

SaveTheAcademy.org Letters From Supporters

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Student Letters

Robert Le says:

April 19, 2009 at 3:57 pm

Representatives of Massachusetts,

My name is Robert Le, and I am currently a junior attending the Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science at WPI, a school for academically accelerated youth to enhance their abilities in math and science. As of right now, the budget proposed by Governor Deval Patrick allows for funding for Mass Academy under Account 7010-0039. The House's Ways and Means Committee is proposing to remove that funding, which will cause the school to close should the proposition pass. After attending a year at the school, this is an outrageous decision that not only cuts the enhancement of the thinking capabilities of one hundred of the brightest students in central Massachusetts but also has severe drawbacks for longterm Massachusetts.

Let me first make a point that Mass Academy spends money frugally, spending a mere \$1.23 million in the previous year, extremely little in comparison to what schools in regular towns use. Any special events in the Academy are paid for by the parent support group, not any other funding. Also, we are neither a charter school nor a private school. Mass Academy is a free, public school that neither charges its students for an education nor receives any funding from the towns that send the students. Furthermore, these teachers are paid less than the average teacher despite their expertise in teaching. Spending is used as efficiently and as effectively as possible to maximize on what little we require and receive for funding.

Massachusetts has always had an emphasis on mathematics and science. Currently, it is required to pass both the mathematics and science MCAS as well as an English MCAS in order to graduate. Clearly, it is extremely important in the long run that students are educated in the sciences so that they can lead the economy in the future. Mass Academy is a forerunner in teaching these courses. Students take Mathematical Modeling, which pushes a student's ability to think about Mathematical concepts, Advanced Inquiry Physics, which pushes a student's scientific ability by having him/her design labs to prove various physics concepts, as well as computer science, in which students are given an

introductory course in learning the computer language "SCHEME." In addition, the academy's FIRST robotics team has previously won the FIRST International robotics competitions.

In addition to these rigorous courses in the sciences, students are also required to complete a research project in any field of their choosing. My personal project was building a program which could allow patients to build their medication lists accurately in the doctor's office, something needed in today's health care system. My fellow classmates have done superb work on projects that have received regional awards for their projects that will move onto the state and international fairs, such as an analysis of an enhancement of concrete, development of a system that reforms methane into a cleaner energy source, as well as researching the antibacterial effects of honey. The academy is a hub in central Massachusetts for the sciences, and if the Commonwealth decides to remove any funding, then the state is essentially giving the message that science is not an important part of the development of Massachusetts.

Evidently, classes beyond math and science, such as world languages and civilizations, are important as well. During the junior year, it is required that students take a language class such as French or Spanish as well as the Humanities course, which emphasizes analysis of various works throughout history as well as the culture of western civilizations. These studies culminate in analytical essays throughout the year which advance a student's ability to scrutinize and process literary works as well as to improve his/her writing abilities. World Language courses are done completely in the student's selected language of either French or Spanish so that conversations can be done more fluidly as the year progresses. Mass Academy also requires the course known as Scientific and Technical Writing, which becomes focused towards the end of the third term on completing professional research papers on their research project. The school's mock trial team is among the best in the state, having competed in the "Elite 8" round of the state's mock trial competition, competing with 7 other top teams. The school is well-rounded despite its title of being an academy of mathematics and science and educates its students well in all fields.

Furthermore, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) has recently come to Mass Academy to inquire about its standards and practices. Numerous comments were given out by NEASC and can be found at: <http://savetheacademy.org/>, however, I would like to highlight a particular comment from the review. "The Commonwealth is truly fortunate to have this school of excellence that very clearly meets the needs of academically accelerated youth in Massachusetts." According to NEASC, Mass Academy is something that Massachusetts would benefit from in regards to education. Therefore, does it make sense to cut education to something that the state highly benefits from?

As a student, I would also like to state that prior to this rigorous year, I did not feel particularly challenged in my previous school. This academy is not just an educator in numerous aspects, it is also able to create the drive to work diligently, efficiently, and effectively. Contrary to arguments that claim that the academy's budget would be better off being spent for the sending schools, simply throwing money around does not make teachers or education better. Again, the teachers at Mass Academy are paid lower than the average teacher. Furthermore, distributing the money back to each and every sending town would be dividing the frugal \$1.23 million spent among a whole host of different areas such that the amount is diluted and does not contribute much to the towns' already large spending in comparison to Mass Academy.

Our school is not just about education, however. It is also about giving back to the underprivileged in Massachusetts. Every student in Mass Academy is an active participant in community service, which we do on our Wednesday half-days.

Lastly, even with all these top-notch classes, I could not have learned nearly as much as I could have without the people who make up the school: the students. My fellow classmates are people who are extremely skilled in all types of subject areas and our combined efforts produce many new ideas. This is an environment that is distinctly different from my previous school that has allowed us to cultivate our abilities beyond what we would normally be able to do at our sending schools. It is this difference that makes Mass Academy a necessity to the growth of Massachusetts' education as well as its future endeavors in science and mathematics.

