accomplishments Since Last Board Meeting**

In the Business Office, we had the on-site visit for our annual audit on August 30-31, 2023. This is the earliest we have been able to have the audit visit complete since my transition to the role in 2017. We are aiming to have a fully vetted and approved audit to the State of Maine by the deadline of October 15, 2023.

In the Dormitory, Dave Martin and his team took on the annual task of deep cleaning all dorm rooms in the few short weeks between the school year and summer camp. Meanwhile, Philip Long and his team installed Access Point (AP) routers to improve connectivity for students throughout the dormitory.

On Trafton Ave, new vinyl siding on one of the Trafton residences and a few garage roofs were redone this summer. In addition, the large turnover of employees living on Trafton kept the Maintenance staff busy making necessary repairs before new residents moved in.

We signed a lease and food service agreement with LCS. Through the lease, MSSM may help with significant capital improvements but will earn equity in those improvements maintained according to a depreciation schedule MSSM will keep. Through the food service agreement, MSSM will assume oversight of kitchen operations and maintenance, giving us better control over the staff and facilities. The School also agreed to a new five year service contract with Flik.

### **Challenges and New Initiatives Identified Since Last Board Meeting**

A continued challenge is working with the USDA to finalize the RUS/DLT Grant. Unfortunately, the scope of the original grant has changed given that several schools have opted to not continue due to the very long delay in receiving the technology. We did receive an extension on the grant until March 2024, we remain optimistic that we can finalize all necessary steps before that deadline.

Another prolonged project is the joint acquisition of the Solar Farm located on the former Loring Air Force Base. The Town of Limestone has carried the full cost of purchase since inception. We are hopeful to finalize shortly the outstanding issues with the final contract as well as payment

for our portion of joint ownership. We are currently working with the Foundation on identifying funds to purchase that will minimize the School needing to take on any debt given the cost of money now. The town will be refinancing the loan in December so it would be best for MSSM to minimize our exposure before that loan is refinanced.

A new (but long awaited) initiative currently underway is a new fume hood! It is in the academic building and the final stages of installation. It will be great to have working fume hood in the chemistry lab again!

We have been contacted by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation regarding a long-standing grant the School has not been able to implement. We worked with the Foundation to identify remaining funds from the grant proceeds and will return the remainder to them, approximately \$85,000.

Student Representative Report  
*\*Report will be amended and attached shortly*

## **Introduction**

Though it has only been one month into the school year, students are already settling into their busy academic and dorm lives. First-year students seem to be integrating well into our tight-knit community, with returners leading by example and imparting their MSSM guidance.

Students were ecstatic after being given a day (Chill Day) to unwind and relax after a particularly stressful week. When students found out, whooping and cheering filled the dorm building. Keeping this day as a surprise to students truly allotted them a sense of time affluence. Students also readily utilized the extra office hours that were available on the morning of Chill Day. Thank you to everyone who made this possible, including the RI staff for planning such fun activities!

It is clear to students that the RI staff is dedicated to providing the best dorm-life experience. Some student-favorited activities so far have been the Barbie movie (complete with cookies and ice cream floats!) and the new Open Cab system, in which students can go in vans and choose any fast-food places to visit in Presque Isle/Caribou. Being afforded more opportunities to leave campus with friends has been greatly appreciated by students. On campus, The Residential Assistants (RAs) have also been hosting different nightly activities from Sunday to Thursday that engage many different groups of students. Whether through ramen nights, card games, or basketball games, students have been able to have fun while also furthering connections with their RAs.

MSSM's school spirit has been prospering through the exciting soccer games attended in large numbers by the students. Players and fans alike enjoy how the community is being brought together with cheer and support.

Student Senate has been off to a great start this year. I'm thrilled to be working with so many thoughtful and passionate Senators who truly want to advocate for the student body. As student Senate president, it was a bit difficult at the start of this year due to many long-term senators graduating last year. Though the large overturn was originally a challenge, it has also been inspiring to hear fresh, new perspectives on student issues.

## **Highlights and Significant Accomplishments Since Last Board Meeting**

- 7 new Student Senators elected earlier this month
- Andrew Paine and Student Senate collaboratively requested, and received, a generous grant for DJ and lighting equipment to be used in future student dances

## **Challenges and New Initiatives Identified Since Last Board Meeting**

- Student Senate has been working closely with RI Staff in addressing the new on-wing, in-dorm, and lights-out timings
- Student Senate is interested in buying a gazebo to enhance the campus and provide an enclosed outdoor space for students
- Student Senate has been pursuing an Upper A curtain due to general student concerns over privacy
- Student Senate has begun to collaborate with Mr. Gendreau to potentially move MSSM's equipment from the LCS gym into the dorm gym

## Faculty Representative Report

### Introduction

A new school year has begun, and faculty have enthusiastically welcomed new and returning students into our community. After a number of faculty/staff departures over the spring and summer, we have added six new full-time faculty, two new part-time instructors, plus a new school nurse (Kristin Damboise), a new part-time RI (Cara Primiano) who is also teaching Yearbook, and a new Registrar (former summer camp assistant Heidi St. Peter) to our community. Vanda Madore (mathematics), Emmanuel Nsadha (mathematics), Dr. Henry Kavle (mathematics), former MSSM RI Josh Boucher (English), Dr. Kwang Rim (chemistry), and MSSM alum (class of 2002?) Katya Bezborodko (social science) have joined the full-time ranks, while Dr. Udaya Jayasundara from UMaine, Presque Isle, is teaching one section of chemistry. Everyone seems to be settling in well, and are excited to be working with our students. They bring with them a wealth of new perspectives and experiences, which can only enhance our overall program.

