

**Mississippi State University
Request for Proposals (RFP) 20-98
Comprehensive Academic Advising, Transfer Articulation, and
Degree Audit System for Mississippi State University**

ISSUE DATE: October 12, 2020

ISSUING AGENCY: Office of Procurement and Contracts

Mississippi State University
610 McArthur Hall
245 Barr Avenue
Mississippi State, MS 39762

Sealed Proposals, subject to the conditions made a part hereof, will be received **November 10, 2020 at 2:00 PM in the MSU Office of Procurement and Contracts, same address above**, for furnishing services and potentially, optional services as described herein.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Indicate firm name, and RFP number on the front of each sealed proposal envelope or package.

All inquiries concerning this RFP should be directed to:

Jennifer Mayfield
Office of Procurement and Contracts, (Same address above)
jmayfield@procurement.msstate.edu
662-325-2550

Any addendum associated with this RFP will be posted at <http://www.procurement.msstate.edu/procurement/bids/index.php> located under RFP 20-98. It is the respondent's responsibility to assure that all addenda have been reviewed and if applicable, signed and returned.

1. UNIVERSITY OVERVIEW

Mississippi State University (MSU) is a comprehensive land grant university of 21,500+ students and approximately 5,000 faculty and staff. The main campus is located adjacent to the community of Starkville in northeast Mississippi, with a remote campus located in Meridian with an enrollment of around 700 students. Additionally, the university operates several remote agricultural experiment stations and has an Extension office located in each of the eighty-two Mississippi counties.

Additional information about MSU can be found at our website www.msstate.edu.

2. INVITATION TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL ON RFP

The Mississippi State University Office of the Registrar seeks a web-based comprehensive academic advising, transfer articulation and degree audit system that will enable students and their advisors to successfully negotiate MSU's curriculum requirements. This solution must be fully-integrated with Ellucian's Banner Student Information System.

The solution must provide powerful academic planning tools and real-time counseling capabilities that create efficiencies and foster personal interactions between advisors and students. The solution provides aggregate for senior administrators with metrics for planning future term course offerings, streamlining processes for efficient cost management, and keeping with national higher education standards.

The solution provides students with a web interface to navigate complex degree requirements, helping them find the most effective path to graduation. MSU will be able to define general education, major, minor and concentration requirements. Students and advisors can track mandated competencies, courses and test scores with direct access to web-based worksheets and related hyperlinks to catalog information, class schedules, and transcripts.

The transfer equivalency system must provide an easy-to-use administrative tool for mapping courses and processing transcripts, along with a self-service tool for transfer students to self-articulate their own course work. The web-based tool will allow administrators to define articulation agreements from transfer institutions, process transfer transcripts, articulate classes, display audits, etc. The course mappings may be entered into the administrative tool or may be imported automatically from the Banner student system.

3. SCOPE OF SERVICES REQUIRED

a) Technical Requirements

The following requirements are absolute minimums that a vendor and their proposed software solution must meet. If these requirements are not met, the proposal will be removed from consideration. The vendor must provide a detailed description of how each of these requirements will be met by the solution.

- Vendor must be an Ellucian Banner collaborative development partner
- Integration with Banner SIS
- Support major browsers, specifically IE, Firefox, Safari, and Chrome
- Integrate with University's authentication system, CAS or Shibboleth
- Web-based login/access with VPN
- Solution must provide for mobile capability.
- Solution must provide both a test and a solution environment with capability to transition objects between both.

b) Users

- There must be no restrictions on the number of users in the system.
- Administrative update pages are intuitive and easy to use.
- Administrative users can record course equivalency updates individually or in batches. Administrative users can update course and program data manually as needed with the least number of key strokes.
- Provide narrative and/or screen captures that demonstrate the level of staff effort required to update and maintain course equivalency and program articulation data.
- The secure administrative site or dashboard is available only to approved users.
- Solution allows administrative users to share articulation data with specific individuals or groups while restricting access to end users. (ex. tiered security prevents administrative users from altering course and articulation data from other institutions.)
- Describe access and controls of administrative users.
- Solution allows institution administrative users authority to control when course and credit articulation data and notes or comments are published. For example, as new articulations are added, to be effective the next academic year, an administrative user can set a "control" to publish articulation data at the beginning of that year.
- Describe publishing controls of administrative users.
- Users should be required to log into the solution through the Central Authentication Service (CAS).

