RICE UNIVERSITY

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RFP# 2020-08-001

GLOBAL AND DIGITAL STRATEGY AT RICE UNIVERSITY

AUGUST 4, 2020

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Global and Digital Strategy at Rice University

Global and Digital Strategy at Rice University is soliciting proposals from potential vendors to provide strategic advisory, marketing and integrated enrollment management services to increase brand awareness, application submissions, and enrollment growth. Vendors interested in providing the required services must submit proposals per the requirements detailed in this RFP.

Contents of this Solicitation

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Section I—General Instructions

1.1   PURPOSE

This request for proposal, (RFP) is issued by Rice University is to solicit proposals from vendors to execute marketing campaigns with the purpose of increasing brand awareness and ultimately enrollments in the Master of Computer Science Online Program and supportive graduate programming coming from the Rice Engineering Computer Science department.

1.2   DEFINITION OF TERMS

"Purchaser", "University"	Rice University
"RFP Coordinator"	University Point of Contact: Meredith Bonner mma4@rice.edu
"Vendor "Contractor" "Supplier", "Proposer"	A person, firm, or corporation submitting a proposal
"Request for Proposal "	A written solicitation document which identifies the University's need, and consultants are invited to submit proposals which outline their solution to the need, their qualifications and experience to provide the services, and their costs or fees.

1.3   TIMETABLE

Activity	Due Date	Due Time
RFP released	Tuesday, August 4	
Due date for questions	Friday, August 7	5pm CST
Proposals due	Friday, August 21	5pm CST
NDA Signed	Friday, August 21	5pm CST
Finalist presentations	Week of September 1 and September 7	
Partner selection	Week of September 21	

1.4 INQUIRIES

All questions must be submitted using the RFP Template, Attachment A citing the particular RFP section and paragraph number. Depending upon the nature of the inquiry and the response, copies of the question and response may be distributed to all other potential vendors. The closing date for asking questions is given in Paragraph 1.3. The University may exercise its option not to reply to Vendor inquiries; therefore, Vendors should be prepared to submit a proposal based on the information included in the RFP.

1.5 PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

Proposals should be submitted via email to the Meredith Bonner, RFP Coordinator, (mma4@rice.edu) and Charlita Marrs, Procurement Manager, (cam3@rice.edu) by the deadline given in Paragraph 1.3.

1.6 REVISIONS TO THE RFP

The University reserves the right to change the acquisition schedule or cancel the RFP at any time. The University reserves the right to make corrections or amendments due to errors identified in the RFP by the University or a Contractor. Any changes will be dated and attached to, and made a part of, the RFP. All changes must be coordinated in writing with, authorized by, and made by the RFP Coordinator.

1.7 COST OF PROPOSALS

Costs incurred in preparing and presenting the proposals or incurred in any other manner by the Contractor in responding to this solicitation are not reimbursable and may not be charged to the University.

1.8 WITHDRAWAL

Any Contractor may withdraw their proposal upon written request at any time *prior* to the scheduled due date for submission of proposals.

1.9 ACCEPTANCE PERIOD

Contractor's proposal must provide 120 business days for acceptance by University from the due date for receipt of Proposals.

1.10 RESPONSIVENESS

All Proposals will be reviewed by the RFP Coordinator to determine compliance with administrative requirements and instructions specified in this RFP. The Contractor is specifically notified that failure to comply with any part of the RFP may result in rejection of the Proposal as non-responsive.

1.11 SELECTION OF PROPOSALS

In determining the "apparent successful Contractor", in addition to cost, the Contractor's compliance with the requirements of this solicitation, and the items listed below, shall be given consideration.

A. The ability, capacity, and skills of the Contractor to perform the contract or provide the service required.

B. The character, integrity, reputation, judgment, experience, and efficiency of the Contractor.

C. The quality of performance of previous contracts or service.

D. The previous and existing compliance by the Contractor with the laws relating to contract and services.

E. Such other information as may be secured having a bearing on the decision to award the contract.

1.12 NO OBLIGATION TO CONTRACT

This solicitation does not obligate the University to contract for the solicited services specified herein.

1.13 CONTRACT IN BEST INTEREST

The University reserves the right to accept or reject proposals on each item separately or as a whole, to reject any or all proposals without penalty, to waive informalities or irregularities, and to contract in the best interests of the University.

