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UNH Launches New Initiative in Business Analytics to Meet Growing Student and Employer Demand

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Producers and editors: Dean Merrill-Sands is available for interviews as are faculty members, Paul College graduates working in the field and business leaders. Please email erika.mantz@unh.edu (mailto:erika.mantz@unh.edu) for contact information.

DURHAM, N.H.—The University of New Hampshire’s Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics has launched a new business analytics initiative aimed at providing New Hampshire and regional businesses with the critical help they need to sustain a competitive advantage—graduates who can harness the power of big data and support to help them employ analytics tools to create value for their business.



“This investment in the business analytics initiative will enable Paul College to build on its strong foundation and accelerate its educational offerings, research contributions and industry engagement in this critical field that is reshaping business worldwide,” said Peter T. Paul ’67. “The college is now recognized as one of the nation’s top business schools and I am proud to make this new investment to help it go from good to great as a significant player in this fast-evolving and growing field.” A \$6 million gift from Peter T. Paul ’67 launched the initiative to educate more students and increase engagement with businesses.

Business analysts are often thought of as the bridge between IT departments and management. They are technologically and business savvy and can take large quantities of data, analyze it to build reports that help make sense of it and provide actionable insights to drive strategic decision-making in their organizations.

In response to growing student and employer demand for undergraduate and graduate education in business analytics, Paul College is strengthening its offerings in this area. The college offers an undergraduate specialization in information systems and business analytics which has more than 180 students enrolled. At the graduate level, there is a popular specialization in analytics in its MBA program, new master’s programs in business analytics and analytical economics, and a specialization in financial analytics in its master’s in finance program.

“Our vision is to build out a comprehensive and integrated business analytics initiative that will drive the expansion of programs, course offerings, enrollments, research and engagement to meet student and industry demand,” said Dean Deborah Merrill-Sands. “We are developing business analytics as a specific area of academic expertise that will further distinguish us among business schools.”

The \$6 million investment will enable the college to:

- Accelerate the hiring of faculty to expand teaching and research capacity
- Provide scholarships and assistantships to attract high-performing graduate students and support upper-level undergraduate students
- Establish a new Center for Business Analytics

“The field of business analytics is not entirely new, however, with the rapid growth in the amount of data produced by businesses and advances in computing technology the field is rapidly changing, and it is also changing the manner in which many business decisions are made,” said Khole Gwebu, associate professor of decision sciences. “There are many problems that students graduating with a degree concentration in business analytics can tackle. One example is in the area of fraud detection and prevention.”

Gwebu explained that whenever companies engage in transactions there is an opportunity for fraudulent activities to occur. Using statistical techniques or artificial intelligence techniques such as deep learning, business analytics professionals can help companies effectively and efficiently detect and mitigate fraud.

The Center for Business Analytics, which will launch this spring, will serve as the “hub” for companies and organizations to engage with to learn new skills, connect with students and professors to help find solutions to real problems and to discover talent for internships and employment.

Richard Ackerman '96, vice president of workforce development at Red River in Claremont, said UNH's expansion of its business analytics programs is a win-win for students and businesses. He has sponsored student capstone projects that help the company get ideas for solutions they may not have considered, and those projects also help gauge the talent of the students, who they sometimes hire.

“There is a tremendous need for graduates who can understand and work across the disciplines, massage the data and visualize it, while also understanding the needs and wants of the business, the challenges and constraints, and the market space in which they operate,” he said.

For more information on the initiative visit <https://paulcollege.unh.edu/business-analytics-initiative> (<https://paulcollege.unh.edu/business-analytics-initiative>).

Courtesy photos available for download:

Paul College building photo: <https://unh.box.com/s/em01j2mxcviui60ld9lqx5s2r2mk1bbq> (<https://unh.box.com/s/em01j2mxcviui60ld9lqx5s2r2mk1bbq>)

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