c) **Reporting/Forms, Custom Fields, Files**

- Standard Administrative Reports
 - Solution provides standard administrative reports such as, but not limited to the reports listed below.
 - Provide a list and description, and include samples, of all standard administrative reports included with the Solution license.
 - Changes in Course Equivalencies. Report aggregates changes as new course, retired course, no changes, changes. In each category, lists course(s) affected, includes indication of what has changed such a prefix change or credit hour change signaling substantive curriculum change.
 - Changes in Program Requirements. Report aggregate changes as new program, discontinued program, no change, changes. In each category, lists changes to course(s) and related requirements.
- Customized Administrative Reports - MSU administrative users can export delimited data from software system tables for purposes of creating customized reports.
 - Describe how administrative users can create customized reports and provide samples, if available, including the ability to write queries from the solution's database(s).
 - Provide a list and samples of customized administrative reports created for other Vendor customers, if available.
- Printable Results - Search results and end user and administrative user reports are printer friendly and exportable as delimited data or pdf. Provide sample of printable reports.

d) **Function**

- Describe in detail the system's degree audit features.
- Please specifically address the following questions:
 - How does the system identify students who are eligible for graduation?
 - How does the system handle concurrent and multiple degrees?
 - How does the system handle exceptions, substitutions and waivers and how these are updated? How are students notified of changes?
 - How are "what if" situations handled in your degree audit program?
 - Does the system automatically certify a degree and how?
 - Does the system produce diplomas?
- Solution integrates directly with Ellucian's Banner student information systems. The integration process requires no level of development needed from MSU staff.
- The university will not be required to purchase additional software.
- Describe steps involved in the integration process.
 - The data import process does not require university user or IT intervention.

- The import process can include metadata (ex. catalog descriptions, program descriptions) associated with courses or programs.
- Once set up, import processes are automated.
- Subsequent import cycles identify changes made since the last upload date such as new classes and deleted classes.
- Integrate with University's authentication system, CAS or Shibboleth. Describe single sign-on integration, if option is available.
- Provide narrative and/or screen captures to demonstrate Solution is fully web-based:
 - Solution is viable on mobile devices.
 - Solution is accessible as a stand-alone website.
 - Solution portal can be incorporate into the institutional website.
- The look and feel of the solution's web interface or landing page can be customizable to reflect MSU branding
- MSU can update static content on solution pages with no involvement of Vendor.
- As part of the migration to a Degree Audit system, MSU may require the following scribing services.
 - Please provide examples of scribing techniques used and end-user training allowing the university to continue to scribe with little or no involvement of Vendor.
 - Initial deployment may include Vendor to scribe some number of years of catalogs. Please provide detailed cost estimate for services required to scribe MSU's current catalog, plus one to two previous years. Also detail costs and methods for training MSU staff to scribe and note what support would be available to MSU staff as they scribe.

e) **System Maintenance and Support**

- The vendor must provide details of system and software requirements.
- The vendor should include initial training and provide additional training as needed.
- The vendor must provide email and phone support in addition to a trouble ticket system.
- The vendor must provide details for maintenance, support, and problem escalation procedures.
- System must be secure and meet all local, state and federal data security standards.
- The vendor must provide the implementation plan and process.
- Provide applicable certifications such as SOC2 documentation
- Provide product interfaces that are compliant with WCAG 2.0 AA.
- Provide a completed Higher Education Cloud Vendor Assessment Tool (HECVAT) (lite version available at: <https://www.ren-isac.net/public-resources/hecvat.html>)

4. INQUIRIES ABOUT RFP

Prospective respondents may make written inquiries concerning this request for proposal to obtain clarification of requirements. **Questions should be submitted either via a Word document or plainly typed in the email itself.** Responses to these inquiries may be made by addendum to the Request for Proposal (RFP). Please send your inquiries to Jennifer Mayfield via electronic mail at jmayfield@procurement.msstate.edu.

