

# **Mississippi State University**

## **Notice of Proposed Sole Source Purchase**

**245-118**

Mississippi State University anticipates purchasing the item(s) listed below as a sole source purchase. Anyone objecting to this purchase shall follow the procedures outlined below.

**1. Commodity or commodities to be purchased (make, model, description):**

uConnect Virtual Career Center

**2. Explanation of the need to be fulfilled by this item(s), how is it unique from all other options, and why it is the only one that can meet the specific needs of the department:**

The Mississippi State University Career Center serves thousands of students and alumni representing all majors and degree levels. The Career Center is a centralized, comprehensive unit providing a diverse range of services to connect job seekers to employers and vice versa. uConnect is a career management and marketing platform that will help the Career Center leverage the resources, tools, and services they already have into one, online environment that enhances access and drives engagement. uConnect's powerful platform will help more efficiently engage faculty, attract employers, and collaborate with other departments on campus.

uConnect would enable the Career Center to provide all current and prospective students, alumni, and families with 24/7/365 highly scalable, self-guided career exploration experiences including up-to-date career data and resources, which is a limitation of the current operating structure. The platform would enhance the student experience by creating an updated career services hub, combining existing resources, such as Symplicity CSM and LinkedIn Learning, into a convenient source for information at any point in their career journey. Faculty and staff who support students would also have access to this resource, allowing them to integrate career readiness into their interactions with students in a meaningful way. This would aggregate career resources, events, and opportunities from across campus, and easily curate them for students based on industry, major, or identity. As such, uConnect is not simply 'another tool,' but rather functions as an integrative framework to engage stakeholders (prospective students, enrolled students, faculty, staff, employers, etc.) by creating an institutional hub for career content that markets services, curates resources, and personalizes direct-to-student communications university-wide.

Below are example services that make uConnect unique and differentiated:

A customized and natively branded website, incorporating each institution's digital

brand assets and website style guide to promote local career content and resources under the school's brand umbrella

Technical integrations with career services and student success subscription services already used on many college campuses

Self-service administrative dashboard for faculty and staff to publish local career content, resources and opportunities including events, employers, jobs and mentors

Marketing and student communication tools that fully integrate with the institutions communication policies and guidelines including branded templates, social media integrations, direct sync with student information and robust data management tools

Access to a proprietary portfolio of partner content to enable career service staff and students

Full range of IT support services including integrations with campus single sign-on and DNS, and systems requirements for accessibility and data security.

Managed platform onboarding, implementation and training

Minimum service level for platform maintenance, hosting and technical support

Customized taxonomy and data mapping based on each institutions naming conventions to optimize curation at the individual user level

Proprietary algorithms that map historically disaggregate student engagement with career outcome data to offer prescriptive recommendations for current and prospective students

**3. Name of company/individual selling the item and why that source is the only possible source that can provide the required item(s):**

uConnect is sole sourced because it offers a unique combination of tools to enable schools to promote their own local career content, resources and data on their own website, living on a custom domain and leveraging proprietary integrations with their existing campus systems and technologies. It would be unrealistic to create a look-alike and would not only be cost prohibitive, but would lack important functionality, including proprietary content integrations, email marketing, that is critical to achieving the desired customer outcomes.

Additionally, the requirement to support and maintain the platform would likely multiply the cost and complexity involved.

**4. Estimated cost of item(s) and an explanation why the amount to be expended is considered reasonable:**

The annual amount for this platform is \$35,000 per year. This price includes discounts for the platform for us to test modules at our campus; which includes a discount on the Classes module. These add-on modules will be evaluated before the annual license is renewed.

uConnect charges a flat fee based on the modules that the Career Center would like to use. Below is the cost breakdown of the different modules. There are no additional start-up, integration, or equipment costs associated with the onboarding of this resource.

## Products and Services

Name	Description	List Price	QTY	Disc	Total Fees
uConnect Virtual Career Center	Includes the platform license, as well as ongoing maintenance, hosting, and technical support	\$15,000.00	1	\$0.00	\$15,000.00
Symplicity	Technical integration with Symplicity to consolidate recruiting events, internships, job opportunities and employer profiles into your virtual career center.	\$0.00	1	\$0.00	\$0.00
Add on Module - Communities	Add-on functionality that aggregates and presents content from all available content modules into a single page to curate recommended resources for end-users based on a variety of topics. Admins can create community pages and group them by category. Common categories include industries, identities, majors, class years, and more.	\$5,000.00	1	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
Add On Module - Blogs	Add-on functionality to create a newsfeed, publishing blog content including announcements, career advice, industry insights, student and alumni stories, and employer spotlights. Leverage blogs and articles from uConnect's External Blog Library, which includes thousands of posts from many of the most trusted career advice platforms across the web including The Muse, Idealist, Wayup and many more!	\$5,000.00	1	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
Add On Module - Video Content	Add-on functionality to create a video library and promote recorded webinars, career videos, student and alumni stories and much more. Integrate with existing video libraries including Candid Career and Career Spots, and add videos across the web from sources like YouTube, Vimeo and Wistia	\$5,000.00	1	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
Add On Module - Classes	Add-on functionality to promote skill-building courses in your virtual career center, including those from course catalogs, continuing education programs and third-party systems like LinkedIn Learning	\$5,000.00	1	\$5,000.00	\$0.00
Add-on Module - People Content	Add-on functionality to promote mentors in your virtual career center including alumni, faculty and peer mentors. Integrate mentor profiles from campus systems like PeopleGrove, Graduway and First Hand.	\$5,000.00	1	\$0.00	\$5,000.00

### 5. Explanation of the efforts taken by the department to determine this is the only source and the efforts used to obtain the best possible price:

The Mississippi State Career Center has conducted several demos with the platform, which began in early December. To our knowledge, there is no other platform like this in the career

services field. We also benchmarked with other SEC and ACC institutions, such as the University of Florida, Auburn, Duke, and the University of Miami who currently use the product and have only heard great things about uConnect and its impact on student engagement with their services. Our uConnect sales representative has been incredibly communicative and eager to provide discounts to us as we continue to use this new product at MSU successfully.

Any person or entity that objects and proposes that the commodity listed is not sole source and can be provided by another person or entity shall submit a written notice to:

Jennifer Mayfield, CPPO

Director of Procurement & Contracts

[jmayfield@procurement.msstate.edu](mailto:jmayfield@procurement.msstate.edu)

Subject Line must read "Sole Source Objection"

The notice shall contain a detailed explanation of why the commodity is not a sole source procurement. Appropriate documentation shall also be submitted if applicable.

If after a review of the submitted notice and documents, MSU determines that the commodity in the proposed sole source request can be provided by another person or entity, then MSU will withdraw the sole source request publication from the procurement portal website and submit the procurement of the commodity to an advertised competitive bid or selection process.

If MSU determines after review that there is only one (1) source for the required commodity, then MSU will appeal to the Public Procurement Review Board. MSU will have the burden of proving that the commodity is only provided by one (1) source.