1.14 PUBLICITY

Advertising, including use of the University marks and logos, press releases, or any other general public announcement by a Contractor, stating the availability of its products or services to University employees is strictly prohibited unless the Contractor has obtained prior written authorization from the University Procurement Services Department.

1.15 NON-ENDORSEMENT

The successful Contractor agrees to make no reference to the University in any literature, promotional material, brochures, sales presentation or the like without express written consent of the University.

1.16 UNIVERSITY GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The attached University General Terms and Conditions, Exhibit B, will automatically be incorporated into any contract award as a result of this solicitation. Any exceptions taken must be noted and alternative language submitted with the Certification and Assurances. In no event, is a Vendor to submit its own standard terms and conditions in response to this solicitation.   The University will review requested exceptions and accept or reject the same at its sole discretion.

1.17 DATA-SECURITY

If, during the course of the performance, administration, or maintenance of this contract, or any extension or renewal thereof, CONTRACTOR acquires, uses, or otherwise obtains access

to 'University Data' or 'Confidential Data' as those terms are defined in the University Data Security Agreement, incorporated herein, then the University and CONTRACTOR agree that all of the terms and conditions of the University's Indemnification and Data Security Provisions shall apply.

SECTION II—Requirements

2.1   BACKGROUND

Global and Digital Strategy at Rice University is strategically focusing efforts on new sources of enrollment and tuition for continued growth. As a result, Rice seeks to shore up its long-term strategic position while serving critical regional needs by executing a comprehensive enrollment and recruitment marketing plan that drives enrollment growth in existing programs including Masters of Computer Science, Visiting Owls Program, as well as a number of new programs that will be developed over the next months.

The University is looking for an operational and scalable communication and enrollment model that can support several campus divisions so they might foment change and drive growth. By centralizing and streamlining marketing operations for offerings for non-traditional students across campus, the University hopes to see an increased ROI by lowering costs and exceeding enrollment goals. A few key results to drive that will drive success in that objective are as follows:

- Increasing enrollment for active signature programs
- Increasing the lifetime value of the student, connecting with constituents with the right content at the right time of their continuing education journey
- Decreasing the cost-per-lead (CPL) by building a formalized pipeline of non-traditional students
- Identifying cost savings with external agency partners

To maximize success of our marketing efforts of this diverse portfolio, the University is searching for a partner that can fully staff and support the marketing of individual programs as separate clients while also assisting in the oversight of a holistic enrollment approach for online programs and initiatives at the University.

Rice Online

Rice Online is the university umbrella unit dedicated to creating online courseware and programs in-house. In addition to providing online teaching support at a faculty/course level and liaising with 3rd party platforms, Rice Online enables the strategic launch of degree programs for departments who wish to build their own programs and other online products.

The signature program of this unit is the unique online Master of Computer Science degree program that launched in Fall 2019. The transformative degree is run by Rice's Department of Computer Science, ranked as one of the nation's top 20 by U.S. News & World Report.

Additionally, Rice Online's portfolio includes plans for 3 more professional masters degrees within the next two years, the Visiting Owl Program for high school and visiting undergraduates and online professional programs which include online products such as certificates, degree "on-ramp" programs and short courses.

Master of Computer Science (MCS@Rice)

> The Rice Master of Computer Science online degree (MCS@Rice) is a Professional Masters degree, requiring 30 credit hours to earn the degree. The program is designed for both working professionals with a technical background (not necessarily computer science) and students who want to add depth to their existing computer science skills. The program is entirely online with no residency requirements. A typical OMCS student is expected to complete the program part-time in two to 3.5 years, although it could be completed on a full-time basis (in 12 months).
>
> The online program has a focused curriculum designed to provide advanced training appropriate for modern computing jobs. The highlights of the curriculum include:
> - Consists of a small set of fully online classes that are each offered three times per year (fall, spring and summer).
> - Built in consultation with leaders from Houston industry
> - Waives physical residency requirements, such that students never need to be present on campus
> - Designed to be taken by part-time students over the course of 5-10 semesters. Each class will have an asynchronous component (videos to watch each week) and synchronous component (weekly live sessions that provide the opportunity to engage with the faculty and students in the courses).
>
> Rice's MSC enrollment targets are three intakes per year of at least 25 students.
>
> Historical enrollments are as follows:
> - Fall 2019 (launch of program) - 5 incoming students
> - Spring 2020 - 6 incoming students
> - Summer 2020 - 1 incoming student
> - Fall 2020 - 29 incoming students
>
> Programmatic Goals Include:
> - Grow the program in terms of both the number of students we can educate and the breadth and types of students we can reach
> - Expand and scale the size of our program to address the current and future needs of the Houston area, as well as major metropolitan areas of Texas and surrounding states
> - Enable the department to actively engage and strengthen ties with local industry, educate their workforce, and grow our brand locally

