



An Invitation to Apply for the Position of

Executive Director

Maine School of Science and Mathematics:
Maine's Public Residential School of Excellence
Limestone, Maine

The Maine School of Science and Mathematics challenges students to achieve their aspirations by fostering intellectual growth through a rigorous curriculum in advanced mathematics, science, and humanities. The residential experience encourages personal accountability and the development of skills in relationships, healthful living, and social diversity. This mission is advanced through outreach programs including distance education, summer programs, and workshops for students and teachers.

Mission Statement

THE SEARCH

The Maine School of Science and Mathematics (MSSM) seeks an Executive Director (ED) to lead one of the nation's few publicly established, residential, magnet schools. MSSM is a pioneering school of excellence, designed to serve talented high school students from across the state and, in a few cases, from across the country and abroad. Specializing in the sciences and mathematics, but also including rigorous courses in the humanities, MSSM is Maine's first and only statewide high school. It is also the first school of its kind in the northeast and one of only about a dozen statewide public high schools of math and science in the nation. In 2009, U.S. News & World Report named MSSM the twelfth best high school in the nation, a remarkable accomplishment.

MSSM was established by the Maine Legislature in 1995 as part of the State's effort both to strengthen its STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) education programs and to use wisely the resources made available when the Loring Air Base closed. With skilled leadership, vision, and solid experience in its new ED, the School is well positioned to expand enrollment, continue its high levels in student achievement, and contribute to STEM education and economic development in Maine.

The Board of Trustees has established a Search Committee and retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in recruiting the new ED. All inquiries, applications, and nominations should be directed to Kate Reilly as indicated at the end of this document. This position profile has been approved by the Search Committee to be shared with candidates and key contacts. Thank you for participating in this search.

THE MAINE SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

The following descriptive materials are a brief introduction to the accomplishments and potential of MSSM. Further information is available on the School's website and will be

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shared with candidates invited for interviews. The School is a member of the National Consortium of Specialized Secondary Schools of Mathematics, Science, and Technology.

Background

A number of states and cities have experimented with magnet schools, exam schools, and charter schools. A small number, like MSSM, have been residential. As part of the initiative in Maine, the Legislature has also seen MSSM as a way to speed the State's transition to an increasingly technology and information driven economy. Maine has been successful in national science and mathematics testing (ranking near the top for grades 4 and 8). It is starting to attract and working hard to retain such scientific enterprises as National Semiconductor, Idexx, and Jackson Laboratories. Its traditional industries such as forestry, farming, manufacturing, and fishing, are also utilizing new technologies and processes to increase their competitiveness. The state is small (1.3 million population), relatively low in per capita income, and vast in area. MSSM is a visible and important element in the State's strategic effort to bootstrap its economy, to reach out to its talented young citizens, and to build its stature as an educational leader.

Students

Total enrollment for the current school year is roughly 135 students with just over 35 expected to graduate in 2010. All of the students live on campus. The student residence is next to the school building which MSSM shares with the local school system. Students typically come from about 60 Maine high schools. Since 1995, some 750 students have attended the School, coming from about 75 different high schools.

MSSM students are talented and strongly motivated. They bring a desire to excel in learning together with the enthusiasm that comes from helping to build this still relatively new venture. MSSM students often find the School a welcome intellectual haven with its focus on ideas and deep respect for academic challenges. Faculty, administration, and staff are alert for student scholastic, personal, medical, social, or emotional problems and address them through academic support, counseling, and referral to professional help as needed.

Maine's senior U.S. Senator, Olympia Snowe, described MSSM as follows: "The School unites a population of student achievers in an environment of academic excellence, and, as a result, the Maine School of Science and Mathematics students have won recognition in state, regional, and national competitions."

Ninety-nine percent of graduates attend a college or university, many a highly competitive one. MSSM students and their families have high expectations and standards. They are an integral part of the School and regard it, their friends, and MSSM faculty members as important in improving the trajectory of their careers. Many look back on their experiences at the School as life changing.

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Organization and Program

There are 10 full-time faculty members and another 11 part-time teachers and residential staff members. Most of the full-time faculty hold or are close to completing advanced degrees, with one holding the PhD. Several have taught at the collegiate level or come with significant private sector experience. As a magnet school chartered by the Legislature, MSSM is not required to hire traditionally certified teachers, although some of its faculty are certified. It recruits exceptional faculty members, supports their rigorous teaching, and encourages their academic freedom, innovation, and excellence.

Depending upon faculty resources and student interests, the faculty designs a curriculum that currently includes roughly a dozen different science courses and a dozen mathematics courses are offered each year. Spanish and Chinese are regularly offered. Three semester computer science courses are also offered. The joint Humanities and English department usually offers roughly fifteen courses. All students also participate in work jobs and in a recreation program. The curriculum is engaging, demanding, and free from the time limits of a traditional school calendar.