I implore you to read the stories of other Mass Academy students and alumni at <http://savetheacademy.org/> and consider amending the current budget proposal by the House Ways and Means Committee so that Mass Academy may receive funding to continue its outstanding program that will benefit the state in the long term.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Robert Le

Anant Garg says:
April 11, 2009 at 10:31 am

Hi, I am currently a Junior at Mass Academy. I go to the Academy because it offers a great education and the general atmosphere at the school is very comfortable and supportive. Although it may seem cliché, our class of 46 is truly

a family. There is absolutely no negative/bitter competition over here and everyone is more than willing to help each other. Above all, Mass Academy is a place where I can meet people like myself; I feel as if I belong there.

Nick Moisan says:

April 11, 2009 at 2:58 pm

Hey. I am a junior at Mass Academy this year. Mass Academy has had more of an impact than anything else in my life. At first, I didn't want to come to this school, mostly because I was afraid. But, it is an amazing school. I have fallen in love with it and everyone else in the school as well. I have made some of the best friends I could ask for. They share similar interests (and quirks) that I never had at my sending school. It offers the highest level of education for some incredibly brilliant students. It is bringing me, and all my peers, to our full potential. I feel that cutting the school would harm everybody, not just the students and teachers.

Kate Baker says:

April 11, 2009 at 9:40 pm

I am currently a senior at Mass Academy (Class of 2009). I came not because I was interested in math and science, but because I needed to be challenged academically. The faculty at my sending school actually tried to discourage a friend and me from trying to take higher level courses with the classes above us because they "weren't sure we could handle it". After completing the classes with As and A+s, we felt differently.

I was at the top of my class, played two varsity sports, and was involved in the band and choir groups at my sending school. Although I was apprehensive about attending the Academy at first, looking back, I would trade all these things in a heartbeat for the experience I had these past two years at MA. I feel that it has opened up so many opportunities for me, especially getting into my top school for next year. Being able to transfer credits from a school like WPI definitely does not hurt either.

I absolutely support continuing the Academy, because I know there are other kids like me that need a challenge. Junior year was unbelievably tough, but was definitely worth it. It scares me to think what my life (both present and future) would have been like if I had not attended the Academy.

Lauren Giacobbe says:

April 12, 2009 at 9:10 am

I am currently a junior at Mass Academy, and I never imagined that I could receive an education as great as the one I have here. This is no ordinary school; instead of memorizing facts, we utilize hands-on learning with practical applications. If this school closes, countless students will be missing out on a unique and enlightening experience.

Ashley Millette says:

April 12, 2009 at 5:35 pm

Hi my name is Ashley and I am currently a junior at the Academy. Before coming to the Academy, I attended two public schools, neither of which provided the challenging academic programming I wanted. When I first came here, I expected that I would be a bit nervous and out of place seeming as how I wouldn't know anyone. But after just a few short weeks, the Academy had become my home. Mass Academy is more than just a place I come to learn, it's my home and I know that I am not the only one who feels that way. I think that taking Mass Academy away from us and from future students will be one of the worst decisions the state will make for many years, and I hope that these stories will help them to realize that.

Aashish Srinivas says:

April 12, 2009 at 9:16 pm

My name is Aashish, and I am currently a junior at Mass Academy. When I first learned that I had been accepted by the Academy, I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know whether I was prepared to leave my friends and school, both of which I had come to love. In the end, I decided that I should be willing to accept some change in my life in order to further my education.

On my first day at the Academy, I realized that it was completely different than any educational experience I had been exposed to before. The teachers placed a great deal of emphasis on teamwork, technology, and hands-on learning. We were challenged right from the beginning in every possible way. However, I met so many great people and learned so much over the last three-quarters of a year. Although I had to leave my comfort zone in my past school, I quickly learned to be comfortable here too. I have become a more independent learner.

Perhaps the experience which best epitomizes the Mass Academy experience for me is the research project I conducted on lichens during my time here. I have always been interested in biology and the environment. Rather than sitting in a classroom and reading a textbook about biology, Mass Academy allowed me to actually conduct research on lichens by providing me with materials and a rare Vernier carbon dioxide probe which most schools probably do not have access to. Because I plan on having a career in a scientific field, I benefited greatly from

the research opportunity that only a school like Mass Academy can provide. Looking around, I can see that all of my classmates have been similarly affected by Mass Academy. To close a school like this would be a huge blow to the educational system of the state. The school nourishes young minds and feeds them with a curiosity and drive which they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. I know that my 6 months here at Mass Academy has affected my life very profoundly. It makes me sad to think that others may be denied the opportunity to come and learn at such a wonderful school.

Mary Devlin says:

April 13, 2009 at 3:26 pm

My name is Mary Devlin, and I'm currently a junior at Mass Academy. In coming to the Academy, I surprised myself. I always expected to graduate from my sending school. A little over a year ago, though, I attended the open house with my dad and really liked the school. It's learning conducive environment was evident as soon as I walked in. A few months after that, I received my acceptance letter and immediately replied with a yes.