We also want to thank former Registrar Cindy Farley for all her help in getting students into Infinite Campus for the start of the school year, and for dealing with all of the Canvas issues. Now that things have calmed down a bit Cindy is helping our new Registrar, Heidi, learn more about the intricacies of these two programs.

### Highlights and Significant Accomplishments Since Last Board Meeting

- Over the summer Peggy Carson finished all of her requirements to earn a Master's Degree in Spanish Language.
- Eugene Katsman's Engineering Project students are working on a kinetic sculpture (penguin motif) that can be used as part of the recruiting process for new students. He is also currently in the process of trying to establish a "cube-satellite" group. Several former NASA engineers and managers have offered to give presentations at MSSM (and there is a large amount of tech support and a bit of grant money available) and Eugene is working with the ED to make this happen. Greg Hamlin has also offered to participate and help the students with electronics and programming.
- English instructor and Humanities Division Leader, Anthony Scott, has been asked to submit an original poem for possible inclusion in a 4<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum being developed by McGraw-Hill.

- Thanks to a generous donation to the MSSM Foundation, our new Chemistry fume hood has arrived and is in the process of being installed in B208. The rainy weather has made it difficult to find a day in which to cut a hole in the roof, however.
- After talking about doing so for many years, new math instructors Emmanuel Nsadha and Dr. Henry Kavle have been given the task of developing an asynchronous on-line Algebra I class. We can offer this to students and/or teachers whose middle school does not offer Algebra I, helping to fulfill our State-wide outreach requirement, and provide potential MSSM students with a consistent Algebra I experience.

### **Challenges and New Initiatives Identified Since Last Board Meeting**

Many faculty have expressed concerns regarding implementation of changes to some areas of our programming, and that our focus on rigorous academics is potentially taking a hit. Faculty were not involved in conversations regarding these changes, and very little information was provided to faculty prior to implementation. This has left faculty, staff, and students a bit confused as to what the new procedures are, and the rationale for rolling them out.