Original research has become a part of the curriculum. Each year one to three students take an advanced genetics course that is given jointly by MSSM and Jackson Laboratories. They participate in ongoing research projects and, in some cases, their research is published. Over the past five years, 36 students, with faculty member Dr. David Brown, have had original research conducted at the School published through the Association for the Advancement of Computers in Education and the International Humans and Computer Interactions Conference. Their papers were competitively read against university submissions and selected by panels of scientists for presentation at these international meetings.

Six senior administrative officers report to the ED: the Academic Dean, the Dean of Students and Residential Life, and the Directors of Admissions, Public Relations and Marketing, Information Technology, and External Relations. The Academic Dean oversees the academic program through department chairs. The Dean of Students and Residential Life works with an Assistant Director for Residential Life and several residential staff members, each of whom works with a small residential group of about 15 students. The School community is small and most of the faculty and staff wear several hats. Many of the adults are available to work with students in the evening in the dormitory, in structured evening study halls, or on other academic or service activities.

Facilities and Finances

As an independent public school chartered by the state, MSSM is directed at a policy level by a 19-member Board of Trustees appointed by the Governor or named in the MSSM statute. The School receives an appropriation of some \$2.2 million from the State and must request that sum each year through the Commissioner of Education, and the appropriate Committees of the Legislature. As a result, the School is tuition free for all Maine students, but charges for room and board. That charge is \$7,800 for the current

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year. Any out-of-state students pay a tuition set by the Board (currently \$31,000) which includes the room/board fee. Approximately one third of the students currently receive financial assistance toward the room and board fee.

The school leases its dormitory and uses several small homes on land adjacent to the dormitory owned by the U.S. Department of Education. It also leases the classrooms, offices, and other spaces it uses for instruction and activities from the local school system. Food service, computer support services, a complex telecommunications system, and other specialized services are managed cooperatively with the local schools. In addition to the residence hall and its portion of a shared 150,000 square foot academic building, MSSM facilities and equipment include a large number of computers with Web access (34 of those systems constituting a state of the art PC lab for computer science/technology instruction and a smaller PC laboratory – both labs open to all students on a regular basis), four fully equipped science labs (1 biology, 2 chemistry, and 1 physics), a pool, dining facilities, a 550 seat auditorium, a gymnasium, and offices.

While the general level of State support for MSSM is relatively modest, the School has been able to combine special support from the State and with the opportunity to raise funds for special needs either through its own Foundation or from outside sources known to the faculty or the administration.

The revised FY10 budget totals \$3.56 million. It is balanced, but under pressure particularly in the next two years as Maine copes with the recession. The average teacher salary is in the range of \$45,000, roughly \$7,000 over the state average. With its heavy dependence on the state appropriation, MSSM must work hard to build enrollment, particularly of out of state full pay students and to add other sources of funding. MSSM debt totals \$235,000 for building repairs and is due to be paid over 13 years.

Limestone, Maine

MSSM is located in the small town of Limestone in northern Maine's central Aroostook County. Encompassed on three sides by the Canadian Provinces of New Brunswick and Quebec, the area is known by many simply as "The County." It is the largest county east of the Mississippi and larger than the states of Connecticut and Rhode Island combined. Rich in agriculture, the area has a natural splendor with rolling hills, fields, and forests laced with over 2,000 lakes, streams, rivers, and ponds. A person only needs to go to the top of the nearest hill for an absolutely breathtaking view. Just as there is no limit on space around MSSM, there is also no limit to its varied recreational activities. "The County" is a strikingly natural and peaceful setting for MSSM.

The Limestone community, with a population of approximately 1,950, has a friendly atmosphere and limited services. The neighboring small cities of Caribou and Presque Isle together have some 20,000 people and more active services as well as shopping outlets. The people of the area are hardworking and treasure the values of community and outdoor living. Area lodging, from bed and breakfasts to camping and locally owned

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motels, provides School families a relaxed setting with all the amenities to enjoy spectacular scenery, and year-round recreational activities while visiting students attending MSSM. Across the area and in nearby Canada, there are cozy inns and attractive sites to visit. The School's locale offers extensive outdoor activities and the hardy lifestyle of northern Maine.

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The ED position corresponds, in many ways, to that of a superintendent of schools or the principal of an innovative high school. The ED reports to a Board of Trustees and oversees the full operation of the School, balancing the role of educational visionary and leader with that of seeing that MSSM is managed well and continues to grow. The six senior staff meet weekly with the ED and form an advisory council that helps to shape the management of the School. Although MSSM is a small school, it involves an unusually demanding curriculum, issues of residential living, a direct relationship with State educational and legislative authorities, and the shared occupancy of the Limestone school. Its relative independence, national visibility, and statewide responsibility to add strength to STEM education in Maine give further complexity to this assignment.