I have always been stronger in liberal arts, so I knew the academy would present an interesting challenge. Although it is a math and science school, it is so much more than just that. No matter what your career goals are, I believe the Academy can prepare you for success in just about any field because it teaches students how to learn. That's something many schools are not providing to students. I came here for that reason and many others. I never worked to my potential at my sending school: I did enough to get by with A's. In my heart I knew this wasn't right. Before I was ridiculed for being the "smart kid" in class, but now that is far from the case. I was hoping for a change when I attended the Academy, and I got exactly what I was looking for.

The past seven months have been the most challenging, exciting, and life-changing months of my life. I have achieved more than I thought I ever could. At first, it was difficult to transition. It was hard to no longer be at the top of my class. The standards here are high and teachers present new challenges daily. For this I am extremely grateful. The way I approach problems and think about the world has changed drastically. I have learned an immense amount not only from the hours of homework I do daily, but from the many experiences I've had because of the Academy. The friends I have made have truly become family. The decision to come here was one of the best I have ever made.

I am proud to be a student at Mass Academy, now more than ever. From all of the positive feedback, the impact it has made on many people is evident. So many more deserve the opportunity to become a part of the Mass Academy community.

Margaret Harrison says:
April 13, 2009 at 5:48 pm

I am a junior at Mass Academy this year and I absolutely love it here! Meeting people who have such similar interests and goals really makes us work harder than ever to achieve those goals. Even though I have only known most of my fellow classmates since September I feel that we are as close as a family. The other thing that Mass Academy really inspires me to get involved in my community because we are encouraged to do community service every week. The entire Mass Academy experience has helped me grow as a person and hopefully will continue to help me grow further in the end of this year and into next year.

Andrew Ryan says:
April 13, 2009 at 6:46 pm

In the winter of Eight Grade, 2006, I was carted along with my brother on an otherwise uneventful day to a strange building that seemed to reflect Worcester's past. It was an old steel mill made of solid brick with a cobblestone street, and it was where I was told a school was. I saw no playground, no bus zone, and no welcoming sign. I was a little worried entering the front doors for the first time, but I was surprised to find a homey space right beyond the tinted glass.

After piling into a room with over one hundred other people all looking to join the academy, Dr. Salvatelli began his informational talk on the academy. Less than half way through the speech he hit a point I found interesting, an extensive project. He went on to explain that they had challenged the students to build something related to "green" technology, or devices that are less harmful to the environment. Shortly after, I stopped listening to the speech all together and started thinking about what I would have chosen as my project.

In a very short amount of time I came onto the topic of tire pressure and how it increased fuel efficiency. I pulled out my pocket notebook I had forgotten to put away that morning and began to do some sketches of possible designs. In thirty minutes I had a pressurized air system that would automatically adjust tire pressures to maximize fuel efficiency. The only problem was that I could not devise a way of supplying high pressure air to the tires without a pipe that would break after a few thousand rotations in one direction. As the meeting came to a close and my frustrations grew I simply forgot the idea to move on to my school work.

After returning to my sending school I no longer kept my grades up for my parents sake, but because I knew I had a goal and I needed to excel in order to meet them, I was convinced I wanted to go to Mass Academy. With that as my motivation I went on to get straight A's in every class I took for the next 2 years as well as went far beyond the requirements in every project, preparing myself for the whopper I knew I would have to face when I reached my goal.

And the design? Well One day, I was flipping through a copy of Popular Science and Popular Mechanics when I noticed a strangely familiar article. After some reading I realized that the article was on a device almost identical to my primitive scratches from eight grade, except the invention in the article would work only while a car was stopped at a gas pump to refuel, a clever way of eliminating the problem of constantly twisting a hose.

Alumni Letters

Maggie Frost says:

April 11, 2009 at 1:46 pm

I graduated from the Mass Academy in 2005 and am soon to graduate from the U.S. Naval Academy as a member of the class of 2009. I am currently ranked 4th in my class of 1074 and will be attending Oxford University in England on a full scholarship directly following being commissioned as an Ensign in the U.S. Navy. Following grad school, I will be going to flight school to become a Navy pilot. Any success I have had in my undergraduate career is directly linked to the lessons that I learned at Mass Academy.

These lessons can be summarized into three main areas. First, I gained an incredibly strong foundation in technical competence. As an aerospace engineering major, I found myself a step ahead of most of my classmates in our many technically-oriented classes. This served me very well, allowing me to not only succeed in the engineering classes I took, but also to validate several of the required math courses which freed up enough of my credits for me to pursue a language minor. I can distinctly remember multiple occasions when I was sitting in a challenging class and realized that I was directly applying concepts that I learned either at Mass Academy or during senior year at WPI. Had I not had the preparation that I received at Mass Academy, many of my classes would have been much more of a struggle.

Secondly, I learned how to think critically. One of my engineering professors once told me that when a company hires an engineer, they aren't hiring someone who already knows exactly how to build the airplane that they need to build. They are hiring someone who knows how to think critically and who will be able to figure out how to build the airplane better than anyone else as a result. I believe that training in critical thinking cannot begin early enough, and sadly most high school students are more proficient at rote memorization than actually understanding problem solving. Mass Academy, by nature of its attitude that how you solve a problem is more important than its actual solution, encourages development of critical thinking skills early and often. I have applied the critical thinking abilities that I learned at Mass Academy every day over the past four years.