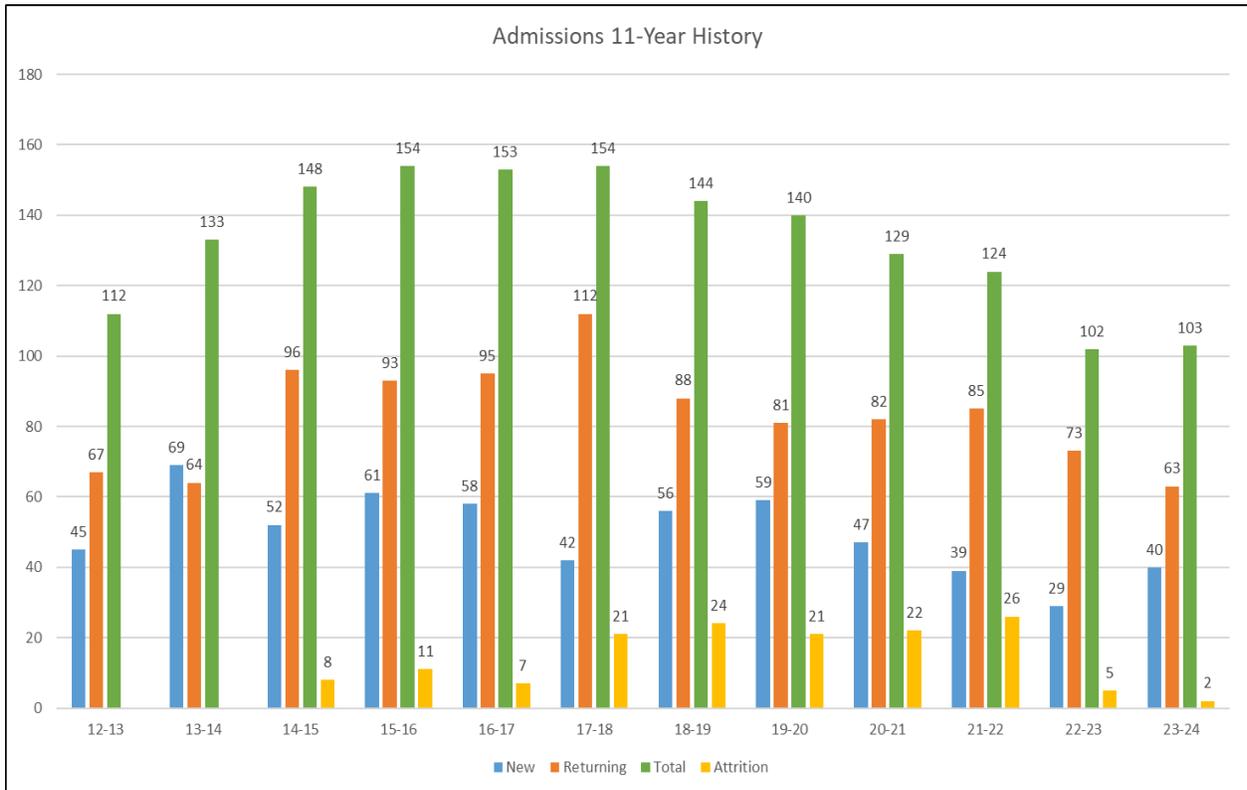
On-going Measures

**Maine School of Science and Mathematics  
Actual Expenses and Revenue Compared to Budget**

Account Number / Description	Last Year	Year to Date	Revised Budget	% Spent
	7/1/2022 - 8/31/2022	7/1/2023 - 8/31/2023	7/1/2023 - 6/30/2024	7/1/2023 - 6/30/2024
1000 Academic Support	\$17,011.00	\$29,168.45	\$218,052.29	13.4%
1000 Admissions	\$19,684.40	\$11,187.54	\$178,976.31	6.3%
1000 Board of Trustees	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$13,000.00	0.0%
1000 College Counseling	\$10,535.82	\$10,493.93	\$73,483.46	14.3%
1000 Contingency	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$29,269.05	0.0%
1000 Executive Director	\$29,477.48	\$57,028.60	\$276,749.41	20.6%
1000 Health Services	\$13,010.32	\$16,298.63	\$175,376.40	9.3%
1000 ICT (Computer Tech)	\$22,541.62	\$20,628.78	\$184,305.65	11.2%
1000 Operation of School	\$63,824.77	\$71,789.34	\$473,120.00	15.2%
1000 Operations	\$57,271.88	\$49,513.84	\$263,947.37	18.8%
1000 Public Relations	\$3,021.32	\$3,066.56	\$33,824.99	9.1%
1000 Financial Aid (RSL)	\$177,469.00	\$192,325.00	\$325,000.00	59.2%
1000 Special Education	\$2,385.39	\$7,983.86	\$95,419.43	8.4%
1000 Athletics	\$8,565.60	\$7,332.81	\$79,814.13	9.2%
1000 Student Activities	\$3,533.49	\$2,327.46	\$61,338.29	3.8%
1000 Teachers	\$141,439.09	\$162,345.04	\$1,321,025.52	12.3%
1000 Trafton (Employee Housing)	\$13,919.30	\$11,356.93	\$106,336.60	10.7%
1000 Transportation	\$14,873.58	\$7,818.16	\$73,008.11	10.7%
2030 Foundation	\$5,744.80	\$33.90	\$80,000.00	0.04%
2670 REAP (ICT Hardware)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$30,000.00	---
2700 Title IIA (TEA Qlty)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	---
6000 Summer Camp	\$96,690.97	\$93,189.40	\$296,000.00	31.5%
6100 Contingency	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$7,922.25	---
6100 Food Service Contract	\$53,150.48	\$70,264.79	\$623,000.00	11.3%
6100 Operation of Dorm	\$28,409.83	\$31,452.82	\$334,699.97	9.4%
6100 Residential Life	\$28,246.29	\$31,201.23	\$231,267.13	13.5%
6100 Transportation	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$13,696.36	---
6100 Vending Machine	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	---
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$634,151.36</b>	<b>\$694,482.07</b>	<b>\$5,602,632.71</b>	<b>12.4%</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>		<b>\$986,944.84</b>	<b>\$5,602,632.71</b>	<b>17.6%</b>

## Annual Measures

### Admissions



### Academics

#### AP Test Scores - 2023

Subject Totals	1	2	3	4	5	Total Exams	Pass Rate (3 or higher)
Calculus AB	3	1				4	0
Calculus BC		2	7	3	2	14	85.71428571
Chemistry				1		1	100
English Language and Composition		4	1	5	2	12	66.66666667
English Literature and Composition					1	1	100
Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism		2	2	1		5	60
Physics C: Mechanics		1		3	1	5	80
Statistics	2	4	5	4		15	60
United States History			1			1	100
			Passing Range				

**Attachment B: Maine School of Science and Mathematics  
Management Report  
December 2023**

**Executive Summary (Executive Director)**

At our last meeting, we were just beginning the academic year, our new students were settling into their Limestone home, our new faculty were just starting classes, and I was just a few short days into my first school year at MSSM. So much has happened since then!

In my September report, I identified some of the challenges the School faces regarding student well-being and our student support efforts. This has been a regular topic of our Board Student Welfare Committee meetings and of our administrative Leadership Team. We have continued to take concrete steps on campus:

- Residential Life staff continue to identify and add student-adult contact time through the Dorm family structure
- Faculty (academic and residential) continue to offer a wide range of activities for students
- Clarified philosophy and expectations around student health days
- Engaged student support team focused on supporting academic, emotional, and physical health needs of students with an emphasis on positive student success and engagement
- Building and maintaining a collaborative and collegial work environment that allows adult team members to focus on students.

The Student Welfare Committee has recently been looking into various ways to more objectively measure the pulse of campus, but also regularly gathers some information to assess how things are going. The Leadership Team and the Student Support Team also assess how things are going on campus regularly. Overall, we have been pleased with “the flow” on campus. After a couple of challenging early events, we have honed our response framework and language around student challenges and all reports indicate that the students are in a “good space” right now.

We are moving forward with implementing a student support framework in line with the Maine Department of Education’s guidelines for staffing student mental health efforts in schools. After carefully assessing our needs, studying the guidelines and discussing them with DOE personnel, evaluating and discussing our current services and possible revisions with our contracted provider AMHC, and identifying available resources, we determined that it would be best to move forward with hiring a School Social Worker for this year and revising some of the services we receive from AMHC. I’m pleased to report that our hiring committee interviewed two strong candidates and we have made an offer to one candidate that was just accepted! The candidate is a licensed social worker currently working at LCS - we have been transparent with LCS throughout the process and coordinated a start date of January with them to limit disruption on their program.

Along with hiring a new school social worker, we have also hired a new maintenance team member and an adjunct meteorology instructor for next semester. The maintenance position has been open since September and we tried various ways of promoting the position. We are excited that the recent hire brings a fair amount of construction and mechanical skills - something we were hoping for in this role. The meteorology instructor is an alumna with a strong meteorology background who will be teaching the course remotely. This class is open because we moved forward with adjunct structure to replace a late departure last year.