All inquiries should be marked “URGENT INQUIRY. MSU RFP 20-98”

5. ADDENDUM OR SUPPLEMENT TO RFP

In the event it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP, an addendum to this RFP will be provided to each respondent who received the original RFP. Respondents shall not rely on any other interpretations, changes or corrections.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

a) Issuing Office

This RFP is issued by the following office:

Office of Procurement and Contracts
Mississippi State University
245 Barr Avenue, 610 McArthur Hall
Mississippi State, MS 39762

b) Schedule of Critical Dates

The following dates are for planning purposes only unless otherwise stated in this RFP progress towards their completion is at the sole discretion of the university.

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| RFP Posted | October 12, 2020 |
| Questions from Vendors Due | October 23, 2020 |
| MSU Q&A Response Due | October 30, 2020 |
| Proposal Submission Deadline – 2:00 p.m. | November 10, 2020 |
| Award Date (Estimated) | December 1, 2020 |
| Contract Effective Date (Estimated) | February 1, 2020 |

7. PROPOSAL CONTENTS

This is a two-step RFP process. The technical proposals and the cost proposals are to be submitted in separate sealed envelopes. Indicate firm name, RFP# and word “Technical Proposal” on the front of the sealed technical proposal envelope or package. Indicate the firm name, RFP# and the word “Cost Proposal” on the front of the sealed proposal envelope or package.

At a minimum, the following items should be included in the contents of the Technical Proposal:

- Cover letter, indicating the scope of the proposal. The letter should include an overview of the services being offered. The letter should include a statement of exceptions to any of the terms and conditions outlined in this RFP. (Cover letter should be no more than 3 pages in length.)
- Corporate Structure and Credentials
 - Number of years of experience
 - Staffing levels and support proposed
 - Examples of similar previous work.
- Operations and Ability To Perform
 - Provide operation plan. This should include, but not be limited to, acknowledgement and agreement with all requirements as well as explanations, where applicable, of the intended plan to achieve the requirements.
 - Describe how services will be provided to MSU.

At a minimum, the following items should be included in the contents of the Cost Proposal:

- Fees for initial purchase of software/items/service (including all preparation, installation, rollout, training and first year maintenance and support)
- Annual Maintenance Costs after initial purchase.
- Pricing for any optional modules should be included but itemized, as should pricing for scribing or requirements.

8. DISCUSSIONS/EVALUATION CRITERIA/AWARD PROCESS

MSU reserves the right to conduct discussions with any or all respondents, or to make an award of a contract without such discussions based only on evaluation of the written proposals. MSU reserves the right to contact and interview anyone connected with any past or present projects with which the respondent has been associated. MSU likewise reserves the right to designate a review committee to evaluate the proposals according to the criteria set forth under this section. MSU may make a written determination showing the basis upon which the award was made and such determination shall be included in the procurement file.

MSU reserves the right to award this contract in whole or in part depending on what is in the best interest of MSU with MSU being the sole judge thereof.

The evaluation factors set forth in this section are described as follows:

- The Vendor's ability to deliver an application meeting the overall objective and functions described in the RFP
- Competitive fees
- Availability and access technical support
- Vendor's experience with similar systems
- Compliance with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations
- The committee may invite finalists for interviews and/or presentations

Failure to attend a requested interview presentation before the committee may result in a proposal not being considered.

Upon award of contract(s), successful respondent(s) will be asked to provide a transition plan and timeline and obtain MSU's input and concurrence before moving forward.

Proposals will be scored based on the following weights (100 points total):

- Corporate Structure/Years of Experience/References – 25 pts
- Operation Plan/Ease of Use/Services Offered – 50 pts
- Fees – 25 pts.

9. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposals shall be submitted in two packages (envelopes or boxes) as set forth in Section 7. Please make sure that the RFP number is clearly visible on the outside of the package.

Technical Proposal – One (1) original and one (1) electronic copy (of the complete technical proposal in one pdf file on a flash drive) of parts 7(b)(i) (Cover Letter), 7(b)(ii) (Corporate Structure and Credentials), and 7(b)(iii) (Operations and Ability to Perform) should be sealed in a package with “Technical Proposal” in the lower left hand corner. Each submitted package should be a complete copy. The original shall be marked on the first page “Original”.