Each person in the small MSSM community helps to build the exciting, personally focused environment for learning that makes the School a unique institution in Maine and within the National Consortium. The ED has external responsibility to maintain strong and effective relationships with MSSM's Augusta and Limestone partners. Internally, the ED must build close relationships with faculty members and students. MSSM is an intense and personal educational community whose leader must bring to this assignment substantial educational leadership and accomplishment together with the political and management skills required to meet its complex needs.

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES FACING THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The general leadership challenge facing innovative school leaders requires an educator, organization manager, and system builder: 1) familiar with education reform and professional development; 2) comfortable and effective in classrooms, in the community, and in board rooms; and 3) adept at team building, communicating ideas, and establishing effective partnerships. In this case, the ED must also anticipate changes in the statewide picture surrounding the School, must understand the particular educational needs at MSSM, and must successfully lead the implementation of strategies to cope with those changes and needs. Only with this level of leadership can MSSM continue to offer high quality educational experiences to its students as well as STEM educational leadership to the State.

The School has built excellence and rigor into its programs, has attracted a high quality staff, and is, with this hire, positioning itself for growth. The specific challenges described below suggest several of the current opportunities likely to face the new ED. There will, of course, be other important issues and the new ED will also bring his or her own ideas to this position, but we see the following as emerging opportunities and

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challenges. Taken together, these issues suggest the dynamic and healthy outline of a pioneering educational venture.

Communication and Management

Relationships within the School will directly reflect the people and communication skills of the new ED. MSSM expects an approachable, candid, decisive leader able to set an example of collegiality, engagement, and effectiveness at the very center of the School. The ED must bring the very best out of all of those who share in the operation of the School including students, faculty and staff, parents, the board, the foundation, and the alumni. When it is time for the ED to make decisions, those actions will be more effective and more respected, if there is a tone of engagement, openness, and effective problem solving.

Successful leadership of MSSM also requires an unusual combination of educational leadership, academic excellence, management of a complex enterprise, and the entrepreneurial drive needed to envision and achieve outstanding results. Needed management skills include basic skills in operating a complex educational system, political acumen, and experience in leading an organization to achieve the highest possible standards. A successful candidate is likely to have led or participated at a senior level in a highly productive school or school system. MSSM also requires an ED familiar with business plans, capable in setting and getting the most out of a budget, and experienced in implementing strategic plans. The School is currently coping well with Maine's financial pressures, but there is more to be done to ease continuing financial pressures over the next year or two.

Enrollment

Attracting exceptionally talented and motivated students is a continuing priority for the new ED. The Director of Admissions will lead that effort, but the ED must be available and engaged on a regular basis. MSSM seeks to continue expanding its visibility and selectivity among Maine high school students. The mission of the School, its excellent curriculum and faculty, plus its unique residential community have been attractive to Maine's public high school students and to a few from out of state. MSSM always intends to remain relatively small, but long-term enrollment growth is likely and will require some growth in boarding facilities.

External Relations

With substantial faculty and staff support focused on day-to-day activities at the School, the ED will be free to oversee those operations and to build MSSM's stature and resources at the State level, in Limestone, with the Board, with the Foundation, with parents, and in other quarters. MSSM has earned and will continue to need the support of the Legislature, the Commissioner of Education, its parents and a wide array of educators across the State. Further strengthening the partnership with the local schools and wider community is a part of these external responsibilities. There will also be a continuing priority on enhancing relationships with key friends in Augusta. The State's recent

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district reorganization plan and specific financial issues in Limestone have also kept the School's future location on the agenda. Two Directors assist with public relations and external affairs.

As MSSM's graduates move into their careers, an alumni association will grow and have increased potential for fund raising and other supportive involvement with the School. MSSM also has a role to play in school reform as an example of one State's approach to improving education and retaining its most talented young people. Some of these external activities will be opportunities to make friends for MSSM and some will be directly tied to raising the resources needed for the School. In every case, the ED will serve as the spokesperson for the School and as a visible leader of education in Maine.

Vision and Leadership

The leadership transition at MSSM is about building on past successes, building energy and support for the future, and bringing together diverse elements around the School's educational vision and mission. The new ED will lead that effort. There is strong interest within the School and across the State in making MSSM even more outstanding. That energy needs to be harnessed by listening, reaching out to diverse elements, and sharing ideas across all parts of the School community and the State. As a residential, statewide magnet school, MSSM carries a special responsibility to be innovative and to contribute to strengthening STEM education in Maine.

This challenge involves positively knitting together and building links between Maine people interested in STEM education, academic standards, scientific business initiatives, school improvement, and other issues. A seasoned leader and politically astute educator will quickly understand the opportunity to deepen the exciting vision set for MSSM.