It's also been a busy time for guests on campus! Since our last board meeting, we hosted a robust Family Weekend, a full Open House, a visit from Representative Edward Polewarczyk, a guest alumnus, and several other informal visitors to campus. On December 13, we will have a some members of our area political delegation on campus for a donation presentation ceremony. We determined that it was best to form ad hoc committees for each event rather than one committee charged with the many different ways we host visitors on campus. Each event and visit has gone well and the feedback from visitors has been positive. At the same time, we recognize that we can continue to improve how we present the School through these opportunities. As a School we will continue to work on how we allocate resources to various events and how we ensure that each opportunity serves the purpose of positively promoting the School to our various constituencies. We are also pleased with our coordination with the Foundation to drive some of the visits to campus and their help in planning and putting together some of these visits.

As I learn more about the School, I am working closely with the Leadership Team on evaluating our policies and implementing best practices around organizational operations and efficiency. We have a strong Leadership Team, but it is always valuable to take the opportunity of new insight to identify areas for improvement. The Team has been great partners in this work, and some of the area updates shared within this management report identify some of the challenges we've encountered and the measures we are taking to improve as a professional organization. We will continue to evaluate and improve our operating processes based on our own evaluations of our work, Board evaluation of School performance, strategic objectives, and changing industry standards.

Finally, I am excited by and grateful for the efforts of the Board around best practices in a governing role and the beginning of a strategic practice. The work of the Board around policy review has already been helpful to the administration in the daily operations of the School. I mentioned some of the things I have been thinking about in my section of the September Management Report. A comprehensive and inclusive strategic planning process overseen by the Board will result in a focused path forward for the School that considers and addresses some of the things that keep me up at night!



## Academic Report (Division Leaders)

### Introduction

Fall semester has moved along, with both staff and students working hard to meet the challenges that faced the community when year began. New faculty and new students are settling into the routine and pace of MSSM courses. Math Team has performed well at competitions.

At the time of this report, there are only a few regular class periods left and then finals/midterms begin on December 11. Students are well into their last projects. On the Sunday before testing begins, the afternoon will be devoted to Study Day in the academic wing, and that will culminate in a medieval Holiday feast in the dining hall.

Following finals and the three-week holiday break, J-Term is ready with an exciting array of internships, travel excursions, and on-campus courses, and after that, the Spring semester will begin with a slate of familiar and new courses. Fitness options will no longer include Independent Fitness, but will include Intramural sports as a new option. Between now and finals, students and advisors will work to get all students signed up.

### Highlights

- ❖ Under Ms. Vanda Madore's guidance, MSSM's Ivory Team is currently the top scoring Math Team in Maine; Gabriel Austin maintained the Math Team ranking of third in the state for a large portion of the semester.
- ❖ This week, the 18 students of Book Club, advised by Ms. Cindy Dubois, read illustrated books to 77 elementary students of the Pre-K, Kindergarten, First Grade, and Second Grade classes of Limestone Community School.
- ❖ Structured Study—due to the quantity, diversity, and degree of student needs—has been augmented with a couple of changes: in addition to the main student support space in the Learning Center, B101 has been turned into a dedicated individual study space during Structured Study, with adult supervision; Weekend Warriors has been re-launched as a directed, organized individual study program for recommended students. Overall, the varied approach provided students who simply needed the space and time to study, and has seen marked gains in students who had sensory or emotional challenges, and/or who had deficits in self-direction and study habits
- ❖ The new Piano class has seen some exciting growth and benefits:
  - 3 students who were beginners in August are playing at levels 2-3
  - 2 upper level students are playing at levels (middle intermediate)
  - Another student who was working on simple jazz charts last year has advanced to levels 8-9, and is playing the third movement of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*, Rachmaninoff's prelude in C#, and a very difficult piano/violin duet

- Other students, including some who don't take piano, have found the piano's a valuable way to de-stress
- ❖ J-Term (click here to see [Course Descriptions](#); the list includes courses that won't run due to sign-up numbers and overall student population size)

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Courses</b>	<b>Enrolled</b>
Chouiniere	RPM Challenge	10
Katsman & Madore	Blacksmithing	10
Kavle	Experimental Mathematics	9
Scott	Household & Hardware Music	7
Nsadha	Rich Culture	15
Bezborodko	Sidewalk Story	4
Desnieges	Supercalifragilistic Projects	12
Carson & Hamlin	Trip to Peru	10
Rim	Can You See Atoms? (trip to New York lab)	3
Primiano & Dubois (coordinators)	Internships	18
	<b>TOTAL</b>	98

- ❖ New Spring courses include (click here for the full list of descriptions: [Spring 2024](#)):
  - ENG 225--The Humanist Mutation in Western Literature
  - ENG 326--Mary Shelley's Children
  - ENG 521--Senior Writing Tutorial
  - MAT 3xx--Abel's Theorem--Arnold's Version (course number pending)
  - PHY xxx - Intramurals (course number pending)
  - SOC 2xxU - Introduction to Human Geography, 2 sections (course number pending)
  - SOC 3xx--A History of Rome (course number pending)
  - SOC 3xx--Economic Geography (course number pending)
  - SOC 3xx - Rural Geography (course number pending)

## **Challenges**

- ❖ Some new courses and/or new faculty received extra support and guidance from Division Leaders, and from UMPI faculty (related to Dual Enrollment alignment); currently, all instruction appears to be on track to finish the year well.
- ❖ Seven students and their parents received Academic Warning letters the second week of November. Since then, some of their statuses have changed. Most, if they finish in poor academic standing, will go on Academic Probation in the Spring. However, one elected to withdraw the week before Thanksgiving break, and another is at serious risk of dismissal, having already been on probation prior.

