USM SSP 26_020 Notice of Proposed Sole Source Purchase of Accommodate by Symplicity.

http://www.ms.gov/dfa/contract_bid_search/Bid

RFx: 3150006750

Comments/objections will be received as required per Section 31-7-13 (C) of the Mississippi Code until 8:00 a.m. (Central Time) on April 3, 2026.

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:

Jacob Cochran
Director of Procurement & Contracts 118 College Dr. Box 5003 Hattiesburg, MS 39406
bids@usm.edu
Phone: 601-266-4131

Subject Line must read "Sole Source Objection USM SSP 26_020"

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, USM determines that the commodity in the proposed sole source request can be provided by another person or entity, then USM 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 USM determines after review that there is only one (1) source for the required commodity, then USM will appeal to the Public Procurement Review Board. USM will have the burden of proving that the commodity is only provided by one (1) source.

Run Dates: 3/17, 3/24

The University of Southern Mississippi
Notice of Proposed Sole Source Purchase
SSP 26_020

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

1. Description of the commodity that USM is seeking to procure:

Student Accessibility Services is seeking to enter a partnership with Symplicity, Inc. to license the Accommodate platform for accommodation caseload management for the next 3 years. Accommodate is a user-friendly option that synchronizes accommodation requesting, notification, management, and implementation for students, faculty, and staff.

Accommodate is a cloud-based software platform designed to help colleges and universities manage and deliver accessibility accommodations for students with disabilities. The system centralizes the entire accommodation process by allowing students to request services online, upload documentation, schedule exams with testing accommodations, and track the status of their requests. At the same time, accessibility services staff and faculty can use the platform to review requests, coordinate services such as note-taking or assistive technology, communicate with students, and maintain detailed case records.

Accommodate is a one-of-a-kind package through its integration with Microsoft Office and other third-party vendors, automated workflows, and 24/7 customer support. By consolidating information into one digital system, Accommodate streamlines administrative tasks, improves communication across campus, and helps institutions ensure compliance with accessibility regulations while providing timely support to students.

2. What efforts were made by the Agency to determine that the proposed provider is the only entity that can provide the commodity needed?

Accommodate is considered one-of-a-kind for the following reasons. This list is not exhaustive, but lists rationale relevant to the success of Student Accessibility Services:

1. Symplicity, the enterprise behind Accommodate, has extensive experience working within student affairs spaces and is familiar with the needs and goals of student affairs divisions nationwide.

2. Accommodate's user friendliness is unparalleled and allows SAS to manage their own systems, meaning they can revise and adjust processes without time-consuming back and forth with Symplicity and/or iTech. In addition, Accommodate offers an internal form builder, allowing students to utilize the platform as a "one-stop" to request accommodations, schedule exams, and even provide feedback and other insights.

3. Accommodate offers **full** integration with Microsoft Office, simplifying appointment booking and management for students, staff, and faculty.

4. Case management is seamless and provides updates and notifications to ensure all cases are quickly managed and appropriately documented promptly.

5. Accommodate is the *only* platform that truly automates the timely notification of faculty regarding student accommodation. This will save several hours of staff-power each semester.

6. Accommodate supports an accurate, granular user-rights system that protects student data by role. Administrators have full access to edit testing schedules, accommodations, etc., which is something the other few providers struggle with.

7. Symplicity offers 24/7 user support, whereas other vendors do not provide this and can not guarantee support to students, staff, and faculty in a timeframe that may be critical for accommodation implementation.

3. What efforts were made to ensure the best possible price for the commodity was

   obtained?

SAS has worked with Symplicity's sales and finance team to establish the optimal financial liability for the university related to Accommodate. To offset the initial cost of implementation + yearly fee, SAS has negotiated paying the implementation cost and associated fees in FY25, where there is substantial surplus in the 10H10 170001 05100 CNTRSRV line. This means that in FY26, SAS would only have to pay the yearly fee in the first full year, rather than both the yearly fee and implementation cost.

SAS has negotiated the implementation cost from $10,000 to $8,000, representing a 20% discount.

4. Why is the commodity the only one that can meet the needs to the Agency?

In short, the user experience is what makes Accommodate by Symplicity a sole source. Below are some examples of how other entities profess to offer the same thing, but fall short in their claim.