- Enable the department to extend Rice's reach in Computer Science and increase our reputation within the US and across the globe

Visiting Owl Program

The pilot Rice Online Visiting Owls program allows high school juniors and seniors and visiting undergraduates to enroll in select online courses for credit. The Visiting Owls program was created in response to high demand for the university's Rice Online Summer Session offerings — classes that were originally scheduled to be delivered in-person but moved online due to COVID-19 — and positive feedback from the non-Rice students who took part. Offerings include high-demand courses from the George R. Brown School of Engineering, the Wiess School of Natural Sciences and the School of Social Sciences, such as Organic Chemistry, Single Variable Calculus, Fundamentals of Computer Engineering, General Physics, Introduction to American Politics and Multiracial America.

The program plans to run three intakes (fall, spring and summer) a year for both open enrollment and potential agreements with regional high schools to complement their existing online programming. Enrollments increased from 67 in 2019, to 310 in 2020, and the goal is to reach 1000 visiting student enrollments within the next five years.

Online Professional Programs

Rice Online works with departments and schools to establish their program goals, providing shared services and strategic marketing/enrollment oversight. This area presents specific institutional opportunity for a more integrated marketing strategy of offerings. University partners that Rice Online works closely with are Jones School of Business, Executive Education and The Glasscock School of Continuing Studies, Professional and Corporate Programs.

2.2   SCOPE OF WORK

The University seeks integrated strategic enrollment solutions for the online programs mentioned above. To achieve desired enrollment goals, the selected vendor will provide brand strategy for Rice Online as a hub for these programs while also delivering individual account service, marketing strategy that includes a comprehensive range of services for MCS@Rice, Visiting Owl Program and the further development of online products that fall into the professional degree and program category.

These services include: program development strategy and market planning, brand strategy, audience definition and targeting, creative development and executing traditional and digital marketing campaigns across multiple channels. This project requires that the selected

vendor have an understanding of the broader nationwide landscape of higher education trends, regional variants of those trends as they affect the University's local area, and a research-backed knowledge of graduate and non-traditional student enrollment behaviors.

The following services are required by this RFP

Strategy and Market Planning
- Analyze student demand and the competitive landscape to recommend program prioritization and new programs creating pipelines and cross-promotional pathways between University units.
- Analyze program structure for current and proposed programs to determine desirability relative to competitors.
- Provide competitive analysis on a quarterly basis
- Analyze marketing campaign performance to understand website engagement to improve conversion both from a historical perspective and ongoing
- Support implementation of findings and recommendations from analysis.
- SEO audit and recommendations for the university, school and departments to optimize organic visitor experience. Please identify your approach at these different levels.

Brand Strategy
- Develop a comprehensive brand strategy for Rice Online that creates a brand platform for multifaceted relationships between Schools, departments, programs and public-private partnerships while also leveraging existing University brand standards.
- In your response please describe your approach to brand strategy, specifically as it pertains to products and collaborations.

Audience Definition and Targeting
- Identify audiences for marketing campaigns that are likely to enroll in the current and future program portfolio mentioned above. In your response please identify specifically how you will identify new prospects for marketing campaigns previously unknown to the programs. Preference will be given to vendors that utilize multiple sources for audience generation. Please break out your response for MCS@Rice + Additional Professional Masters Programs, Visiting Owls Program and Professional Program Offerings
- Development of audience personas based on data analysis.
- Ability to understand how to attract a wide B2C age group (18 to 45) and B2B employer audience and how to segment and message through different mediums accordingly.