## **Residential Life Report (Director of Residential Life)**

### **Introduction**

The Residential Life Team continues to focus on supporting a positive learning environment for our students and providing important skill development in areas outside of the classroom. We are using our local opportunities to offer more activities for our students on and off campus. We are also continuing to develop our efforts to keep parents engaged and informed.

### **Highlights and Significant Accomplishments Since Last Board Meeting**

Restructured club process

- Creating a more student-driven process that also promotes financial literacy and student leadership

Dorm/Residential Life Improvements

- Solicited student input into needs/wants
- Added bean bags and more entertainment options to the common areas (donor gift)
- Added Print Center in dorm (Penguin Fund)
- Student senate requests (water cooler, Netflix account)

New 12 passenger van

- Increased capacity for student trips without impacting staffing model

Restructured Health Day Procedure

- Clarified philosophy (our goal is to get students to class) with campus adults
- Clarified procedure for students
- Added check-in and follow-up expectations and half-day option to health day
- Shared philosophy and procedure with parents and guardians

New Activity Offerings

- Quaggy Jo night skiing (\$5 lift tickets, \$5 rentals)
- Driver's Ed - 13 students received permits first semester, will offer second semester
- Community Service - several opportunities this semester

### **Challenges and New Initiatives Identified Since Last Board Meeting**

Intramurals - As part of move away from individual fitness, residential life team is building out intramural program to have more offerings and engage more students.

Activity conflicts

- With increased volume of activities, we have noted rising number of conflicts for student time. These conflicts can be challenging for students and adults who see numbers decline for some activities

We need to evaluate advisor role

- Expanded programming expectations this year combined with increased residential focus on activities has led to increased conflicts

- Need to ensure we are most efficiently using human resources to improve the student experience

Withdrawals since last Board meeting

- 2 voluntary. One primarily for academic reasons and one for social/emotional health reasons
- Both resolved fairly positively. Executive Director engaged with families through the decision process.

## **Enrollment Report (Director of Admission)**

### **Introduction**

Since our last board meeting, we've made significant strides. We hosted two open houses this fall, with the second drawing 21 attendees. We have 22 applicants in process. Our new website, launched on October 31st, is responsive and has generated new inquiries. At the NCSSS Phoenix conference, our workshop on merging Admissions, Residential Life, and Students received positive feedback. Summer Camp registration has begun with 54 participants, and we've introduced Dorm Parents for added support. We're navigating SEVIS and J-1 Visa applications to welcome international students and collaborating with IECA members aims to attract motivated students that might not be aware of MSSM.

### **Highlights and Significant Accomplishments Since Last Board Meeting**

Open Houses: We have held two open houses this fall, one on October 9th and the other on November 10th. The first OH did not have good attendance, only 5 students and families, but the second OH had 21 attendees and their families. The October OH had 12 register, but some moved to November, a few had sudden medical issues, and a few decided they were no longer interested. Our next OH will be on January 29, 2024 and will be virtual. At both in-person open houses, students took the math admission test. The English test was sent out online over November break.

Applications: At this time we have 25 applications, but 3 are not valid because they are international students. We have not removed them because we have tried to reach out and ask if they have US citizenship. If they do not respond or say no, we will remove them from the system. We have had at least 10 email inquiries from international students, but we have told them we are unable at this time.

Website Launch: On October 31st, the new website was launched. It was a collaboration of efforts over the past 9 months by Ryan McDonald, Tadd Devoe and Jeff Candura along with our colleagues at Finals site. It's an updated website using responsive design that can easily be viewed on either a mobile phone or a laptop. It has many new features and has already generated new inquiries.

Along those lines, we also purchased the Messages module which allows real time feedback and advanced newsletter capabilities. Every newsletter, called the Penguin Pulse, directs readers to the website.

NCSSS Phoenix: Immediately following the November Open House on the 10th, Cyndi Trapnell and Ryan McDonald went to Phoenix for the Professional Conference of the National Consortium of Secondary STEM Schools. While there, we presented a workshop about merging the efforts of Admissions, Residential Life, and Students to increase enrollment. The session was well attended with 33 participants engaged and asking questions. One comment about the best way for us to increase enrollment was having a math class lower than Algebra II if we have freshmen.

## **Summer Camp**

Summer Camp registration has opened and we already have 54 registered participants although not all of those are paying. This year we are having Dorm Parents each week and less teen staff. Dorm Parents can have up to two related children at camp for free per week and they (the parents) will have some duties in the morning while the teen staff have duties in the afternoon and evening. Dorm Parents get gas reimbursement and a small stipend so they are employees and can drive vans. *(A more indepth update on Summer Camp will be in a future board report.)*

## **Challenges and New Initiatives Since Last Board Meeting**

SEVIS: We are currently in a waiting period as our SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) application remains under "pending review." Once this review process is completed, the subsequent step involves providing the necessary documentation, which we have already gathered. Our application for the J-1 Visa is in progress, which, if approved, will enable us to issue visas for a duration of one year. While this may not be as ideal as the 4-year F-1 visas, it will allow us to welcome international students who are seeking to enhance their academic qualifications through a Post Graduate program before pursuing their college education. I believe we could easily increase enrollment by 10, minimum, if we had the J-1 Visa ability.