Finally, I learned time management and organization. The Naval Academy is a constant-stress environment, both deliberately as a subtle preparation for the rigors of combat and also as a result of simply having a great many things to accomplish and only so many hours in the day in which to do it. Because of the time management lessons that I learned during Mass Academy's intensive junior year, I found that I was able to balance the many demands on my time far better than the majority of my classmates.

The ways in which I have benefited from studying at Mass Academy are by no means limited to just these areas. The fantastic language instruction at Mass Academy truly set me up for success in an Arabic minor and the year of college classes at WPI were a tremendous preparation for the independence, self-reliance, and intellectual diversity required for study at any university. I cannot say enough about the competence and devotion of the faculty, who are willing to work as hard as is needed to help their students gain the tools to succeed in college and in life. My fellow students with whom I graduated will be the leaders of America's future and we will all benefit from our mutual contacts in the years to come. We were able to challenge each other and learn from each other to a far greater degree than at any other high school, due to being far more exposed to each other on a daily basis than gifted students scattered throughout a larger institution. I will be reaping the rewards of having studied at Mass Academy for the rest of my life and I consider it a tragedy for a politician to even discuss its closure.

I believe that the greatness of American society, though founded in the common strengths of its entire population, is furthered and advanced by the efforts and abilities of its great men and women. One person with talent and motivation can invent the light bulb, derive the concept of relativity, or inspire a nation to rise to its feet. Each of us in our everyday activities stands on the shoulders of those few who used their superior abilities for the betterment of mankind. If America desires to remain the greatest nation in the world, we must raise up our great students and give them every weapon in our arsenal in order to ensure their success. It is our promising young people who will create the technology and conduct the research that will improve the quality of life for each and every one of us. If we fail our talented students, we as a society will fail to retain our preeminence in a rapidly changing world. This is true for students of every subject, but most importantly for those who are technically inclined. America owes its global superiority to the superiority of its technology. Our national security and economic strength depend on our ability to create new and better technology before the rest of the world. It is our great students who will someday grow up to accomplish just that, but they cannot do it alone. They need support and guidance, and institutions such as Mass Academy, which set their students upon the road to become technical leaders, are essential to meet this need. I have no doubt that it is only a matter of time before a Mass Academy graduate accomplishes something tremendous enough to put its name in the headlines, but until then, it needs a chance to continue its vital work. We as a society need

to have faith in the best among us and boost them up as high as we can so that someday they may repay our investment by using the lessons they learned at Mass Academy to change America and the world for the better.

Sarah (Sargent) Leshay says:
April 11, 2009 at 2:28 pm

I am a graduate of the Mass Academy Class of 2002. I attended the Academy because I was looking for a school where I would be challenged, which I did not feel was happening at my sending school. There is no doubt that the Academy provided many challenges for our class - for the first time, many of us were no longer at the "top" of our class. We had peers who set a high bar and teachers who challenged us to go beyond what we had been asked to do prior to attending the Academy. What I learned at the Academy went beyond the math, science, programming and other academic subjects I took - it taught me time management, organization, persistence, and pushed me to push myself beyond what was easy.

I attended Northeastern University after graduation, where I finished a BS in Biology and a MAT in Secondary Education. I found that my experience at the Academy prepared me to manage my time and work independently in college, something my peers had a difficult time with. I was able to receive credit for several of the courses I had taken at WPI which allowed me to graduate in 5 years with both degrees, one six month co-op, and a year-long internship student teaching.

I currently teach high school science at Bedford High School in Bedford, Massachusetts. Last year, I was asked to help start a rookie FIRST Robotics team at BHS - I had been exposed to FIRST through the Academy and said I would take on the challenge. We leave on Wednesday for our second Championship event in two years. I most likely never would have taken on the challenge of coaching a brand-new team if it wasn't for the experiences I had at the Academy.

The Academy was a huge factor in shaping who I am. It truly taught me to stretch beyond what I thought I was capable of and see what I could accomplish. I try to instill that lesson in the students in my classroom so that they can be challenged to give their personal best. I hope that the Academy continues to be a place where students are able to grow and stretch beyond their comfort zones.

Karen Mendelson says:
April 12, 2009 at 4:52 pm

This year marks my 10 year reunion since I graduated from the Mass Academy in 1999. Prior to attending the Academy I had been a student at both public and private schools and I can say that, without a doubt, the Mass Academy was certainly the most innovative, meaningful, and enjoyable to these academic experiences. The Academy is unique in that it teaches a way of thinking and problem solving that has stayed with me to this day. The Mass Academy was truly a remarkable educational experience and greatly influenced my decision to pursue a career in science. I graduated from Princeton in 2003 and am currently pursuing a PhD in biomedical research at Weill Cornell Medical College. I hope that the academy will continue to grow and flourish so that it can inspire the next generation of young scientists.

