



UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO MIGRATES MAJOR SYSTEMS TO THE CLOUD IN JUST 14 WEEKS

The university has realized benefits around cost control, scalability and disaster recovery

The University of Idaho is Idaho's land-grant university, with almost 12,000 students, more than \$113 million expended in research activities and two-thirds of undergraduates participating in hands-on research. Founded in 1889, the college is known for its agricultural, science and business programs, as well as for its setting in picturesque Moscow, Idaho.

Since 1993 the university relied on an on-premises Ellucian Banner system to run its student information, human resources and finance operations.

"Students, HR and finances are critical to us, so Ellucian Banner is our crown jewel," says Dave Lien, the university's Director of Technology Infrastructure and Innovation.

Though Ellucian Banner worked well, overhead costs, maintenance requirements and a lack of modern technological capabilities were a longtime concern for university officials. The university contemplated moving to the cloud in recent years to lower its costs, improve security and enhance scalability, but hadn't yet landed on the right solution.

"We knew a move to the cloud would bring a number of strategic advantages but we needed a mechanism by which we could do so and manage costs around Banner, the supporting Oracle software, and our computer and storage infrastructure," says Dan Ewart, the

university's Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer.

When school officials reached out to Oracle, they discovered Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI) could provide the university an easy path toward modernization and cost management.

Moving to OCI would also allow the university to dodge an imminent and expensive hardware refresh and take advantage of new services like intrusion detection and prevention.

Oracle representatives put together a bid to show university officials what they could potentially save over five years.

"The advantage Oracle brought over other cloud vendors was the licensing," adds Lien. "We would have spent more money on Oracle licensing running on other platforms. We looked at Ellucian's hosted Banner solution, but from a cost standpoint and an operational efficiency standpoint we saw the value of Oracle database in the cloud."

Another major hurdle was the university needed to move its Ellucian Banner environment to OCI quickly to accommodate contract and hardware replacement timelines while also addressing challenges presented by COVID-19. With most campus personnel working remotely, the migration would have to be carefully orchestrated from a distance.

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Dave Lien, Director of Technology Infrastructure and Innovation, University of Idaho

After weighing its options, the University of Idaho committed to move Ellucian Banner to OCI and, at Oracle's suggestion, recruited Astute Business Solutions to assist it with its swift migration.

A 14-Week Migration to OCI

Astute went to work quickly to create a clone of the university's Ellucian Banner production environment in OCI that would not affect current systems or users. That enabled the university to kick the project off quickly and begin testing almost immediately.

“That saved so much time,” says Lien. “Before that we were worried we'd need to build out 60 new servers in OCI, re-install the applications and then move the data. But as we began working with Astute, it became clear they were very organized, they had done this before and they were adept at leading us through the project timeline.”

The university went live in 14 weeks, moving approximately 150 virtual machines and 24 databases to OCI.

“Great project management and great dedication of resources, both on the Astute and university's side, enabled this to happen in three months,” says Randy Wood, Manager of Enterprise Applications. “This project was our biggest priority for those three months.”

“This was all-hands-on deck,” says Lien. “All of the university's IT personnel were dedicated to making this happen, but we were led by Astute. The automation and tools Astute brought to the process were critical to getting this work done as quickly as we did.”

“In Astute we found more than a vendor with the technical and project management skills to deliver our needed outcomes — we found a trusted partner that became part of our team, helped deliver a successful migration and will continue to support our long-term success in OCI,” says Ewart.

Improving Performance, Security and DR

Since the University of Idaho completed its migration to OCI, it has realized benefits around cost control, availability and performance.

“Performance is better in OCI than it was on-premises,” says Lien. “It's good knowing that the environment performs well, and we have the ability to easily increase performance as we need to. We were able to quickly add resources during our registration period and then remove those resources just as quickly so we only paid for what we needed while minimizing risk during this critical period.”

Improved security is another benefit. OCI natively enables database encryption, so the university's data — both at rest and in motion — is fully encrypted. This is increasingly important as the number of cyberattacks on universities continues to rise.

Perhaps most critically, the move to OCI provides the University of Idaho with disaster recovery and business continuity benefits it couldn't previously access.

“Before, we had two physical data centers with Ellucian Banner spread across them,” says Lien. “But we would have been significantly impacted by a major event like a power outage, ice storm or windstorm here in Moscow. We feel so much more confident now knowing that our critical systems are running in multiple data centers in OCI and that the OCI environment has much more redundancy built into it than we could ever have achieved on our own. That really puts us at ease.”

This piece was developed and written by the Government Technology Content Studio, with information and input from Oracle and Astute.

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