Intent Marketing
- In your response please describe your approach to higher education marketing. Specifically discuss how your marketing campaigns address the behaviors, habits, and

preferences of today's non-traditional learner and employers and how you stay on-top of industry trends. Please break out your response for MCS@Rice + Additional Professional Masters Programs, Visiting Owls Program and Professional Program Offerings

- Execute integrated, multi-channel creative marketing campaigns across the following channels: paid search, print, email, social media, digital, and text.
- Guide prospects through the student journey. Demonstrate how you achieve campaign customization for individual students at scale, and particularly how you accommodate the preferences and marketing needs of different students at different points in their student journey—RFI, App Start, Complete, Enroll. Note, we are currently under contract with a firm that provides enrollment coaching services and we use Slate for our application process. Rice Online is looking for a strategic short and long-term solution to create more fluidity with our prospective student data to better understand the user journey, connect lead scoring with marketing initiatives and track ROI.
- Provide creative development services that incorporate data-driven audience insights.
- Provide data-driven on brand landing pages that further engagement with the University.

Test, Learn & Apply
- In your response please list the KPIs you use to evaluate campaign performance and share samples of dashboard reporting.
- Provide custom analysis as needed.
- Create and execute ongoing A/B test plans.
- Provide ongoing campaign monitoring and performance adjustment.
- Provide weekly detailed campaign performance updates to the University, preference given if dashboards can be offered in real-time.
- Refresh of campaigns based on current market performance.

2.3   QUALIFICATION OF CONTRACTOR
A. Provide an overview and history of your firm.
B. Higher education experience is desired by not required. If you have experience providing higher education marketing services, please share your approach. If not, please demonstrate why this could be a benefit and share your approach towards B2C and B2B marketing.
C. Descriptions of prospective account team roles and capabilities
D. Across all education or education related clients, what are your averages for: campaign response rate, increase in applicants during the first year of partnership, increase in acceptances in the first year of partnership, increase in enrollment.
E. Provide 5 case studies demonstrating the impact and ROI of your marketing, specific to brand strategy and conversion marketing for online graduate programs, online graduate certificates, online bridge programs and online short-courses
F. Share examples of reporting dashboards.

G. List your capabilities for ongoing testing and innovation.
H. Describe any research that informs your approach to higher education marketing.
I. Share your current list of clients
J. Please provide 3 references. University will only reach out if the proposer is selected as a finalist.

2.4 CONTENT OF PROPOSALS

A. Describe how you will address each item listed in the Scope of Work and Qualifications of Contractor sections.
B. Provide a 12-month project schedule overview that shows Rice Online institutional marketing strategy, MCS@Rice marketing strategy, Rice Visiting Owls marketing strategy, and new product support.
C. Provide a project staffing plan that services both the Rice Online umbrella unit and specific degree and programmatic offerings
D. Provide an estimated budget, for agency fees and recommended media spend, inclusive of any agency mark-up. Estimates should show separate scopes of work for Rice Online / MCS@Rice / Visiting Owls / Additional Professional Degrees / Professional Program Support while also demonstrating any cost efficiencies that come with servicing the collective.
E. Demonstration of tracking and report generation capabilities.

SECTION III—Evaluation and Contract Award

3.1 EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

The University reserves the right to make Vendor selections based solely on the proposal submitted. Responsive proposals will be evaluated strictly in accordance with the requirements stated in this solicitation and any addenda issued. The evaluation of proposals shall be accomplished by an evaluation team to be designated by the University, which will determine the ranking of the proposals. The RFP Coordinator may contact the Vendor for clarification of any portion of a Vendor's proposal.

3.2 INTERVIEW / PRESENTATION

At its sole discretion, the University will require some Proposers to participate in a Zoom interview and provide a presentation to the evaluation committee. If so, the score from the interview and/or the presentation may be combined with the score of the proposal to identify the apparent successful Vendor. The University will contact the Vendor directly to schedule the interview/presentation.

3.3 EVALUATION CRITERIA & SCORING

The following weighting and points will be assigned to the proposal for evaluation purposes:

1. Scope of Works   30 points (maximum)
2. Qualifications   20 points (maximum)

3. Project Schedule & Staffing Plan   10 points (maximum)
4. Pricing   25 points (maximum)
5. Case Studies   15 points (maximum)

3.4   NOTIFICATION TO PROPOSERS

Once the final evaluation phase has been completed, the solicitation Coordinator will issue a written announcement to all participants, citing the name(s) of the apparent successful vendors.