Nathan Houle says:
April 13, 2009 at 4:20 pm

I graduated from Mass Academy in 2004 and immediately following I reported to the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. After four long years on the Severn I graduated with Honors and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps with a guaranteed flight contract. After graduation from the Naval Academy I reported to my current duty station at the University of Virginia to get a follow on Masters of Science in Mechanical Engineering. I was only one of 12 Marines in the Class of 2008 to gain a full scholarship to graduate school.

As I look back at all the decisions that I have made in my life, without a doubt, my decision to attend Mass Academy was one of the best. My sending school was not providing an atmosphere where I was able to challenge myself on a daily basis. Out of the box thinking and collaboration among students was quite limited. Mass Academy changed all of that for me. From my first visit to the school I knew it was the place for me.

The lessons that I learned at Mass Academy transferred immensely to my time at the Naval Academy and now as professional military officer. Beyond the critical thinking skills that were always drilled into us I have to say that time management was perhaps the greatest lesson I learned at Mass Academy. The extra class time, my 2 hours of daily commute, several hours of homework a night all while still acting as a student athlete at my sending school truly showed me what the meaning of hard work was. When I arrived at the Naval Academy and had the large time crunch applied, I was ready. Many of my classmates were not.

I could possibly go on forever on how much Mass Academy changed my life. It is an experience I would not change for all the money in the world. It not only gave me the opportunity to reach for my dreams, but to exceed them. It would be a

shame to deny all the bright young minds in the Massachusetts school system the same opportunities that I was afforded.

If there is any assistance I can provide please feel free to contact me.

Semper Fi,
Nate Houle
2nd Lt USMC

Rebecca Didio says:
April 11, 2009 at 8:38 pm

I graduated in 2003 from the Academy. I grew up in south Jersey and my family moved to Massachusetts right before my sophomore year of highschool. I transitioned to a new school in a new place and I was absolutely miserable. I was bored and unchallenged. I told my parents that I refused to go back to my sending school. I didn't know where I was going to go, but all I knew is that it wouldn't be back to that school. My stepmom started doing research and that's when she found the Academy. To be honest, I was skeptical at first. But after spending 2 years at the Academy, I can't imagine my life any other way.

The Academy was hard. I was challenged. I learned so much and got to partake in so many activities that would never be an option at any other school. The way the Academy operates is completely different than any public school. The knowledge I gained and the opportunities I were given were priceless.

Because of the Academy, I found out what I wanted to do with my life. It was one elective class that I took in aeronautics that guided me to where I am now. Because of the Academy's status in the NCSSSMST (is that too many letters?? haha), I was able to get a \$50,000 scholarship to Florida Institute of Technology where I majored in Aviation Management with Flight. I graduated with honors and am also an Instrument rated Commercial pilot for single and multi engine land aircraft. And now I'm an Aviation Planner in Honolulu for one of the country's top architecture firms.

The Academy gives people so many opportunities that they would never get from other schools. I would've never gotten that scholarship or became interested in aeronautics if it weren't for the Academy. Transitioning to college was easy because I had already done it my senior year in highschool. There are tons of teens in the state of Massachusetts right this minute that are miserable in school because they can't live up to all their potential. To take the Academy away would crush opportunities and dreams. I know that if it weren't for the Academy, I wouldn't be as successful, hard working, and dedicated as I am today.

Jun Qi says:

April 13, 2009 at 10:12 pm

Hi, my name is Jun Qi. I graduated from Massachusetts Academy in 2008. I believe Mass. Academy is the place that provided me the best education. During my junior year, I took the research seminar and technical writing courses, which I spent about 100 hours on a research project. I considered the research seminar course as a worthwhile experience because I learnt so many great lessons from it. I learnt how to narrow down research topic, discover ways to search scholarly and non-scholarly articles for my topic, conduct research, and finally generate a professional academic report and presentation to community. Currently, as a freshman at college, I am still using the knowledge I have learned from the research seminar project to conduct my other researches. I believe without the great education from Mass Academy, I wouldn't be doing a great job at College today.

I believe Mass. Academy is the place where I met my closest friends and the nicest teachers. Our class of 2008 consisted of 47 students. We did everything together as a family. We conducted experiments together, ate meals together, laughed together, enjoyed life together, and eventually survived together. I clearly remembered the first day when I meet all of them. Most of them become my close friends who I can trust and keep in touch during my entire life time. I still remembered the briarwood events, the field trips and food projects we had completed together. There wouldn't be another high school like Mass Academy that could provide students a 360 degree of fun learning experience. Here, all I can say is "I Love Massachusetts Academy," and I will always be there to support the school whenever it needs help from me.

