

# EMS Case Study *University of Oklahoma Memorial Union*



## Background

The University of Oklahoma is known for its academic excellence and strong sense of community. While much of the Central Oklahoma area that is home to the university was settled in one day, it has been a process of continual growth and improvement that has positioned “OU” as one of the most well-respected educational institutions in the country.

The university employs 200 full-time faculty and has a student population of more than 30,000. The school draws students from across the U.S. and more than 100 countries around the world.

In addition to its academic credentials, the university boasts an impressive array of cultural facilities and exhibits, including the largest university-affiliated natural history museum in the world, the oldest piece of art found in North America and the largest gift of French Impressionist paintings ever given to a university. Students can even make a very tangible connection to the past at the old OU Library, which is the only place in the United States where you can hold a document written by Galileo in your hands.

## The Memorial Union

The Oklahoma Memorial Union, on the main campus in Norman, was completed in 1928 as a memorial to the students, faculty and staff that fought and died in World War I. In 1997, the university completed an \$11 million renovation of the facility that returned it to its original grandeur and made it more inviting as a student meeting place.

Before purchasing EMS, the Memorial Union staff was booking space in the union using another online system, but one that was poorly designed and unreliable. “The old system would crash whenever the wind blew,” says Sherry Paxton, reservations and catering coordinator. “There were times when we lost all of the data that we had entered into the system the previous three days. We made numerous attempts to work with their technical support team to fix the glitches, but they never came through on their promises.” This lack of response, on top of the system’s other failings, was the last straw. OU researched other options and ultimately purchased EMS Enterprise.

## Fast Facts

- **EMS Enterprise** replaces unreliable scheduling system
- More than **30,000** students
- **12,000** events each year
- Memorial Union reservationists utilize the EMS reminder functionality to create **seamless events**

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Today, OU is using EMS Enterprise to manage more than 120 spaces including meeting rooms, display booths and suites in Oklahoma Memorial Stadium. The system is also used to coordinate catering deliveries to locations around campus. More than 12,000 events are scheduled in EMS each year, including meetings, receptions, banquets, concerts, carnivals, weddings, seminars and career fairs.

## Challenges and Solutions

Managing such a large number of reservations for such a diverse clientele is not without its challenges. "One of our biggest struggles is getting a comprehensive list of a client's needs, so that there aren't a large number of additional requests on the day of the event," says Paxton. The logical process flow and organization of data within reservations in EMS Enterprise, along with the readily available lists of resources and services, help prompt reservationists to inquire about and record event detail information. OU also takes advantage of the EMS "reminders" function which automatically notifies a user when a task for which they are responsible - such as "Finalize Catering Details" - has come due.

Even when all of the details for an event have been properly recorded, last minute changes are nearly inevitable. "People often change their requirements the day before, or the day of, an event," Paxton observes. "It can be frustrating for the reservation coordinators, setup crew and service providers." Automatic inventory verification and a variety of resource scheduling reports make dealing with last minute modifications less stressful.

**"EMS has streamlined our reservations process by saving time, eliminating unnecessary tasks and delivering detailed financial information."**

Once an event has taken place, the OU scheduling staff faces another challenge: How to record, track and communicate billing information. The solution is the built-in billing functionality in EMS Enterprise. "Once the pricing structure has been setup properly, the revenue coding is automatic," says Tammie Nelson, an Oklahoma Memorial Union accountant. After invoices have been generated and distributed, returned payments are recorded in EMS. "The general ledger capability has made it significantly easier to work with the university's financial package," she adds.

Asked to reflect on how EMS has affected scheduling operations at the Oklahoma Memorial Union, Sherry Paxton sums it up this way: "Before EMS, scheduling was a daily challenge. Now, EMS has streamlined our reservations process by saving time, eliminating unnecessary tasks and delivering detailed financial information." And not a moment too soon.

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For more information on Dean Evans & Associates, and the company's event management and master calendaring software products, go to [www.dea.com](http://www.dea.com) or contact the Sales department at [sales@dea.com](mailto:sales@dea.com) or 1.800.440.3994 ext. 863.