IECA: In our efforts to expand our outreach to potential students and their families, our Admissions team has recently acquired two uses of the mailing list for the Independent Education Consultants Association (IECA). As defined on their website, an IECA member educational consultant is a highly skilled professional who offers guidance to assist students and families in selecting a school, college, or program that aligns with their unique needs and aspirations, fostering both academic and social growth.

We are fortunate to be collaborating with a colleague of Rob Constantine, a well-respected figure within the IECA community. This collaboration will help us craft a thoughtful and effective letter that we believe will be warmly received by IECA members and, in turn, facilitate our mission of attracting motivated students to our institution.

## **Finance and Facilities Report (Director of Finance and Operations)**

### **Introduction**

We have already begun the budgeting process for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. We developed a draft payroll budget encompassing the usual faculty step increase and 1.5% equivalent. We will be asking for non-payroll budget requests from all department chair beginning in January. Furthermore, we are developing an ongoing list of non-payroll expenses to make the most economical use of our one-time State Appropriations that we will receive in the 24-25 fiscal year.

### **Highlights and Significant Accomplishments Since Last Board Meeting**

#### Impact of new club procedures

We are moving towards using up and eliminating all proprietary funds. This will streamline our accounting process and eliminate an entire bank account that is required to be audited. Beginning with the 23-34 audit, there will be no “Non-Ops” account. All funds needed for Student Clubs and Activities will be recorded in Student Clubs and/or Student Activities expense accounts in the School’s normal Operating Accounting.

#### Budget projection positives

As of November, we have allocated \$292,156 of the \$325,000 budgeted for Financial Aid in the 23-24 school year - projecting roughly \$30,000 underspend in that budget area. With a careful eye to reduce expenses, Summer Camp is also projected to be a net gain for the 23-24 fiscal year of approximately \$24,000. A large savings was incurred by eliminating an Admin Assistant role that was funded 50% by Summer Camp dollars.

#### New van

In early November, we swapped a 7 seat van for a 12 seat van. This will allow us to transport up to 5 more students per employee driver/chaperone. With a similar price point for monthly flat rate, this should be beneficial from many perspectives. We are currently tracking the use of another 7 seat van to determine if an additional van can be returned to garner monthly savings.

### **Challenges and New Initiatives Identified Since Last Board Meeting**

#### Budget projection challenges (loss of out of state tuition, refunds)

We budgeted for 1 out-of-state student for the 23-24 school year, but did not have any - thus a projected \$34,300 less revenue for Out-of State Tuition. We did have a few students depart early, but still expect to receive Room and Board revenue as we budgeted for less students than were enrolled at the beginning of the school year.

### Cash flow management issue/new process going forward

The Business Office has created a new process to more effectively monitor cash flow. This will help alleviate the internal weakness that was illuminated in late October. We had not yet received our 2nd quarter deposit for our State Appropriations (expected by October 15) and had to transfer funds from our Line of Credit to cover outstanding checks until our State Appropriated funds arrived. Moving forward, we have a method to track cash inflow and outflows to ensure we do not overdraw our Operating Funds. Funds borrowed from the Line of Credit were transferred back upon receipt of the State funds.

### Solar array progress

We are currently awaiting a revised purchase agreement from attorneys. We learned of some concerns about some aspects of the arrangement with the Town that the School had already agreed to and negotiating those has added some time to finalizing the agreement. We have kept the Town informed and are exploring ways to limit the potential of having to incur borrowing expenses by financing the amount.

## Faculty Representative Report

### Introduction

As the fall semester comes to a close I think the faculty are in a good place. After a bit of a rocky start, procedures have been put in place (particularly in the area of student support) that have smoothed out the daily flow of MSSM. We've become more proactive, rather than reactive, and this has significantly reduced the chaos that had characterized the past few years. There are still periodic fires that need to be put out, but their frequency is much lower.

The new faculty are pretty well settled in by now and, except for a few challenges that continue to be addressed, are looking forward to our holiday break and J-Term. Being new to MSSM always comes with a steep learning curve, but because all of the new people were hired over the summer (rather than in the spring) that curve has been even steeper. While there have been a few stressful times for all of them they have embraced, and been embraced by, the MSSM community. As long as they all remember that year two will be easier than year one, they'll be fine!

### Highlights and Significant Accomplishments Since Last Board Meeting

- Eugene Katsman's *Engineering Projects* class has their website up and running live after their meeting with Rob and the Communication Committee. They have also initiated a collaboration with the UMO 3D Printing Club (the class will join the club as a member) to have their parts printed using the UMaine facilities.
- Deb Eustis-Grandy attended the *National Association of Biology Teachers* professional development conference in Baltimore in early November. This is always a great place to pick up new ideas for classroom activities.
- Eugene Katsman and Math instructor, Henry Kavle, are advising a student team participating in the Cube-Sat Challenge, and Henry attended the first Cube-Sat/Space-Maine Conference in Portland as the MSSM representative. Continuing with things that fly, Rocketry Club has started repairing and building more rockets and plans to do a large launch in the spring to show off their skills.
- English instructor Cindy Dubois organized an outing for faculty at the Jade Palace in Caribou – a fun way to interact with colleagues in an informal setting.
- Thanks to Math instructor, Vanda Madore, for coordinating MSSM's participation in the annual AMC math exam. All students take this national exam, and it was the first time we did it entirely online. There were a few hiccups, but it all turned out well in the end. Students who score well will qualify for a future round of math exams.
- History instructor Josh Primiano took a large group of MSSM students to the annual *Youth in Government* weekend in Augusta in November.

