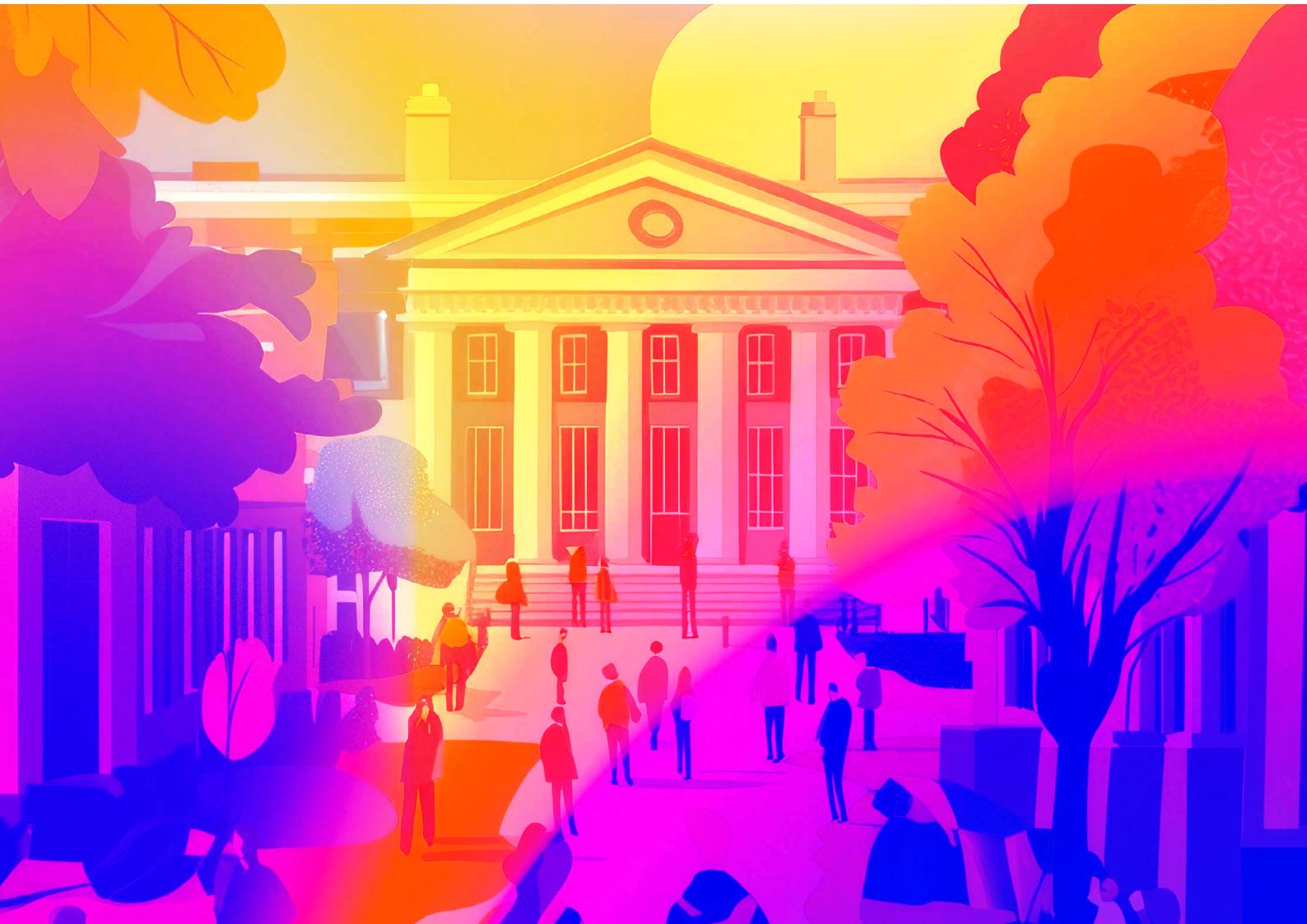2025 CASE STUDY

How the University of Maryland Partnered with BigID to Save Over $5M in Risk Exposure

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The University of Maryland (UMD) is a premier public research institution, managing vast amounts of digital and research data across diverse fields. With a team of over 10,000 employees—including faculty, researchers, and support staff—the campus operates in a dynamic, data-driven environment where safeguarding sensitive information is essential.

Like many organizations, UMD relies heavily on cloud storage solutions such as Google Drive, Office365, and Box, spanning a 2.5-petabyte environment. While policies were in place to prevent sensitive data from being stored in these systems, behavioral controls alone proved insufficient. Over time, the university identified growing risk exposure, with sensitive personal information scattered and potentially unprotected in the cloud.

The Challenge: Managing Sensitive Data at Scale

Joseph Gridley, UMD's Chief Privacy Officer, leads SPARCS—Security, Privacy, Audit, Risk, and Compliance Services—a team responsible for enhancing the university's security and compliance posture. One of their most pressing concerns was reducing liability tied to high-risk data, including employee records, intellectual property, and regulated information.

With limited resources, SPARCS needed a way to efficiently identify and mitigate risk across their vast data environment. The goal was clear: uncover hidden sensitive data, take action to remediate exposure, and improve compliance without adding operational burden.

The Approach: Identify Sensitive and Dark Data, Take Action, & Reduce Risk

UMD leveraged BigID to locate tens of thousands of exposed sensitive records across its cloud storage platforms. Identifying risk, however, was only the first step—mitigating it was just as critical. By implementing remediation workflows, the university took immediate action, moving or deleting improperly stored data and significantly cutting its risk footprint.

The Impact: Over $5M in Risk Reduction

By partnering with BigID, UMD successfully:

- Removed 27,000+ records containing sensitive PII

- Reduced its overall risk footprint and attack surface

- Eliminated redundant, obsolete, and trivial (ROT) data

According to IBM's 2024 Cost of a Data Breach Report, the average cost of a breach reached $4.88 million in 2024, with PII being the most expensive type of record at $189 per record. By proactively cleaning up its environment, UMD reduced risk exposure by over $5 million ($5,140,800 to be exact), while strengthening its approach to data security, compliance, and governance.

What's Next?

With significant risk reduction achieved, UMD is now exploring additional strategies with BigID, including:

Automated remediation workflows
to minimize manual intervention and streamline risk mitigation

Data lifecycle management
to improve records retention, reduce attack surfaces, and enhance data quality

Access intelligence
to address overexposed data and excessive permissions

Expanded implementation
across additional cloud services and on-premises environments

As organizations continue to navigate complex data challenges, UMD's approach highlights the importance of a scalable, proactive strategy for managing risk, securing sensitive information, and ensuring compliance in an evolving digital landscape.

About BigID

BigID helps organizations connect the dots across data & AI: for security, privacy, compliance, and AI data management. BigID enables customers to find, understand, manage, protect, and take action on high risk & high value data, wherever it lives.

Customers use BigID to reduce their AI & data risk, automate security and privacy controls, achieve compliance, and understand their data throughout their entire data landscape: from the cloud, on-prem, and everywhere in between.

Connect the Dots Across Data & AI

Security • Compliance • Privacy • AI Data Management

Reduce risk, accelerate time to insight, and get data visibility and control across all your data - everywhere.

" **Tools like BigID are the future.**
Organizations should be leveraging these tools to remove the manual processes from data discovery, provide better visibility, and help with prioritization of controls.

IDC
Ryan O'Leary
Future of Trust: Battling Data Discovery Confusion