Cost Proposal – One (1) original and one (1) electronic copy (of the complete cost proposal in one pdf file on a flash drive). Should be sealed in a package with “Cost Proposal” in the lower left-hand corner. Each submitted package should be a complete copy. The original shall be marked on the first page “Original”.

The proposal package must be received on or before **2:00 p.m. on November 10, 2020**. It is the responsibility of the respondent to ensure that the proposal package arrives in the Procurement and Contracts office on-time. The proposal package should be delivered or sent by mail to:

**Office of Procurement and Contracts
Mississippi State University
610 McArthur Hall
245 Barr Avenue
Mississippi State, MS 39762**

Your response must include the signature page included in this RFP (See Appendix A) and contain the signature of an authorized representative of the respondent's organization. The signature on the "Original" signature page should be in blue ink.

MSU reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive informalities and minor irregularities in proposals received and to accept any portion of a proposal or all items bid if deemed in the best interest of the University to do so.

Proposals received after the stated due date and time will be returned unopened. Submission via facsimile or other electronic means will not be accepted.

10. PCI COMPLIANCE ISSUES (IF APPLICABLE)

The vendor must provide a PCI compliant processing environment using one of the approved options below. If the vendor is unable to fully adhere to one of these options, the proposal will be removed from consideration.

- **Option 1** – Integrate with MSU's existing third-party solution (NelNet Business Solutions – Commerce Manager), because all hardware, software and back end processing have been vetted and credit/debit card payments are automatically posted to Banner.
- **Option 2** – Use alternative third-party solution. Use a different MSU Merchant ID but same bank account.
 - Work with members of MSU's PCI Council and third-party PCI Compliance consultant to review business needs and proposed solution.
 - Ensure card transactions processed by university personnel are performed using a PCI-validated point to point encrypted (P2PE) solution. The solution must be listed on the PCI council's website (<https://www.pcisecuritystandards.org>), must not be expired, and devices to be used with the solution must have a PIN

transaction security (PTS) expiration date at least 3 years past the date of installation.

- Obtain the following solution information
 - Attestation of compliance (AoC) from all parties involved in handling or that affect the security of cardholder data.
 - Verify that all devices have a current PTS certification and have an expiration date at least 3 years past the installation date of the solution.
 - Obtain a data flow diagram showing where payment card data will be introduced to the proposed solution and all steps/hops it will take until payment information is delivered to the merchant processing bank. This will determine all of the service providers that must provide an AoC.
 - Require specific reporting requirements and interfaces to support Banner integration and automatic posting of credit/debit card payments to the ERP. The exact file layout will be provided upon request.
- **Option 3** – Use alternative third-party solution. Use vendor’s Merchant ID.
 - Work with members of MSU’s PCI Council and third-party PCI Compliance consultant to review the solution.
 - Ensure card transactions processed by university personnel are performed using a PCI-validated point to point encrypted (P2PE) solution. The solution must be listed on the PCI council’s website (<https://www.pcisecuritystandards.org>), must not be expired, and devices to be used with the solution must have a PIN transaction security (PTS) expiration date at least 3 years past the date of installation.
 - Obtain the following solution information
 - Attestation of compliance (AoC) from all parties involved in handling or that affect the security of cardholder data.
 - Verify that all devices have a current PTS certification and have an expiration date at least 3 years past the installation date of the solution.
 - Obtain a data flow diagram showing where payment card data will be introduced to the proposed solution and all steps/hops it will take until payment information is delivered to the merchant processing bank. This will determine all of the service providers that must provide an AoC.
 - Payments due MSU will be remitted on a predetermined basis, net of all applicable fees and merchant discounts. Banner integration not required.

11. TWO-PHASE, BEST AND FINAL OFFER

If the initial proposals do not provide MSU with a clear and convincing solution, or if MSU feels it is appropriate to offer the potential providers an opportunity to submit revised proposals, MSU reserves the right to use a two-phase approach and/or invite Best and Final Offers (BAFO). Based on the information obtained through the proposal submittals (Phase-One), MSU may choose a specific business model, and potential providers may be asked to submit revised proposals based upon that specific model.