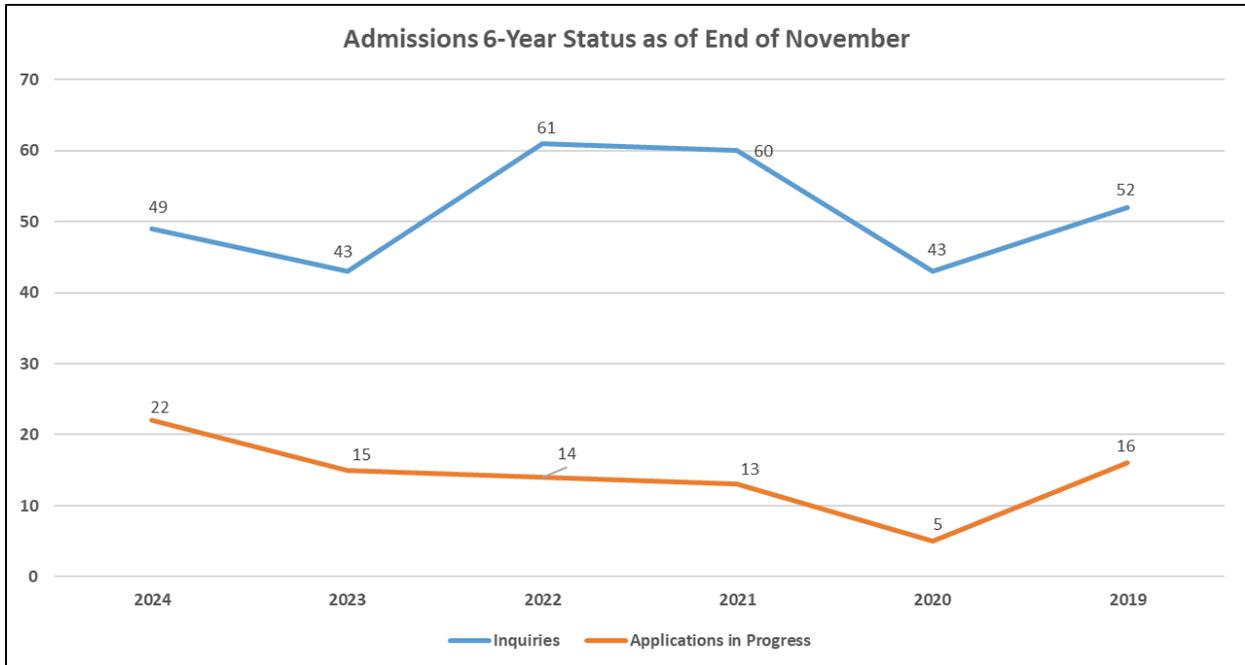
### **Challenges and New Initiatives Identified Since Last Board Meeting**

With so many new faculty this year one of the biggest challenges has been demonstrating and/or explaining what it means to teach at MSSM, and how MSSM is different from other places they may have taught. While classroom autonomy and academic freedom are very important, faculty also have to embrace the overall philosophy of providing a challenging, yet supportive, instructional environment. They also have to recognize that their students will sometimes try to play them like parents – “teacher X lets me hand in assignments two weeks late without penalty, so why don’t you?” – so we need some shared instructional expectations. This is one of the things we’ll be discussing during our after-graduation meetings in the spring.

## On-going Measures

### Maine School of Science and Mathematics Actual Expenses Compared to Budget

Account Number / Description	Last Year Period	Year to Date	Revised Budget	Percent Spent
	07/1/2022 - 10/31/2022	07/1/2023 - 10/31/2023	07/1/2023 - 06/30/2024	7/1/2023 - 06/30/2024
<b>Academic Support</b>	\$40,528.15	\$66,137.26	\$218,052.29	30.3%
<b>Admissions</b>	\$45,730.56	\$34,004.11	\$178,976.31	19.0%
<b>Board of Trustees</b>	\$63.71	\$1,618.38	\$13,000.00	12.4%
<b>College Counseling</b>	\$19,674.06	\$22,043.37	\$73,483.46	30.0%
<b>Contingency</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$29,269.05	0.0%
<b>Executive Director</b>	\$60,018.94	\$103,795.12	\$276,749.41	37.5%
<b>Health Services</b>	\$32,782.57	\$64,395.99	\$175,376.40	36.7%
<b>ICT (Computer Tech)</b>	\$65,151.22	\$50,928.57	\$184,305.65	27.6%
<b>Operation of School</b>	\$128,979.88	\$174,880.67	\$473,120.00	37.0%
<b>Operations</b>	\$101,792.92	\$125,804.34	\$263,947.37	47.7%
<b>Public Relations</b>	\$6,043.36	\$7,312.50	\$33,824.99	21.6%
<b>Financial Aid (RSL)</b>	\$62,496.00	\$85,353.00	\$325,000.00	26.3%
<b>Special Education</b>	\$10,406.98	\$17,710.38	\$95,419.43	18.6%
<b>Athletics</b>	\$19,614.02	\$24,025.37	\$79,814.13	30.1%
<b>Student Activities</b>	\$6,767.12	\$8,038.68	\$61,338.29	13.1%
<b>Teachers</b>	\$331,086.69	\$382,840.82	\$1,321,025.52	29.0%
<b>Trafton (Employee Housing)</b>	\$47,143.63	\$48,496.15	\$106,336.60	45.6%
<b>Transportation</b>	\$32,309.71	\$14,570.38	\$73,008.11	20.0%
<b>Foundation</b>	\$7,157.02	\$9,146.99	\$80,000.00	11.4%
<b>REAP (ICT Hardware)</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$30,000.00	0.0%
<b>Title IIA (TEA Qlty)</b>	\$0.00	\$765.00	\$3,000.00	25.5%
<b>Summer Camp</b>	\$106,148.62	\$106,728.71	\$296,000.00	36.1%
<b>Contingency</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$7,922.25	0.0%
<b>Food Service Contract</b>	\$183,074.41	\$253,981.06	\$623,000.00	40.8%
<b>Operation of Dorm</b>	\$83,089.21	\$76,409.84	\$334,699.97	22.8%
<b>Residential Life</b>	\$64,876.35	\$85,923.96	\$231,267.13	37.2%
<b>Transportation</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$13,696.36	0.0%
<b>Vending Machine</b>	\$290.80	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	0.0%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,455,225.93</b>	<b>\$1,764,910.65</b>	<b>\$5,602,632.71</b>	<b>31.5%</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>		<b>\$1,871,275.07</b>	<b>\$5,602,632.71</b>	<b>33.4%</b>



