**Request for Proposal**

**Digital Marketing Partner**

*May 8, 2023*

***Jeff Sponn***

***Director of Procurement***

[*University*](http://www.princeton.edu/) *of Southern Indiana*

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**OVERVIEW**

**Purpose and Timeframe**

The University seeks an agency that can provide the services needed to help University of Southern Indiana (USI) in its digital branding efforts and help drive important initiatives for reputation, awareness, enrollment, and advancement. USI seeks a true marketing partner to deliver digital planning, media strategy and buying for digital channels and potentially creative development services. We are looking for a qualified and experienced agency to provide comprehensive digital marketing services for a one-year contract (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024).

**RFP Schedule:**

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| May 8 | RFP Issued to Agencies |
| May 15 | Written Communication of Vendor’s Intent to Bid to Jeff Sponn, Director of Procurement (jsponn@usi.edu) |
| May 22 | RFP Questions Due to Julie Weinzapfel, Manager of Procurement Operations (jweinzap@usi.edu) |
| May 29 | RFP Question Response Distribution |
| June 5 | Deadline for the Agencies to Submit Proposals to Bid to Jeff Sponn, Director of Procurement (jsponn@usi.edu) |
| June 12 | Selection of Finalists |
| June 26 – June 28 | Agency Finalist Presentations (presented virtually) |
| June 30 | Final Agency Selected |
| August  | Target Start |

**About University of Southern Indiana**

The University of Southern Indiana’s appeal to students is found in its size, the accessibility of professors, its beautiful environment and innovative housing, its proximity to an urban center, the friendliness of students, employees, and the community, as well as its affordability and value.

Founded in 1965, USI enrolls 9,200 dual credit, undergraduate and graduate students in more than 130 areas of study. A public higher education institution, located on a beautiful 1,400-acre campus in Evansville, Indiana, USI offers programs through the College of Liberal Arts, Romain College of Business, College of Nursing and Health Professions, Pott College of Science, Engineering, and Education, and School of Graduate Studies.

USI is a Carnegie Foundation Community Engaged University and offers continuing education and special programs to more than 15,000 participants annually through Outreach and Engagement. The University offers study-abroad opportunities in more than 60 countries and hosts international students from around the globe.

A competitive member of NCAA Division I and the Ohio Valley Conference, USI offers 19 varsity intercollegiate men's and women's sports.

Dr. Ronald S. Rochon serves as USI's fourth president.

**About University Marketing and Communications**

The mission of University Marketing and Communications is to strategically market and communicate the unique value of the University of Southern Indiana, elevating its visibility and reputation, to promote student recruitment and retention and foster a strong sense of community among stakeholders.

The Vice President for University Marketing and Communication, Kindra Strupp, oversees the areas of Athletic Communication, Special Events and Scheduling, University Creative and Print, University Strategic Communication, University Strategic Marketing and University Web and Digital Content. Special projects include [Commencement](https://www.usi.edu/commencement), [Archie Eagle Mascot](https://www.usi.edu/archie), [Brand Licensing](https://www.usi.edu/brand) and Athletic Marketing.

**Brand Narrative**

At the University of Southern Indiana, we know that our determination is our greatest strength. We bring dedication, perseverance, and a shared pride to everything we do, knowing that together we can overcome any challenge. We celebrate this courageous spirit not for its own sake but for the potential it unlocks in every member of our community, rippling outward as we turn our talent and ambition into action.

This growth happens through a passionately caring community that places the wellbeing of each person at the center of our work. We tailor our learning programs to the needs of our students, putting impactful education within reach. We create a continually evolving network of support resources that help our students flourish in every way. We seek to practice bold hospitality and inclusion for all. And we model a culture of care that inspires our students to demonstrate generosity and passion throughout their lives.

In a constantly changing world, we bring a forward-looking vision that anticipates needs and solves them with ingenuity and creativity. We treat challenges as opportunities to innovate, embracing the diverse gifts of our community along the way. We seek to embody a mindset of constant flexibility, equipping our students to lead change through emerging careers and technologies. At every step, we celebrate how the growth of our students benefits others, enriching their world as they prove the transformative power of education.

