Mississippi State University
Request for Proposals (RFP)
RFP 25-47
AI-Based Platform for Curriculum Analysis

ISSUE DATE: May 1, 2025

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 **May 22, 2025 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:

Jay Rester
Office of Procurement and Contracts, (Same address above)
jrester@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 #RFPNUM#. 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 more than 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 serving approximately 700 students. The university also operates several remote agricultural experiment stations and maintains an Extension office in each of Mississippi's 82 counties.

This RFP is issued on behalf of the Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine (MSU-CVM).

The MSU College of Veterinary Medicine was established in 1974 and has since grown into one of the nation's leading veterinary institutions. It is fully accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Council on Education and offers a comprehensive curriculum that spans veterinary medical education, research, clinical services, and public outreach.

MSU-CVM trains approximately 440 professional veterinary students and numerous graduate students annually, offering a DVM degree, master's and doctoral programs, and advanced clinical training residencies. The college encompasses multiple departments including Comparative Biomedical Sciences, Clinical Sciences, and Pathobiology & Population Medicine. It operates the Animal Health Center—a full-service veterinary teaching hospital— and engages in cutting-edge biomedical and agricultural research supported by external grants and collaboration with industry and government partners.

MSU-CVM is committed to innovation in veterinary medical education and is pursuing advanced technology platforms to enhance its data integration, curriculum analytics, and decision support capabilities to further improve student outcomes, curriculum design, and program assessment.

More information about MSU can be found at www.msstate.edu, and about the College of Veterinary Medicine at www.vetmed.msstate.edu.

2. INVITATION TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL ON RFP

MSU-CVM is seeking proposals from qualified vendors for a scalable, off-the-shelf AI-based platform with Natural Language Understanding (NLU) capabilities. The platform will analyze and unify curricular and assessment content from multiple academic and administrative systems. The solution must support both structured and unstructured data sources and provide self-service analytics, curriculum intelligence, and enterprise-level data integration.

3. SCOPE OF SERVICES REQUIRED

The following requirements are the absolute minimum standards that a vendor and their proposed system must meet. Proposals that fail to meet these requirements will be removed from consideration. Vendors must provide a detailed description of how their system meets

each requirement.

i. General Requirements:

- **Scalability:** All use cases must be extendable for future integration with other academic systems and content sources.
- **Commercial Availability:** The proposed solution must be a mature, commercially available product already in use at other Colleges of Veterinary Medicine.
- **Security & Compliance:** The solution must comply with industry standards for security,

ii. Data Integration and Processing

- **Unified Data Consumption:** Ability to ingest and unify disparate data sources such as:
  - **MSU's Learning Management System** (Canvas)
  - **Lecture capture systems** (Mediasite)
- **Consumed Data Set:** Should include the current year and previous three academic years.
- **ETL Pipeline:** Fully automated **Extract, Transform, Load (ETL)** capabilities to prepare data for analytics without manual intervention.
- **Logical Layer:** An intelligent unified logical layer that supports streamlined key metrics, calculations, and institutional business rules.

iii. Advanced Analytics and AI Capabilities

- **NLU-Powered Search:** Must support **Natural Language Understanding search**, not simple keyword search, across content types such as:
  - PowerPoint presentations
  - Lecture capture video/audio
  - Faculty notes
  - PDF documents and eBooks within LMS or digital libraries
- **Semantic Data Mapping:** Time-saving, automated tagging of content using **Medical Subject Headings (MeSH)** terms.
- **Cross-Platform Analytics:** Ability to connect and analyze data from multiple platforms with readable and accessible outputs to end-users.
- **Unstructured Data Transformation:** Capability to convert unstructured content (e.g., lecture transcripts) into structured formats usable in reporting and dashboards.
- **Daily Content Indexing:** Platform must support **automated daily indexing** of content across all connected systems.
- **Data Relationships:** Ability to analyze and connect **billions of data points** for semantic, curricular, and performance analytics.

iv. User Experience & Reporting

- **Self-Service Tools:** Users must be able to create ad hoc reports, dashboards, and visualizations without relying on IT.

v. **Technical Requirements**

The following requirements are the absolute minimum standards that a vendor and their proposed system must meet. Proposals that fail to meet these requirements will be removed from consideration. Vendors must provide a detailed description of how their system meets each requirement.

To ensure compatibility, security, and efficiency, the system must include the following:
- **Cross-Browser Support** – The platform must support major web browsers, including Microsoft Edge, Firefox, Safari, and Chrome.
- **Cloud-Based SaaS Solution** – The system must be a hosted, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solution to ensure scalability, accessibility, and reliability.
- **Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI)** – The platform must integrate with Canvas via LTI for secure access.
- **Authentication, Single Sign-On (SSO), and Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) Support** – The system must integrate with MSU's authentication system, supporting CAS or Shibboleth for secure and seamless access. It must also support Single Sign-On (SSO) functionality and be fully compatible with MSU's Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) requirements to enhance security and streamline user access.

vi. **Users & Access Management**

User permissions and access to system functions must be role-based, allowing individuals to be assigned multiple roles as needed. These role-based permissions will govern each user's ability to add, edit, and view information within the system.