Nathan Williams says:

April 12, 2009 at 9:08 pm

My name is Nathan Williams and I graduated from the Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science at WPI in 2007. My sending school had very limited resources and a severely laid-back, unproductive atmosphere that greatly impeded my ability to learn and grow. Then, I heard about Mass Academy two years before I could even apply, and was already waiting to go. I lived 45 miles away from the Academy and rarely traveled anywhere; but, even after my first visit, I realized it was well worth going the distance. Once at Mass Academy, my educational experiences improved exponentially. Junior year at the Academy offered a unique, challenging environment and approach to learning through hands-on independent and collaborative thinking. We learned to manage our time and energy efficiently, allowing us to learn and apply an immense amount of new knowledge. My classmates were all bright, highly motivated, and surprisingly

interested in the same nerdy things I was – something quite different from my sending school. I quickly made friends with almost everyone in my class and felt a powerful bond between all of us in our little community unlike anything I had experienced before. Junior year really helped me evolve socially and academically, and set the stage for what was about to happen next.

During my senior year at Mass Academy, I took an opportunity to do some research outside the classroom with one of my professors at WPI. We analyzed the geology of Hawaii through the new medium of Google Earth, using the computer programming skills I had learned during my junior year. The professor and I presented this research to the American Geophysical Union and the Geological Society of America, while I was still technically a high school student! Then, when I applied to Cornell University, a member of the Ivy League and my dream school for my undergraduate studies, I was accepted as a Jacobs Scholar – the highest award offered by Cornell’s College of Engineering – because of the impressive background and experience the Academy gave me. Less than two weeks after arriving on campus as a freshman, I began analyzing InSAR and MODIS satellite imagery alongside grad students as a top-level student research assistant, in addition to a full schedule of classes. This research transitioned into modeling plate tectonics-related ground deformation via GPS networks in southern California, which I presented and discussed at the Southern California Earthquake Center’s 2008 Annual Meeting in Palm Springs, CA.

After meeting a contact through my InSAR and GPS research, I began working on the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter Camera team and am now eagerly awaiting the satellite’s launch to the Moon from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida this summer! My task is to find and enter targets to photograph and then analyze the new data it transmits once in lunar orbit, in an attempt to better describe lunar origin and evolution. When I was younger, I dreamed about doing research like this and sharing that new, fascinating knowledge with the rest of the world. Now, I am well on my way to a successful career researching geology and astronomy as a professor in academia. If it were not for Mass Academy, none of this would have been possible.

I am greatly saddened by the possibility of Mass Academy closing due to budget cuts, as that would deny similarly exceptional experiences and opportunities to other deserving students that they otherwise would not have. Mass Academy offers its students a unique chance to learn and excel alongside other brilliant and motivated students in a super-productive and encouraging atmosphere unlike anywhere else. Without a doubt, the Academy has played an enormous role in my success thus far, and I urge the State of Massachusetts to fully fund Mass Academy and thus continue to give worthy students the opportunity to succeed at the Academy and in the world beyond.

Tiffiniy Cheng says:

April 13, 2009 at 7:58 am

I graduated from Mass Academy in 1998. I don't know anyone who I went to school with who was not effected by the broad, analytical, constructivist approach to solving professional, academic, personal, cultural, political, etc. issues that we have taken on since graduating from Mass Academy. It's clear to me that I, myself, and my friends from Mass Academy have taken on solving huge problems in the world because we developed a consciousness of being able to and that there was a way to solve complex, difficult issues.

Marie Savignac says:

April 14, 2009 at 8:47 pm

I am a graduate of the class of 2001. Applying to and attending the Mass. Academy was one of the best decisions I've made. I came from a large regional high school with a class of 500 to a class of less than 50. Please excuse the bad cliché, but at my sending school, I felt like a small fish in a big pond and felt lost. At the Academy, I found confidence in myself and my ability to succeed in whatever I decided to do in life. Teachers at the Academy challenged me to do better and were always encouraging, never evaluating us against fellow students. Although I went on to pursue a business degree (B.S. Business Administration, Babson College), I believe the skills I learned and experiences I had at the Academy laid the foundation for my professional achievements. To be successful in any field, you must always strive to be better, a lesson I learned well at the Academy.

Parent Letters

Laurel King says:

April 17, 2009 at 7:28 am

Letter to be sent to Rep. Robert DeLeo later today:

Allow me to tell you about something that Massachusetts is doing right. Along with Worcester Polytechnic Institute, the legislature has been funding Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science, an 11th and 12th grade high school for academically accelerated students. My son is fortunate to be a junior at Mass Academy. The Academy has helped him evolve from a student of untapped potential into an engaged scholar with strong connections to his school and community.

Mass Academy students participate in high-level studies and conduct real research; they don't simply process information to pass a test. Besides the rigorous course work in mathematical modeling, applied physics, computer science, engineering, Spanish, humanities, and technical/scientific writing, this year my son participated in a Harvard/MIT math meet, a Fitchburg State computer science competition, a 48-hour national math challenge, and a DuPont essay competition. At the regional science fair, he won a Naval Research award for his project on artificial intelligence and swarm theory. "I know grad students who couldn't handle that level of programming," a WPI grad student in computer science told him. Next month my son will compete in the state science fair at MIT. Last year, without the support of Mass Academy, he didn't even qualify for the regional fair.