We are the University of Southern Indiana.

**Goals**

The selected agency will work closely with the USI marketing team to develop and implement a digital marketing strategy that will effectively promote the university and attract potential students. The services to be provided by the agency will include, but are not limited to:

* Developing and implementing a comprehensive digital marketing plan to increase enrollment and brand awareness.
* Conducting research and analysis to identify key target audiences and develop effective messaging.
* Creating and managing paid advertising campaigns across various digital channels, such as Google Ads, Facebook Ads, and Instagram Ads.
* Creating and managing organic social media campaigns to engage with potential students and increase brand awareness.
* Creating and managing a content marketing strategy that includes blog posts, infographics, videos, and other types of content that will attract potential students.
* Tracking and analyzing campaign performance to measure success and identify areas for improvement.
* Expand the pool of high-quality applicants at all academic levels.
* Increase visit registration by prospective students for relevant recruitment events.
* Increase the quality and quantity of inbound inquiries by undergraduate, graduate, and non-credit students.
* Support foundation efforts to increase giving to USI.

**Background and Current Strategy**

Relevant channels that the university has used successfully in the past and may continue to use include, but are not limited to:

1. Search Engine Marketing: keyword-based advertising
2. Social Network Advertising: internet and demographic targeting on appropriate (established and emerging) social media channels. These social media channels include but are not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter.
3. Display Retargeting: targeted advertising to website and landing page visitors who have not yet requested additional information about USI or one of its programs.
4. Digital Display: increase general awareness of USI to targeted, relevant prospective students while increasing paid and organic search site traffic.
5. Inbound Marketing Tactics: take advantage of inbound tactics including search engine optimization, landing page optimization, branded blogs, long-form gated content, lead nurturing through e-mail marketing, and other emerging techniques.

**Target Audience**

Our target audience is prospective, undergraduate students in the generally traditional high school age range who are highly digital and specifically mobile; as such, media should focus on reaching teens on digital and social media platforms where campaign impressions can be turned into site traffic and brand engagement by utilizing strong CTAs throughout the campaign. We will look to our digital partner to validate and/or expand upon our stated audience and consider emerging platforms in addition to past efforts.

Designated Market Areas have included:

* Southwest Indiana Counties: Dubois, Gibson, Knox, Pike, Posey, Spencer, Vanderburgh, Warrick, Daviess, Martin, Perry
* Indianapolis DMA+ Vigo County (within Terre Haute DMA)

**Proposal Requirements**

The proposal should include the following information:

* Overview of the agency, including qualifications and experience working with higher education institutions.
* Approach and methodology for developing and implementing a comprehensive digital marketing strategy for USI.
* Proposed timeline and budget for the project.
* Examples of successful digital marketing campaigns conducted for previous clients.
* Description of the team members who will be working on the project and their roles and responsibilities.

**Deliverables**

1. Insight into brand reputation and share of voice for University of Southern Indiana and other, comparable universities.
2. Understanding of current marketing trends and tactics and how they might be applied to USI’s enrollment marketing goals at all academic levels.
3. Expertise and insight into target audiences, including their demographics, aspirations, pain points, preferred channels, and typical behaviors. Audiences include but are not limited to high school students and their parents, current college students, and working professionals.
4. Strategic Assistance. Understanding of higher education admissions cycles for both undergraduate and graduate programs, and how current and potential marketing tactics can best be used within that cycle.

**References**

Provide references, preferably in higher education at institutions of similar size and scope as University of Southern Indiana in the continental United States.

**Evaluation Overview**

Selection of the partner will be made by the Selection Committee, based on the vendor who provides us with the greatest level of confidence after reviewing each response, evaluating pricing, and checking references. All bidders will be informed of our decision by July 5

**Deadline and mode for submission**

Vendors must submit an electronic copy of their proposals and all pertinent documentation, on or before June 5, 2023, 2:00 P.M. local time, to Jeff Sponn, Director of Procurement (jsponn@usi.edu)*.* Proposals that are not received by this time and date will not be considered. It is the responsibility of the bidder to see that proposals are delivered by the time and date indicated above.