

Notice of Intent to Sole Source

Posting Date: 4/17/2025

Francis Marion University seeks to sole source the procurement of the Digistar 7 (Digistar 2025) upgrade for the FMU Dooley Planetarium.

Intent to Sole Source:

The FMU Physics and Engineering Department requires the Digistar 7 (Digistar 2025) upgrade to the FMU Dooley Planetarium for student use in the academic setting along with supporting the FMU community outreach that showcases astronomical datasets. Research is very important for developing fundamental skills that are essential for experimental physics and research. This instrument will be used by students in ASTR 201 – Introduction to Astronomy, ASTR 202 – Voyage Through the Solar System, ASTR 203 – Observational Astronomy, PHYS 497 – Special Topics in Astrophysics. These classes include students in a variety of majors (e.g. Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, Computational Physics, Mechanical Engineering, Biology, Criminal Justice, Sociology, Psychology, etc.) as it satisfies a General Education course requirement for Natural Sciences. Students in the School of Education also benefit from the coursework as it helps prepare them for content they will be teaching as outlined in the Science Standards for South Carolina. Additionally, Dooley Planetarium provides free programming to PreK, K-12 public schools, private schools, home school associations, technical colleges, civic groups (Adult Education, summer camps, girl/boy scouts, etc.). FMU's conversion to a fully digital planetarium occurred in December 2014. Since then, we have presented 1,148 programs to 48,867 guests. Of these shows, 927 were specifically for youth groups. A large portion of our shows are for the 1st and 4th grade levels. Most youths that attend these programs are from the Pee Dee region.

Francis Marion University purchased the Digistar 5 Planetarium unit from Evans and Sutherland in 2014 via solicitation 5400008218 through the Information Technology Management Office of the State of South Carolina. The Domecast ability of the newer versions of Digistar allows FMU to host speakers on our dome who are presenting at any Digistar 6+ site in South Carolina or across the globe. The newest release of Digistar also includes an expanded STEM Curriculum library which includes 41 topics relevant to the courses taught at FMU with animations, models, and control panels that will allow for easy integration of the content into a show. Datasets can also be added to the system to showcase where fossils are discovered, the migration patterns or different species, or pathways using Google map coordinates. This will allow for collaboration with faculty in the Departments of Biology, History, etc. A new feature introduced with Digistar 7 is the ability to show the Sun in real time. Digistar can now accurately display the sunspots visible on the sun without relying on a static model that never changes. Terrain generation has also greatly improved and no longer requires the user to pre-download the terrain files for a location to be visited. This terrain system now includes the Moon and Mars. It allows for an even more immersive experience for the audience. Close-up views of cities on Earth can also display a 3-dimensional view using the datasets built by Google engineers. The Digistar 2025 system also allows the operator to create a full show in the software system. This was first offered in the FMU Digistar 5 software and has been greatly improved to allow for timelining content, music, and lighting controls. FMU has produced many productions over the years and have also trained students in how to do the same. These productions are shown during FMU's free public programs as well as by special request of groups reserving a private show in the planetarium.

Evans & Sutherland Computer Corporation (E&S) are pioneers in digital planetarium systems. These systems use computer projection to create a starfield instead of using an optical projection system. They installed the first digital system (Digistar 1) at the Hansen Planetarium in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1983. They actively maintain their software through a team of software engineers and the input of the Digistar Users Group. E&S acquired Spitz, Inc. in 2006. Together these businesses supply the greater share of fixed planetarium systems across the United States. They offer 24-hour customer support, yearly training at the Digistar Users Group Conference, monthly online training sessions, and in-person training at their facilities in Salt Lake City, Utah or Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. They also offer a cloud service which allows planetariums in the Digistar network to share content (scripts, vignettes, 3D models, full-dome videos, etc.). With the introduction of Digistar 6, one planetarium can hold a presentation that is simultaneously broadcast to any Digistar 6 system (or higher). The Digistar 2025 system will continue to allow for broadcasting to these systems which include six other locations in South Carolina. The Domecast ability is not available through any other planetarium platform on the market. E&S are they only full-service provider, offering Digistar, CX LED dome systems, NanoSeam domes, planetariums, and theater systems. For these reasons, Evans & Sutherland Computer Corporation is the sole source for this purchase.

The cost for the Digistar upgrade is \$245,160.00.

Company Specifics:

Evans & Sutherland Computer Corp.
770 Komas Drive
Salt Lake City UT 84108-1207

Contact Person for this Intent to Sole Source:

Jennifer D Hester, Director of Purchasing
Phone: 843 661-1161
Email: jdhester@fmarion.edu
<http://www.fmarion.edu/about/solicitationsawards/>

Contact deadline: May 1, 2025 11:59 pm EST

Unless additional pertinent information is forthcoming, Award will be posted at the following physical address and website address on May 2, 2025:

Francis Marion University
Purchasing Office
Stokes Administration Building, Room 102
4822 East Palmetto Street
Florence, SC 29506
www.fmarion.edu/about/solicitationsawards

If you are aggrieved in connection with the solicitation or award of the contract, you may be entitled to protest, but only as provided in Section 11-35-4210. To protest a solicitation, you must submit a protest within fifteen days of the date the applicable solicitation document is issued. To protest an award, you must (i) submit notice of your intent to protest within seven business days of the date the award notice is posted, and (ii) submit your actual protest within fifteen days of the date the award notice is posted. Days are calculated as provided in Section 11-35-310(13). Both protests and notices of intent to protest must be in writing and must be received by the appropriate Chief Procurement Officer within the time provided. See clause entitled "Protest-CPO". The grounds of the protest and the relief requested must be set forth with enough particularity to give notice of the issues to be decided.

PROTEST – CPO ADDRESS – MMO: Any protest must be addressed to the Chief Procurement Officer, Materials Management Office, and submitted in writing

- (a) by email to protest-mmo@mmo.sc.gov,
- (b) by facsimile at 803-737-0639, or
- (c) by post or delivery to:

CHIEF PROCUREMENT OFFICER
MATERIALS MANAGEMENT OFFICE
1201 MAIN STREET, SUITE 600
COLUMBIA, S.C. 29201