ACCRUENT EMS

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

HOW SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY STREAMLINED EVENT MANAGEMENT WITH EMS

Learn how South Dakota State University transitioned from fragmented scheduling systems to a unified, cloud-based platform that improved data security, accessibility and operational efficiency across 13 conference spaces and 92 users.

South Dakota State University (SDSU) is a public land-grant research university located in Brookings, South Dakota. Founded in 1881, the university stands as the state's largest institution and the second-oldest continually operating university in South Dakota. The campus serves thousands of students across numerous academic programs and manages a diverse portfolio of classroom and event spaces, including 13 conference rooms, multiple public areas, a large ballroom and several smaller performance venues within the University Student Union. In total, the team oversees 106 facilities within its system.

13	92	2000
CONFERENCE SPACES	USERS	EMS CUSTOMER SINCE

THE CHALLENGE

For more than two decades, SDSU relied on EMS on-premises for event scheduling and space management. Over time, however, the system was adopted inconsistently across campus. Some departments used EMS extensively, while others relied on spreadsheets, Outlook calendars or locally managed tools that operated independently.

This fragmented adoption created significant operational challenges:

- Super users across campus applied the system differently
- Reservation statuses were not standardized
- Consolidating scheduling data became difficult, especially during major events or emergencies that required real-time visibility

The situation reached a critical point in 2018 when the on-premises EMS server experienced a catastrophic failure. The server was accidentally erased, and the backup files that had been created were stored on the same server, rendering them inaccessible. The university lost years of reservation data and faced the daunting task of manually re-entering information to restore basic operational functionality.

> ***"We had an unfortunate experience… they accidentally erased the server. And the backup file that they kept making was on the same server."***
>
> – Mark Venhuizen, Director of Operations and Event Services at the Union

Beyond the data loss, the on-premises infrastructure created ongoing maintenance burdens. Updates were applied inconsistently due to staffing changes and limited upgrade cycles. Staff also spent significant time on redundant data entry, increasing the risk of errors and inefficiencies.

THE SOLUTION: MIGRATION TO THE CLOUD

The server failure marked a turning point for SDSU. University leaders recognized that continuing to operate an on-premises scheduling system introduced unnecessary risk and strain on internal resources. The decision was made to migrate to the cloud version of EMS to improve reliability, security and long-term sustainability.

The migration process was supported by Accruent and included testing in sandbox environments, detailed guidance and a carefully planned transition. The move to the cloud was completed without disruption to daily operations. “Everything on the EMS side went perfect. It was pretty much seamless,” Venhuizen said.

Since migrating to the cloud-based platform, SDSU eliminated its dependence on local servers and manual backups. Automatic updates and built-in redundancy now protect the university’s scheduling data and ensure the system remains current.

> ***“Moving to the cloud is a no-brainer. Any updates and patches that need to happen are done automatically, and the backups of the data are there. You do not have to worry about losing that information.”***
>
> – Mark Venhuizen, Director of Operations and Event Services at the Union

CENTRALIZED SCHEDULING AND CAMPUS ADOPTION

EMS serves as the central scheduling hub for the Union and the broader campus community. The Union manages its conference spaces, public areas, ballroom and performance venues within the system. SDSU also expanded EMS usage to departments, classrooms and conference rooms across campus. “We’re trying to get everybody to use the system for scheduling, which is a breakthrough,” Venhuizen said.

The cloud-based platform brings together functions that were once spread across multiple systems. Room setups, AV coordination, student labor, invoicing and centralized billing are all managed through EMS. Integration with the campus calendar and marketing systems improves visibility for public events.

A key workflow improvement is the EMS web request process. Requests submitted through the web app arrive as pending and are reviewed by the operations team before approval. This step helps ensure accuracy and consistency. “Anything that goes into the EMS web app comes to us as awaiting web request,” Venhuizen said. “We can review the reservation and make sure everything is entered correctly. It works great.”

SDSU also partnered with the registrar’s office to import academic class schedules from Banner, helping prevent room conflicts and allowing general-use classrooms to be scheduled for after-hours events.

THE RESULTS

The migration to the cloud-based platform delivered immediate and measurable improvements to SDSU’s event management operations.

Reduced Risk of Data Loss

The move to the cloud eliminated the vulnerabilities associated with on-premises infrastructure. Automatic backups and cloud redundancy protect years of reservation history and operational data.

Consistency Across Campus

The standardization of EMS usage across campus created a unified approach to event management. Departments that previously operated independently now follow consistent protocols for reservations, status updates and resource allocation. This alignment improved communication between the Union, academic departments and campus facilities and university service providers.

Accessibility

The cloud-based platform's accessibility transformed how staff interact with the system. Team members can now access EMS from any device and any location, whether inside or outside the campus network. This flexibility proved particularly valuable for event coordinators who need to manage reservations and respond to requests while away from their desks.

Improved Reporting and Insights

The system's reporting capabilities provide insights that were previously difficult to obtain. This capability enables the operations team to analyze space utilization, identify scheduling patterns and make data-driven decisions about resource allocation.

> ***"Reporting is so much easier now. We can pull data for food service, HVAC, parking, and safety and security in minutes rather than hours or days."***
>
> – Mark Venhuizen, Director of Operations and Event Services at the Union

Reduced IT Burden

SDSU no longer relies on local IT resources to manage servers, apply patches or perform backups. The cloud-based platform automatically delivers updates and enhancements without interrupting operations. "Moving to the cloud just makes sense from having reliable storage and constant updates, so you know your software is always running at full capacity," Venhuizen said.

LOOKING AHEAD

SDSU continues to expand EMS adoption across campus, with a focus on consistent scheduling practices and broader use of operational workflows. As event needs grow and evolve, EMS provides a secure, scalable foundation that supports collaboration, efficiency and long-term reliability.

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