



FOUNDED: 1847

LOCATED: Iowa City, IA

ENROLLMENT: 30,409

OFFERING: 100 bachelor's
and 100 master's degrees

"In our emergency situation, the Classroom Scheduling department was making every effort to minimize the number of modified classroom assignments. Therefore, re-optimizing didn't seem like the option to pursue. By using the grids and selective scheduling, we felt we contained the amount of potential confusion for the returning students while still ensuring that each section had a room."

—Renee Houser, Assistant Registrar

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA STAYS AFLOAT DURING MASSIVE FLOOD

Renee Houser, Assistant Registrar at the University of Iowa, never imagined that her institution would fall victim to a natural disaster. However, in June 2008, a significant flood affected 2.5 million square feet—ultimately leaving 53 classrooms from five major buildings unusable for the Summer term that was slated to start the next week.

"I knew we should have an emergency plan for weather-related issues, but my biggest concern was a tornado or fire," she says. She and the other three schedulers had to find new spaces for the courses that were scheduled in the compromised rooms.

The Pressure Builds

The institution's president declared that no courses would be cancelled. In addition, the campus had hundreds of non-academic events that would need new accommodations.

Houser and the scheduling team ran preliminary reports in Astra Schedule to identify affected courses and determine availability of moving courses. They needed to find spaces to cover section enrollments, and some courses needed very specific kinds of space.

Houser's goal was for as many courses as possible to stay in the same location. She looked to other departments and off-site locations, such as high schools and churches, for open rooms. "It became a focused community effort to help one another," she says.

The scheduling team used Astra Schedule's Available Rooms Tool, Daily and Weekly Room Grids, and Section Conflict Grid to reschedule all courses that lost their room assignments. The tool allowed them to locate rooms with specific room features and capacities needed for instruction. When it was apparent that the room damage might not be repaired by the end of Summer, the team analyzed and rescheduled affected sections for the Fall 2008 term, as well.

Crisis Averted

After rescheduling was completed, the schedulers had used Astra Schedule's Available Rooms Tool to move more than 1,500 classes, 816 orientation meetings, and 400 meetings.

While much of the damaged space has been repaired, the Scheduling Office's general classrooms are still housing some Art History courses. Houser estimates that it will be two to five years before the campus is fully recovered from the disaster.

Houser is thankful that they didn't cancel any courses, but is still looking forward. "Our focus now is how we can assist in overcoming future issues that might arise from other unforeseen events," she says.





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