The Summary Challenge: Teamwork, Integrity, and Excellence

Success at MSSM will only be possible with the coordinated efforts of the Board and Foundation, a strong School leadership team, plus talented faculty and staff members, all commonly focused around a clear, well established vision, and each motivated to achieve valuable and appropriate objectives. The new ED will lead that effort.

The new ED must also be an unrelenting advocate of the best interests of MSSM students/families and of complete integrity in leading the School. We seek a leader excited about these challenges, comfortable in the lively marketplace of educational ideas/practices, and respectful of the talented students and staff that make MSSM and Maine such a rich community.

LEADERSHIP AND CHARACTER

The experiences and qualities we seek in candidates grow directly out of the challenges facing the new ED. In general, we seek individuals of exceptional intelligence and maturity, well grounded in complex organizational management, comfortable in a public school environment, and committed to the academic mission of the School.

Educational Leadership

We first seek an ED with a vision for educational excellence that challenges every student and the capacity to turn that vision into an achievable mission. Pursuing MSSM’s educational opportunities in the midst of an evolving educational environment must be anchored in a vision, disciplined by realistic budgetary controls, respectful of the existing mission, and fueled by new energy and ideas.

The ED will be expected to:

- Provide a personal example of being a learner and a scholar;
- Be passionate about the academic and character development of students;
- Build rigorous partnerships with institutions, corporations, foundations, legislators, anyone prepared to advance the mission of a public magnet school;
- Champion and defend the School: students, staff, families, community;
- Maintain and communicate a strong vision of how MSSM performs an “essential public function by and on behalf of the State;” and
- Have at least a Master’s in education, management, or an academic field.

Organizational Management

A great ED will understand and orchestrate the School as linked to many other important public systems and operated by complex dynamics. MSSM must function superbly and the new ED must make that happen, not single handedly, but through a well-coordinated team effort. We seek in this appointment a proven, highly effective manager, open in management style, respectful of alternative points of view, comfortable in a collegial environment, capable of decisive action and leading by persuasion, and willing to appreciate MSSM’s active, quirky culture.

The ED will be expected to:

- Recruit and lead a diverse, empowered and exceptional faculty and staff group;
- Embed performance-based, business-like procedures and values;
- Bring financial and administrative skills matching the scale of the School;
- Drive, with the Board, the strategic actions of MSSM – make choices; take risks; open, merge, and close programs; build momentum; leverage success;
- Be comfortable in classrooms and use every opportunity to increase the school’s visibility and effectiveness; and
- Bring patience, humor, and an ability to handle a number of tasks at once.

Building Relationships

A major portion of the ED’s energy will be directed toward garnering resources. The School cannot move forward without a leader capable of marshalling its constituents and building its support. The new ED must quickly understand and actively manage MSSM’s assets, its needs, and its opportunities.

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The ED will be expected to:

- Address the needs of the School through an effective strategic plan;
- Support the entrepreneurial and teaching energies of the faculty;
- Work closely and well with legislators, donors, parents, and the growing MSSM community;
- Carry more than half of every emerging relationship; and
- Bring personal strengths that wear well and contribute to building a successful, unified organization.

Personal Character

The personal style and sensitivity of its leader tends to shape the culture of every organization. We seek an ED at home in a public school and respectful of the culture and people of the Limestone community and Aroostook County, and the State of Maine. We need a leader with presence and stature, who is open to all people, loves ideas, and will thrive in this challenging position.

In addition to walking on water and leaping tall buildings, the ED will be expected to:

- Bring outstanding communications skills as a listener, writer, articulate speaker; be open to the ideas of others; thoughtfully speak one's mind;
- Provide an example of enthusiasm, optimism, resiliency, strength;
- Have the scars and maturity that come from having mostly, but not always, succeeded--and having learned from experience; and
- Finally, be trustworthy, have integrity, be of good character.

SCHEDULE, SALARY, AND TO CONTACT

The search is actively under way, will remain open until an appointment is announced, and is currently scheduled to conclude in the late winter of 2009-10. After significant outreach, there will be initial evaluations of written materials followed by interviews and extensive background checks. The new ED will start as soon after being appointed as possible and no later than July 1, 2010. Compensation will be competitive and commensurate with the successful candidate's experience.

Inquiries, referrals, and resumes are encouraged by email and in confidence, with a cover letter from applicants sent to reillic@mssm.org. The search may be also contacted as follows: Kate Reilly, 49 Sheridan Street, Apt 2, Portland, ME 04101; tel: 207-554-9919; or Jerry Pieh, 87 Spinney Mill Road, Arrowsic, ME 04530; tel: 207-443-2256.

*MSSM is an equal opportunity employer and hires staff without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, or disability.
Diverse candidates are encouraged to apply.*

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