

Hi, Anna,

Given that USM has now responded to your request related to the lease agreement, I wanted to also send along the following statement that addresses the agreement. It may be attributed to me, should you choose to publish it and attribution is required. I will not be available tomorrow to guide you through a tour of the facility, but I should be able to assist with ensuring you have access to the facility. Is there a specific time you had in mind?

The statement is as follows:

The Southern Miss Athletic Foundation and the Mississippi Community Education Center (MCEC) entered into a lease agreement in 2017 that allows MCEC to utilize University athletics facilities, including the new Wellness Center, through 2022. The Athletic Foundation's role in that agreement is as a lessor, while MCEC's role is to develop and execute programming intended to benefit the area's underserved population. That agreement was negotiated in a transparent manner, and was reviewed by University attorneys and outside counsel, as well as approved by the state Attorney General's office as well as the IHL Board.

The Southern Miss Athletic Foundation used funds resulting from that agreement to help construct the new Wellness Center, which will be used for community classes, meetings, camps, seminars and other events, in addition to Southern Miss volleyball matches. As part of the agreement, MCEC had the opportunity to help guide the facility's layout to meet its specific programming needs. Construction of the \$7 million facility--\$5 million of which resulted from the lease agreement—was also supported by individual donors.

As it is now apparent that MCEC is unlikely to continue as an active partner in the agreement, the Southern Miss Athletic Foundation is looking forward to initiating conversations with the appropriate state agency and leaders about how its athletics facilities, including the Wellness Center, can be used to the benefit of Mississippi families and individuals in the spirit of the original agreement.

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James P. Coll

Chief Communication Officer

Office of University Communications

The University of Southern Mississippi

[118 College Dr. #5016 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406](#)

P: [601.266.5722](tel:601.266.5722) | F: [601.266.5347](tel:601.266.5347)

Twitter: @jimcoll | Snapchat: jimcollusm

FB: /jimcollusm | Instagram: @jimcollusm