The educators at Mass Academy know that talented students require strong connections with peers and teachers in order to reach their full potential. The collegial atmosphere of the Academy fosters these bonds. Juniors frequently work together in small groups; they do not compete with each other for class rank, but instead challenge each other to put forth their best efforts, as they work toward common goals. The parent/teacher conference I attended at Mass Academy was unlike any other I've been to. I sat down with all six of my child's teachers and was amazed to discover how well they knew my reticent son and just what he needed to flourish academically and socially.

As with academics, community service is conducted at a high level at Mass Academy. Service learning is directly built into the Academy's engineering curriculum. My son's group of four is currently designing a device to help a child with cerebral palsy write. Students also carry out individual community service projects that must pass stringent requirements and be approved by the principal. In my son's case, he attended training sessions at Tufts Vet School in Grafton and tested to become a registered Pet Partner, qualified to visit nursing homes, hospitals, and schools. He and our Golden Retriever currently volunteer at a Worcester nursing home and have made special connections with residents who have lost the ability for traditional social interaction. My son would never have taken on this challenge without the Academy behind him.

My son is just one of the talented Mass Academy juniors who have already begun to enrich the communities where they live and learn. If these high school juniors can accomplish this much in their first year, just think what they can do their last year when they take all their classes at WPI. Then, think what it means if Mass Academy loses its funding, and please put Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science back in the 2010 House budget. As you make your difficult decisions, remember that if the Academy closes, it is not just these current students and future gifted students who will feel the loss. The loss of what they might have accomplished will ripple throughout Massachusetts communities, businesses and the high tech industry for years to come.

Dear Mr. DeLeo,

You may have already read many emails and fielded phone calls from parents, teachers and other concerned folks about the possible funding cut for MA Academy of Math and Science.

As a parent of a junior in the academy I would like to humbly add my voice and request you to take a few minutes to review the excellent education and leadership skills this school is imparting to an extremely talented and motivated student body - <http://www.savetheacademy.org>.

I cannot believe that to save \$1.2 Million annually, we the people of MA will let a institution as unique and important as the MA Academy of Math and Science cease to exist! We all know times are tough and sacrifices and difficult decisions have to be made but denying funding for a school such as this, in my opinion, will be extremely unfortunate and deny our great state the ability to nurture and grow the leaders of tomorrow.

I can understand that you must be getting hundreds if not thousands of appeals from various organizations and people about changes in funding to their respective causes and decision making should be fraught with a lot of angst, all we request is that you take a hard, close look at MA Academy of Math and Science and am sure you will be convinced that this is one of the best investments the state is making for its future.

Thank your time and consideration,

Srinivas Bhopal

Pete Lane says:

April 16, 2009 at 4:38 am

Our daughter is class of 1997. I think one of the biggest things she got out of Mass Academy is the realization that it's OK for a girl to be smart.

Jean Gonynor says:

April 12, 2009 at 9:31 am

I am the parent of a Mass Academy alum. Here is a letter I sent to my legislators:

I reside in Acton and am writing to you regarding the threat of closure of the Massachusetts Academy of Mathematics and Science at WPI in Worcester due

to budget cuts. In case you are not familiar with Mass Academy, it opened 17 years ago near the campus of WPI and has been a tremendous resource to highly able students in math and science. It accepts students residing in Massachusetts for the junior and senior year of high school and offers them a very challenging curriculum that includes the opportunity to complete the high school senior year alongside WPI students. These students have gone on to incredible levels of achievement. Many would not have found the same level of success without Mass Academy, since their families are of lesser means and could not have afforded private education for them.

My son Jon is a 2005 graduate of Mass Academy. We are one of those families of “lesser means”. I am proud to say that Jon is graduating next month with two bachelor’s degrees from a highly ranked engineering school. I cannot stress enough how important a role Mass Academy played in his success. When Jon first went to Mass Academy, he had an “edge”, which was the result of years of feeling like a misfit in the traditional academic setting. Although he was excelling academically, he was miserable socially and not adequately challenged.

I will never forget my first parent-teacher conference at Mass Academy. Jon’s teachers talked about how they had identified that defensive “edge” in him and were thrilled to watch him shed it as he truly found himself among a group of classmates that were like-minded and equally motivated and curious. He truly blossomed there. I cried on the way home from that conference because I knew he was finally happy, fitting in with his peers and getting what he needed academically from an incredible group of educators that seemed to care as much about him as I did. I implore you to do what you can to save this program so that highly able students like my son can find the path that allows them to shed their defenses and give their gifts to the world.

Jean Gonynor

Friend Letters

Julia Nasrani-Wildfong says:

April 15, 2009 at 11:34 am

Copy of an email I sent this morning to senate president T. Murray:

Dear Senate President Murray, 4/15/09

As I see it Massachusetts has two big problems – a struggling education system and the economic downturn. Eliminating, as opposed to investing in, an excellent school for talented students in math and science will only further aggravate these problems. The students at Mass Academy of Math and Science/WPI public school are exceedingly bright and will be the ones to solve many of our problems through their innovations. Students here regularly create and research solutions

for pressing problems such as developing alternative energy sources and engineering devices to help the disabled.