To ensure effective user access management, the system define role-based access for administrators, faculty, and staff.

vii. **System Maintenance and Support**

MSU requires a robust and reliable system maintenance and support structure to ensure seamless operation, security, and ongoing functionality of the system. The selected vendor must provide comprehensive installation, configuration, and training support to facilitate smooth implementation and effective long-term use. A train-the-trainer model is preferred, where designated MSU staff members receive in-depth training to enable them to educate end users across the institution.

To meet MSU's expectations for system maintenance and support, the vendor must address the following key areas:

- **Cloud-Based Infrastructure & Security** – The system must be cloud-based, with a strong data security and backup plan. Vendors should provide applicable security certifications, such as SOC2 and HECVAT Lite, to ensure compliance with industry standards.
- **Accessibility Standards –** Vendors should provide a completed Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) that covers all software user interfaces.
- **Software Updates & Upgrade Flexibility** – While the vendor is responsible for implementing system updates, MSU must have the ability to apply upgrades on its own timeline to align with institutional needs. Vendor must provide release notes and communicate upcoming changes to administrators, allowing MSU to prepare for new features and any necessary adjustments.
- **Training & User Support** – Initial training must be provided, with options for additional training as needed to support ongoing system use.
- **Comprehensive Support Structure** – The vendor must offer email and phone support.
- **Maintenance & Problem Escalation Procedures** – The vendor must clearly define the procedures for system maintenance, technical support, and problem escalation to facilitate prompt and effective issue resolution.
- **Regulatory Compliance** – The system must meet all applicable local, state, and federal data security standards to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.
- **Implementation Plan** – The vendor must provide a detailed implementation plan outlining the process, timeline, and key milestones for system deployment.

In addition to responding directly to the requests in this RFP, vendors are encouraged to propose alternatives that they believe are the best interests of both parties.

The initial contract is expected to span 24 months, covering system implementation, maintenance, and ongoing support. Vendors must provide details regarding licensing requirements, recurring costs, and any additional fees associated with continued technical support and system upkeep.

To ensure uninterrupted system performance, maintenance services must include access to product updates, patches, and security hotfixes at no additional cost beyond the agreed-upon maintenance fees. After the initial two-year period, support and maintenance costs will be reviewed annually and renewed based on performance and institutional needs.

As a valued customer, MSU requires an expedited process for high-priority issues, ensuring

prompt response times and swift resolution of critical concerns. The support system should provide real-time status updates, comprehensive case tracking, and seamless communication with vendor support teams to minimize disruptions and maintain operational efficiency.

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 Jay Rester via electronic mail at [jrester@procurement.msstate.edu.](jrester@procurement.msstate.edu)

All inquiries should be marked "URGENT INQUIRY. MSU RFP 25-47

5. 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	**May 1, 2025**
Questions from Vendors Due	**May 12, 2025**
MSU Q&A Response Due	**May 15, 2025**
Proposal Submission Deadline – 2:00 p.m.	**May 22, 2025**
Award Date (Estimated)	**June 5, 2025**
Contract Effective Date (Estimated)	**July 1, 2025**

6. 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 and any license or software fees per year after initial purchase.

7. 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 – 10 pts
- Operation Plan/Ease of Use/Services Offered – 60 pts
- Fees – 25 pts.
- Experience with other colleges of veterinary medicine – 5 pts

8. 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 May 22, 2025**. 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 <u>blue</u> 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.

9.   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.

- **<u>Option 1</u>** – 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.

- **<u>Option 2</u>** – Use alternative third-party solution. Use a different MSU Merchant ID but same bank account.

- o Work with members of MSU's PCI Council and third-party PCI Compliance consultant to review business needs and proposed solution.
- o 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.
- o Obtain the following solution information
- o Attestation of compliance (AoC) from all parties involved in handling or that affect the security of cardholder data.
- o 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.
- o 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.
- o 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.
  - o Work with members of MSU's PCI Council and third-party PCI Compliance consultant to review the solution.
  - o 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.
  - o Obtain the following solution information
  - o Attestation of compliance (AoC) from all parties involved in handling or that affect the security of cardholder data.
  - o 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.
  - o 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.

- o Payments due MSU will be remitted on a predetermined basis, net of all applicable fees and merchant discounts. Banner integration not required.

10. 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.

11. TERM OF CONTRACT

It is MSU's intention to enter a two (2) year contract, estimated to begin July 1, 2025 with an option to renew yearly for up to 6 total years. The total expenditures during the entire life of the contract and any renewals cannot exceed $249,999. The vendor will be required to monitor total costs to MSU over the life of this agreement and renewals and shall notify MSU when costs equal or exceed $200,000.

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.

12. ACCEPTANCE TIME

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

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. DISCLOSURE OF PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Proposals will be kept confidential until evaluations and award are completed by MSU. At that time, all proposals and documents pertaining to the proposals will be open to the public, except for material that is clearly marked proprietary or confidential.

IMPORTANT! The offeror/proposer should mark any and all pages of the proposal considered to be proprietary information which may remain confidential in accordance with Mississippi Code Annotated 25-61-9 and 79-23 1 (1972, as amended). Each page of the proposal that the proposer considers trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information should be on a different color paper than non-confidential pages and be marked in the upper right hand corner with the word "CONFIDENTIAL."

Failure to clearly identify trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information will result in that information being released subject to a public records request.

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 8.
- 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 7.

APPENDIX A: SIGNATURE PAGE

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

Name of Firm: _____

Complete Address: _____

_____

Telephone Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Authorized Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Title: _____