The evaluation committee may develop, for distribution to the top-ranked firms, refined written terms with specific information on what is being requested as a result of information obtained through initial RFP submittal process. Proposers may be asked to reduce cost or provide additional clarification to specific sections of the RFP. Selected proposers are not required to submit a BAFO and may submit a written response notifying the solicitation evaluation committee that their response remains as originally submitted.

12. TERM OF CONTRACT

It is MSU's intention to enter into a four (4) year contract, estimated to begin February 1, 2021.

MSU reserves the right to terminate this agreement with thirty (30) days-notice, by the Director of Procurement and Contracts via certified mail to the address listed on the signature page of this RFP (See Appendix A) if any of the terms of the proposal and/or contract are violated.

In the event the contractor fails to carry out and comply with any of the conditions and agreements to be performed under the specifications, MSU will notify the contractor, in writing, of such failure or default. In the event the necessary corrective action has not been completed within a ten (10) day period, the contractor must submit, in writing, why such corrective action has not been performed. The University reserves the right to determine whether or not such noncompliance may be construed as a failure of performance of the contractor.

Termination of contract by contractor without cause can only occur with at least one-hundred and twenty (120) days-notice prior to the proposed termination of the contract.

In the event MSU employs attorneys or incurs other expenses it considers necessary to protect or enforce its rights under this contract, the contractor agrees to pay the attorney's fees and expenses so incurred by MSU.

13. ACCEPTANCE TIME

Proposal shall be valid for one-hundred and eighty (180) days following the proposal due date.

14. RFP CANCELLATION

This RFP in no manner obligates MSU to the eventual purchase of any services described, implied or which may be proposed until confirmed by a written contract. Progress towards this end is solely at the discretion of MSU and may be terminated without penalty or obligations at any time prior to the signing of a contract. MSU reserves the right to cancel this RFP at any time, for any reason, and to reject any or all proposals or any parts thereof.

15. INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR CLAUSE

The contractor shall acknowledge that an independent contractor relationship is established and that the employees of the contractor are not, nor shall they be deemed employees of MSU and that employees of MSU are not, nor shall they be deemed employees of the contractor.

16. OTHER CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

Award Terms: This contract shall be awarded at the discretion of the University based on the capabilities and overall reputation of the Supplier, as well as the cost. Acceptance shall be confirmed by the issuance of a contract from the University.

Standard Contract: The awarded contractor(s) will be expected to enter into a contract that is in substantial compliance with MSU's standard contract http://www.procurement.msstate.edu/pdf/standard_rfp_contract.pdf. Proposal should include any desired changes to the standard contract. It should be noted that there are many clauses which the MSU cannot change (see Standard Addendum <http://www.procurement.msstate.edu/contracts/standardaddendum.pdf>) Significant changes to the standard contract may be cause for rejection of a proposal.

The Procurement Process: The following is a general description of the process by which a firm will be selected to fulfill this Request for Proposal.

- Request for Proposals (RFP) is issued to prospective suppliers.
- A deadline for written questions is set.
- Proposals will be received as set forth in Section 9.
- Unsigned proposals will not be considered.
- All proposals must be received by MSU no later than the date and time specified on the cover sheet of this RFP.
- At that date and time, the package containing the proposals from each responding firm will be opened publicly and the name of each respondent will be announced.
- Proposal evaluation: The University will review each proposal.
- At their option, the evaluators may request oral presentations or discussions for the purpose of clarification or to amplify the materials presented in the proposal

- Respondents are cautioned that this is a request for proposals, not a request to contract, and the MSU reserves the unqualified right to reject any and all proposals when such rejection is deemed to be in the best interest of the University.
- The proposals will be evaluated according to the criteria set forth in Section 8.

APPENDIX A: SIGNATURE PAGE

Provide information requested, affix signature and return this page with your proposal:

NAME OF FIRM: _____

COMPLETE ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____

AREA CODE/NUMBER

FACSIMILE NUMBER: _____

AREA CODE/NUMBER

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

AUTHORIZED
SIGNATURE: _____

PRINTED NAME: _____

TITLE: _____