Exam Scheduling: When scheduling exams, faculty have two options to deliver exams to SAS. The first is to either email/deliver a copy of the exam to our office. The second is to use the current management system to upload a copy of the exam. Unfortunately, the current provider only builds a testing schedule

based on the faculty members who upload an exam using our system and complete a "contract" with exam directions. This means that SAS staff must spend considerable staff power to generate a new schedule with ALL exams when users with other platforms can generate a schedule within seconds.

When discussing this with our current provider, the solution was to require all faculty to take this additional step. This increases faculty load and requires faculty members who may not be technologically savvy to learn a new system. We are of the mindset that receiving an exam anyway is acceptable, and asking faculty members to learn another system while they have to manage so many other important processes online is simply unreasonable.

Currently, staff members, up to the director, cannot alter test times or schedule late exams for students. We cannot set a scheduling deadline and override this on the administrative side, making exam scheduling difficult.

Application Accessibility: The Accommodate platform is known for its user-friendliness and commitment to an accessible accommodation experience. Due to various technical issues and other reasons related to the application process with SAS, the department currently has several incomplete applications from students who began the process and stopped before submitting.

Additionally, SAS can not assist students with completing an application without requiring them to sign into the platform. While this does not sound like a major inconvenience, not every student and family comes to our office with a device or with their USM credentials (freshmen). Our current partner offers no solution for in-person application, while Accommodate does.

The current partner's system may be WCAG compliant, but compliance and accessibility are two different constructs. SAS struggles with redirecting stakeholders back to our website to apply when they have taken the time to come to our office.

Seamless Faculty Notification: Currently, SAS staff-power is spent at the beginning of each semester generating a list of students and manually directing the database to send notification of accommodations to each instructor. Accommodate can perform this task at a fraction of the time taken, if not instantaneously upon request, freeing up accessibility staff to assist with the beginning of semester activities or troubleshooting accommodation issues.

Report Accuracy: The current application for accommodations is not customizable. When students register, they are not required to enter their degree type, resulting in wildly inaccurate reporting for undergraduates. The current provider has no solution for this.

The current sync with Peoplesoft has remained inaccurate despite our attempts to work with iTech to resolve the issue. The current provider offers no assistance, and our current iTech members were not part of the integration of the current system, so navigating this process has been difficult.

If instructors are not listed in SOAR, this results in the unwanted drop of accommodations for courses. Concerned students frequently reach out and ask why accommodations were cancelled when they did not make this request. This is due to a sync error between the current provider and PeopleSoft that the current partner takes no ownership in resolving. To be clear, this is not a misstep from iTech; it is simply a symptom of a system that was developed and left behind with no guidance.

The Accommodate application process is completely customizable, allowing SAS to track students based on the variables that we determine.

Full Microsoft Office Integration: Accommodate boasts a full integration with Microsoft Office applications, unlike similar products. Students and staff can use Accommodate in tandem with Microsoft Outlook and Teams to manage appointments and exam bookings.

Staff Support: Currently, staff support with the current partner is intermittent and inconsistent. When trying to resolve issues, simple questions are not answered for days, and sometimes receive no responses until late hours. We have no direct line outside of putting in a ticket to work with this company.

Creating More Opportunities to Initiate a Feedback Loop: Accommodate features a one-of-a-kind form builder within its platform, truly allowing it to be a "one-stop" for registered students, from application, notification, implementation, and reflection on accommodation services. This allows SAS to invite students to provide more consistent feedback within a system they are already familiar with.

5. Why is the amount expended for the commodity reasonable?

Although this partnership represents a higher upfront investment than our current agreement, the pricing is fixed and does not increase with student enrollment growth, ensuring long-term cost stability and scalability.

Data provided by Accommodate indicates that partner institutions experience an average retention increase of at least 1%. Based on our current enrollment figures, each retained student generates approximately $27,000 in profit. A 1% improvement in retention would therefore represent an estimated $2,841,720 in additional revenue, delivering a substantial return on investment and strengthening the institution's overall financial position.

While a 1% university-wide increase in retention is an ambitious target, the model remains compelling even under more conservative outcomes. Retaining just one additional student for a single academic year would offset most of the incremental cost associated with Accommodate over the duration of the partnership, demonstrating strong return potential even at minimal performance gains.

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Advertisement Schedule	Date
1st scheduled	3/17/26
2nd scheduled	3/24/26

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Jacob Cochran

Director of Procurement & Contracts

Jacob.Cochran@usm.edu

Subject Line must read "Sole Source Objection 26_XXX"

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