Tangent schemes of determinantal varieties

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A particularly nice property for an algebraic variety is to have rational singularities. For example, it is known that determinantal varieties have rational singularities. I will define the property and illustrate some of its geometric consequences. Then I will outline a method to prove that tangent schemes of determinantal varieties have a main component that also has rational singularities. This is a preliminary report on joint work with Greg Smith (Queen's) and Jerzy Weyman (UConn).