

Technology Purchases

Summary/Purpose

The information technology landscape on a typical university campus is complex, and most people are unaware of the integration points between information systems, the impact on the campus network, information security issues, existing purchasing agreements, etc. This policy defines the review and approval process for University of Mississippi technology procurements to ensure compliance with Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services (ITS) policies and state purchasing laws, as well as to promote the resourceful, informed utilization of technology within the University.

Background

Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services (ITS) has established procedures for the acquisition of information technology equipment, software, and services for Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs) in Policy 015-020, Procurement Limit Policies: IHLsⁱ. Responsibility for certain types of purchases and lifecycle limits is delegated to the campus Chief Information Officer (CIO). Additionally, as part of the 2009-2010 IHL “Efficiencies and Effectiveness” initiative, guidelines were established to help ensure informed decisions about technology purchases, reduce redundant technical services, and to leverage technology to help bring about campus-wide efficiencies and improved business processes. Specifically, the IHL Board approved a recommendation that each institution adopt a reasonable process that ensures the involvement of central [Information Technology](#) (IT) in all aspects of information technology planning, acquisition, and deployment to reduce the number of uninformed decisions that result in waste, inefficiencies, and risk. The process for the University of Mississippi is described next.

Process for Technology Purchases

Technology purchases that meet **any** of the following conditions require approval by the campus CIO or delegate.

- Technology projects with total lifecycle costs greater than \$5000
- Campus-wide software licenses
- Contracts for campus-wide cloud services, e.g., IT services hosted off campus
- Technology projects involving the storing or transferring of sensitive data

Examples include but are not limited to: purchases of technology equipment (e.g., servers, laptops, projectors) exceeding \$5,000; contracts for software hosted elsewhere that will be

used by a majority of students or employees; and software applications that track student academic progress and thereby contain sensitive data.

Steps

1. When project planning begins, the project manager should send an email message to itpurchase@olemiss.edu describing the project.
2. CIO or delegate will respond with purchasing information, cautions, and other information that should be considered as part of project planning.
3. For purchases of software or hosted solutions (e.g., cloud) that exceed \$5000 for the lifecycle of the project, complete the Software and Hosted Solution Review Form found here: <http://www.olemiss.edu/techpurchase>
4. When purchase requisition is entered, the user will be asked whether this is a technology purchase that meets any of the conditions above and to provide a narrative description of the project.
5. If yes, then the purchase requisition will be routed to IT for approval. If no, then the purchase requisition will be routed to Procurement Services.
6. If the purchase requisition is routed to IT for approval, then the CIO or delegate will approve or reject the purchase requisition.
7. If approved, then the user will receive an email notification, and the purchase requisition will be routed to Procurement Services. If rejected, then the reason for rejection will be emailed to user as well as suggested revisions or alternatives to improve compliance with procurement policies. No further action on the purchase requisition will be permitted in the workflow.

Any acquisitions of computer equipment and services made with federal funds should be indicated as such in Steps 1 and 4 given that these are subject to slightly different purchasing rules. The most important step of this process is Step 1, i.e., involving IT at the start of the project. If this step is omitted then the chances for approval are reduced. Any questions should be directed to itpurchase@olemiss.edu.

Sole Source Purchases

On July 1, 2015, new laws went into effect requiring that IT sole source purchases undergo a more formalized certification process, including advertisement of the intent to award/purchase as a sole source and on-campus verification after the purchase that the items purchased were as approved for purchase. For IT sole source purchases in the range \$5001 to \$250,000, this process is managed by the university, specifically by the [Procurement](#) Office and IT. IT sole source purchases greater than \$250,000 are managed by (MDITS).

Those who wish to purchase technology items as sole source must complete the form located at <http://olemiss.edu/solesource>. Completion of this form requires a vendor sole source letter and additional details about the proposed purchase.

Accessibility

Departments are responsible for ensuring that any technology they purchase and/or deploy is accessible to people with disabilities. When negotiating contracts involving EIT services, UM departments must request a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) as a critical component in the procurement process. This VPAT will help the department acknowledge and confirm compliance with the accessibility requirements outlined in this policy. More information is available in the Accessibility of Technology Services Policy.

Interfaces with Centralized Systems

Some departmental software applications, to work in a meaningful way, require data from UM's centralized systems. Examples are niche software applications for the management of some aspect of the student life cycle or applications that require single sign-on using UM's centralized directory service. A number of issues must be considered when adopting solutions that require interfaces with centralized systems such as the security of the data being exported and the effort to build interfaces vs. the length of time that the software will be used. Software purchases that require dedicated interfaces are inherently more complicated and costly and introduce more risk to the university. These projects require careful planning and active engagement from the sponsoring UM department to ensure success.

UM departments considering technology purchases that will require interfaces with centralized systems will need to serve as the liaison with the vendor and are reminded of the following:

- IT provides authentication support to cloud-based vendors via Shibboleth. LDAP, Active Directory, and other authentication methods are not supported.
- UM department must work with the vendor to provide adequate proof of FERPA, HIPAA, PCI, and other applicable privacy standard compliance. IT will not provide data governed by such laws/standards to vendors that do not have an established or independently verified history of compliance. See Section 11 of the [Information Confidentiality / Security Policy](#) for additional requirements.
- Written requirements will be established and agreed upon by UM department, IT, and vendor before work by IT begins. Written requirements will include a project schedule. If UM department fails to meet its obligations, e.g., is unavailable to participate at the designated time, then project will move to a dormant state and will be rescheduled at a later date.
- All interface components provided by the vendor, including data feeds, file formats, and web services, must be accurately documented to the current or desired vendor API version and must provide matching sample data.
- UM department must work with the vendor to furnish scheduling details, frequency of transfers, triggers, etc. to IT.
- UM department must work with the vendor to establish appropriate testing of the interfaces both from functional and and technical perspectives. Testing should address adherence to written requirements, accuracy of the data exchanged, presence of required data elements, and overall correctness of the product / service.

- IT systems have predefined periods of downtime to accommodate regular, scheduled maintenance. These times are published in advance on a [public website](#). Vendors must ensure their products can either function normally or fail gracefully.
- UM department must provide prompt, advance notification to IT in the event of service / contract cancellation in order to disable data feeds in a timely manner.
- Implementation efforts to support overlooked or newly provided vendor API enhancements after the project has begun must be mutually agreed upon by IT, the UM department, and the vendor.
- Non-critical vendor changes to API/file formats must be communicated to the UM department and IT at least two months in advance of required due date. Critical vendor changes should be communicated as early as possible.

ⁱ <http://www.its.ms.gov/Procurement/Documents/ISS%20Procurement%20Manual.pdf>