At the moment, I am sitting in my classroom with 8 students who are designing workshops for an outreach program called "SPLISH" for middle schoolers. They will be presenting seminars in order to fuel interest in math and science.

I just asked them to call out some of the projects they worked on this year so I could include them in this email.

Small Scale Solar Thermal Electrical Chemical Fuel Generator – cogeneration system - Ross and Ryan Lagoy (these brothers made this device out of some fire extinguishers along with copper tubing, stainless steel and wood.) You should see it – it is amazing.

Medication list entry yielder – Robert Le (he wrote a computer program for this for doctors to organize prescriptions and their possible side effects)

Fueling the future: Comparing the viability of invasive plants as ethanol fuel – Mary Devlin

Some of their engineering projects this term include:

Creating a device to help an individual woman with MS zip up her coat

Devices to help the elderly with arthritis

Each one of these students sitting here also does regular community service each week in addition to their research projects and rigorous class work.

The above information is only a small sample of activities from the 8 students who happen to be in my room right now! You should see what the rest of these guys are doing. In their sending schools, they would have neither the opportunity nor the support to do such things because there are simply too many other students to educate in typical public school settings.

Special education should include everyone who does not fit into the traditional school setting. We spend millions on special education programs and services – and rightly so. However, it is wrong and discriminatory to only include those at one end of the spectrum.

This country and the rest of the world is in danger because of unwise investments. This is an opportunity to make a good investment that will yield Massachusetts many economic returns in the near future.

China or Japan would not think of cutting such a program. That's why they are outperforming us at every turn.

I implore you to read some of the stories posted on the following site created by a former student. I know you are busy and I know others are vying for money but I

guarantee that Massachusetts would suffer economically in the long term by cutting out this public school. Math and Science innovations drive the economy of Massachusetts. Just look at the growing field of biotech.

<http://savetheacademy.org/>

Respectfully,

Julia Nasrani-Wildfong
Wildfong@wpi.edu

Incidentally, the faculty here all provide outreach programs and workshops for other teachers in this state and sometimes on a national/international level. We are a source of education innovation for other school systems in the state! Working at other public schools, we would not have the support or time to do this.

Selim Tanriverdi says:
April 12, 2009 at 2:56 pm

Hi, I'm Selim. I was looking to apply to this school next year. Currently I am a freshman in Algonquin Regional High School. My friend I met through FIRST robotics goes to the school. I have heard so much about the great opportunities there and was really interested in applying. So much as to set my sophomore schedule to take 2 math courses in a single year to apply there. I was shocked by the news when my friend had told me that the school would be pretty much dying over the summer. I'm here writing to help along with all these students, and parents to help the school stay alive. I feel very bad for all the people at the school. I hope that this effort helps the school survive.

Adam Skolnick says:
April 12, 2009 at 6:12 am

My wife was graduated from the Mass Academy and often speaks of how it changed her life. She has a passion for scientific research. She is now pursuing a Ph.D. in biology and developed her interest in research at a young age because of her training at the Mass Academy. If not for the teachers and experience at the Mass Academy, she may not have pursued her chosen career path.

At a time when the United States has fallen behind the rest of the industrialized world in math and science, we need a strong commitment to schools like this to bolster our educational system in these critical areas. Too many high schools fail to inspire our young people to dream and pursue the rigorous training required to excel. If we are to lead in the future, we must invest in our children's education in

math and science today. In our list of priorities as a nation, I can think of no cause more worthy, no cause more pressing, no cause more fundamental to the future of our economy than support for the Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science.

Judith Sumner says:
April 17, 2009 at 7:08 am

Here is the comment that I left for the 4/16 Boston Globe article “State’s Bold New Vision for Education”

This article mentions “partnerships with universities” as part of the bold new vision for education in the Commonwealth. Yet such a model already exists in the Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science at WPI, a school founded by the Massachusetts legislature seventeen years ago. MAMS provides a superior education in math, science, technology, as well as the liberal arts for one hundred grade 11 and 12 students drawn from many communities. Nevertheless, the continuation of remarkable school is in jeopardy: MAMS funding is excluded from the current House budget.

Governor Patrick should visit the Academy to see what is already in place and functioning successfully in the Commonwealth. Current MAMS seniors are on their way to top-tier colleges and universities, and generations of MAMS alumni are working as successful professionals—in engineering, medicine, military science, R+D, and other fields. MAMS graduates will help to rebuild the economy of Massachusetts. The bottom line: we need this school now more than ever.

Incidentally, in terms of standardized testing, MAMS students earn both the highest SAT and MCAS scores statewide. However, the real value of the school is in the educational model and opportunities that it provides.

It would be nothing short of legislative malpractice to let this school close as a casualty of the 2010 budget.

Dawn Davies says:
April 13, 2009 at 7:25 am

Hi, I have always looked at MAMS as the best of what public education in Massachusetts could be. While I have no children old enough to attend MAMS, it is very important that MAMS remain a resource in our community. A need-blind institution supporting hard work and commitment, it provides for all students, whether attending or not, a goal to aspire to.

If I can help this outstanding community in any way, let me know.