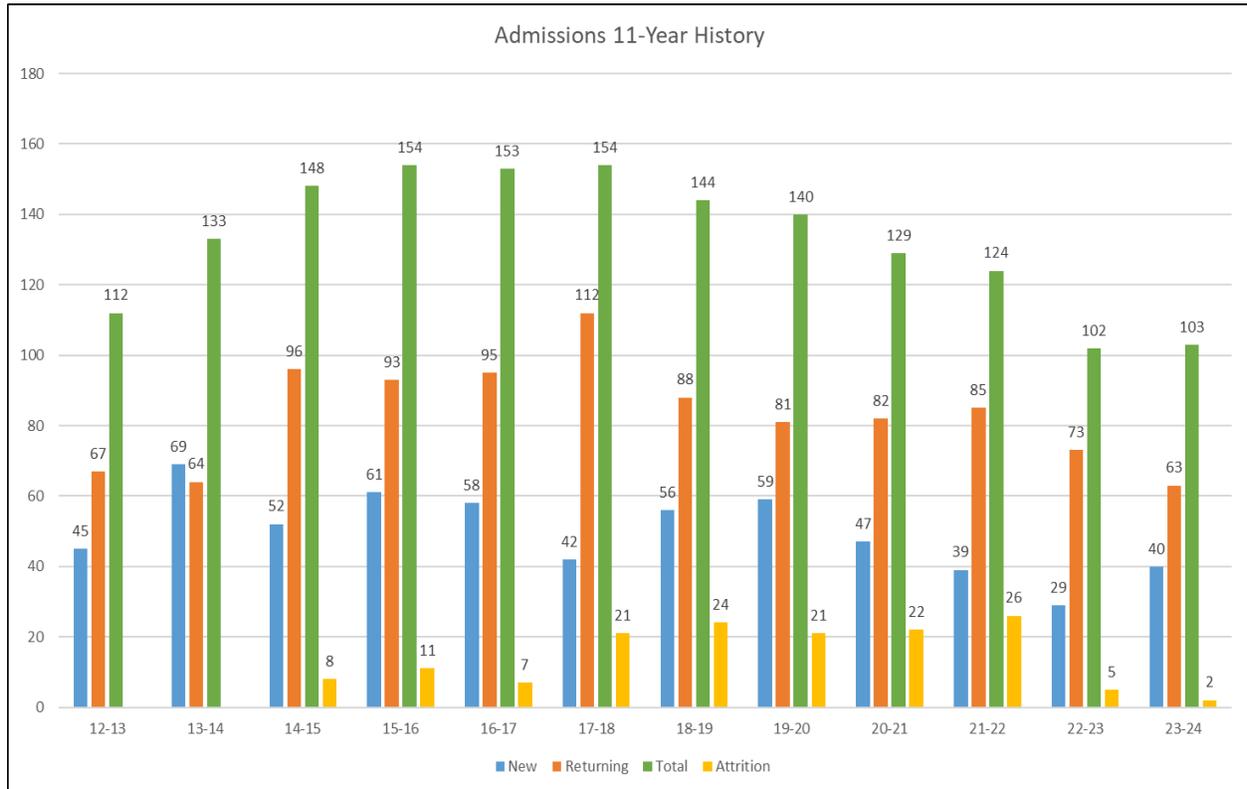
The number of inquiries (49) is about average for this time. It’s still a little early to begin thinking about next year for many families.

The larger number of applications (22) at this time is likely due to a change in the application process which encourages applicants to press submit earlier than January 30th. In the past, they waited until their essays were polished, but now the essays are emailed after they hit submit. It is counterintuitive, but hitting submit starts the application rather than submits it as finished.

We know of 8 students that have expressed interest, but have simply not committed to the application yet. They are included in the 49 inquiries and the 22 applications in progress should spike upwards closer to February 1st. We have changed the deadline to be called “Priority Deadline” which encourages families to apply later if they missed it.

## Annual Measures

### Admissions



### Academics

#### AP Test Scores - 2023

Subject Totals	1	2	3	4	5	Total Exams	Pass Rate (3 or higher)
Calculus AB	3	1				4	0
Calculus BC		2	7	3	2	14	85.71428571
Chemistry				1		1	100
English Language and Composition		4	1	5	2	12	66.66666667
English Literature and Composition					1	1	100
Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism		2	2	1		5	60
Physics C: Mechanics		1		3	1	5	80
Statistics	2	4	5	4		15	60
United States History			1			1	100
			Passing Range				