



| Case Study

# Cornell University unites cloud systems for better visibility

A case study on reducing cloud bills and increasing  
ROI on public sector managed services



## Key challenges

- Manage AWS services as efficiently as possible
- Support cost allocation and invoicing
- Ensure compliance with regulations such as Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and HIPAA



## Key benefits

- Easily allocate cloud costs to colleges, departments, and individual users
- Actionable insights into billing details, resource inventory, permissions, and more
- Improves and maintains compliance, bolstering security and performance

After reviewing solutions from several companies, Cornell University selected CloudCheckr, now part of Spot by NetApp, to manage its Amazon Web Services (AWS) usage. The reason was simple: CloudCheckr's cloud management platform is fine-tuned to help customers maximize the value of their AWS investment, mitigate security risks, and maintain regulatory compliance.

## The challenge

Cornell is among the premier private universities in the U.S. Since its founding in 1865 the university has offered students a diverse educational experience. In recent years, as a forward-thinking institution, Cornell has been embracing the benefits of shifting from on-premises data centers into the cloud.

However, the various initiatives and accounts soon became hard to manage. Cornell decided to get help consolidating all of its 65 individual Amazon Web Services (AWS) accounts under one university account to improve governance and manage costs. The university's top priorities were to manage its AWS services as efficiently as possible, support cost allocation and invoicing, and ensure compliance with regulations such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and others.

"Although we could see each sub-account's usage, those views weren't available to subaccounts themselves, so they were limited in their ability to manage and optimize their own usage of AWS services," says Sarah Christen, assistant director of community platforms and cloudification services at Cornell University. "We also needed a way to bill each subaccount for the services it consumed."

## What can CloudCheckr do?

CloudCheckr helps customers maximize the value of their AWS investment, mitigate security risks, and maintain regulatory compliance.



“By offering total visibility and valuable recommendations, CloudCheckr helps people feel even more comfortable stepping into the AWS Cloud.”

— **Sarah Christen**  
Assistant Director  
of Community  
Platforms and  
Cloudification  
Services, Cornell  
University

## The solution

After reviewing solutions from several companies, the Cornell team selected CloudCheckr to manage its usage of the AWS Cloud. The CloudCheckr Cloud Management Platform (CMP) is fine-tuned to help customers maximize the value of their AWS investment, mitigate security risks, and maintain regulatory compliance. CloudCheckr specializes in transforming public cloud data into actionable intelligence, tracking billing, resource inventory, services, configurations, logs, permissions and change data.

CloudCheckr was uniquely prepared to help Cornell solve its challenges and reach a higher level of effectiveness, as a member of the AWS Partner Network (APN), AWS Public Sector Partner Program, and an APN Advanced Technology Partner, AWS Government Competency Partner and AWS Security Competency Partner.

CloudCheckr’s customers include about 40 percent of all APN Premier Consulting Partners and more than 175 AWS authorized resellers. The platform uses a cross-account role in AWS Identity and Access Management (IAM) to collect data across AWS services and make optimization and security recommendations. Users can rely on preset alerts and actions, or set their own rules to clean up security groups, fix buckets, or other actions.

“We started out focused on helping public cloud users meet compliance requirements, but we discovered there was a lot of demand for cost management capabilities for the cloud,” says Aaron Klein, co-founder of CloudCheckr. “We’ve built deep functionality in both areas so we can enable our customers to automate the parts of the cloud that can be automated, optimize their usage and security, and harness the agility of the cloud.”

Users can access CloudCheckr through the AWS Marketplace, as a subscription web service, or as a self-hosted version.



“Before, we didn’t have a good way to allocate costs for specific cloud services to the colleges, departments, or other users who were benefitting from them. Now, with CloudCheckr, we can easily see who is using which resource and invoice them appropriately.”

— **Sarah Christen**  
Assitant Director  
of Community  
Platforms and  
Cloudification  
Services, Cornell  
University

## The benefits

With the help of CloudCheckr, Cornell is better able to understand and contain its cloud-related costs.

Through the CloudCheckr platform’s intuitive web portal, the Cornell IT department has comprehensive visibility into its cloud environment around the world, including billing details, resource inventory, services, configurations, logs, permissions, and changes - and can control how this information is exposed to sub-account users.

The CloudCheckr platform automatically analyzes the university’s inventory and usage of AWS services, performs more than 450 compliance checks, and produces recommendations that Cornell can use to optimize expenditures, security and performance.

Cornell is also planning to deepen and extend its use of CloudCheckr’s security features.

“At first we were mainly interested in the platform’s cost-management features, but we became really excited about how much CloudCheckr can help with security, too,” says Christen. She points out that CloudCheckr was able to help Cornell identify vulnerabilities during a malware attack that targeted a specific operating system. “Through the CloudCheckr dashboard, we were easily able to see anyone who was running an affected server in the cloud and remind them to apply the patch.”

Christen considers the CloudCheckr platform to be key to the university’s cloudification strategy.

“We want everyone to benefit from the agility, flexibility and lower cost of AWS services, but of course some people are reluctant to leave their familiar on-premises data centers,” she explains. “By offering total visibility and valuable recommendations, CloudCheckr helps people feel even more comfortable stepping into the AWS Cloud.”

Get actionable insight and total visibility for your business with a [free trial of CloudCheckr](#)



## About Spot by NetApp

The Spot by NetApp portfolio enables cloud operations teams to deliver scalability, performance and security for cloud infrastructure and applications — at the lowest possible cost — through continuous automation and optimization combined with deep visibility and governance. From cloud-native startups to global enterprises and managed services providers, thousands of customers rely on Spot solutions to unlock the full value of the cloud.