

## Making Sense of Big Data

**UNH Center for Business Analytics and Synectics create unique partnership to bring real-world, big-data problems to students**

Friday, August 19, 2022



THE SYNECTICS EXECUTIVE TEAM, INCLUDING COO JEFF SPEARS, VISITED THE UNH CENTER FOR BUSINESS ANALYTICS TO KICK OFF THE FIRST LARGE-SCALE INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP.

When the University of New Hampshire's [Center for Business Analytics](#) launched last year, it laid out its mission to connect industry partners with the university's talented pool of students and faculty. The goal is two-fold: to help companies harness the power of big data and employ analytics tools to create value for their business, as well as to provide educational opportunities for

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students to build their capacity to manage and analyze data through real-world projects.

This summer the center secured its first large-scale partnership with [Synectics for Management Decisions, Inc.](#), an Arlington, Virginia-based solutions specialist company focused on federal data—gathering, storing, cleaning, analyzing, visualizing, reporting on, and ultimately making it meaningful for stakeholders and their constituents.

The executive team, including Chief Operating Officer [Jeff Spears](#), visited the center to kick-off the partnership and meet with the interns working on their projects, other students, faculty, staff, and stakeholders. In August, Synectics hosted the center for three days in Washington, D.C., to learn more about the company and the city, and to share their progress on the analysis projects. This was the first time the students interns had visited D.C.

“What makes this partnership unique is that we are bringing industry right onsite to work on real projects for Synectics,” said [Nagaraj Bukkapatnam](#), director of UNH’s Center for Business Analytics, which is part of the [Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics](#). COO Jeff Spears is at the center four times a month to mentor students and hold office hours for anyone interested in learning about data analytics or governmental contracting.

Spears said the partnership was seeded by the company’s desire to open an office in another state. It considered Texas, Florida and New Hampshire and ultimately landed in New Hampshire when he learned of the UNH Center for Business Analytics.

“What impressed me was the dual mission of

Having Synectics on-site at the center for this project is already making an impact on several graduate student interns. The project

supporting students from across academic disciplines and working in partnership with industry,” Synectics COO Jeff Spears said. “I now work with a team of interns who are not only strengthening their analytical skills, but also leading a team and building project management skills – both in demand when they graduate and move into industry.”



team includes Paul College students [Cynthia Liu](#), (MBA), [Ali Mara](#) (PhD Economics), [Jarín Tasnim](#) (MS Finance) and Project Manager [Fahime Ebrahimi](#) (PhD Economics).

Ebarhimi, who earned her undergraduate degree in industrial engineering from Yazd University and master’s in economics from the Institute for Management and Planning Studies in Iran, came to UNH to pursue her doctoral degree in economics. As project manager, she leads the team as they work on complex analytics problems using a tool called UiPath, which makes software robots to automate large data files for clients.

“The project I’m working on is helping me gain new skills, allowing me to apply my knowledge in a real-world case, as well as make connections in the industry,” said Ebarhimi.

Spears elaborated on the students’ project describing how they are working directly with Synectics data scientists to automate a process that is currently labor intensive.



*Synectics this summer hosted the Center for Business Analytics staff and student interns for three days in Washington, D.C., to learn about the company and city and to share progress on the analysis project.*

“Our analysts work with data from so many sources and the way that data is organized and presented is not consistent—things like different fonts, spacing or characters require an editor to manually make that data consistent,” Spears said. “For this tool being developed by the center interns, the goal is to prove it can work in the lab environment and eventually in real business operations, ultimately freeing up the time of data scientists to work on the more complex problems.”

Spears said that while the team understands the tools, they need subject-matter experts to understand what the data is being used for. Giving students the opportunity to build cutting-edge skills with companies like Synectics provides them with a competitive advantage to enter the workforce.

Bukkapatnam said that in addition to working with students, Spears will be delivering a series of no-cost workshops for businesses interested in government contract work. Spears and the center will also work with the [NH Small Business Development Center](#) to help their clients address business problems. The

center's paid student interns essentially become consultants for these businesses.

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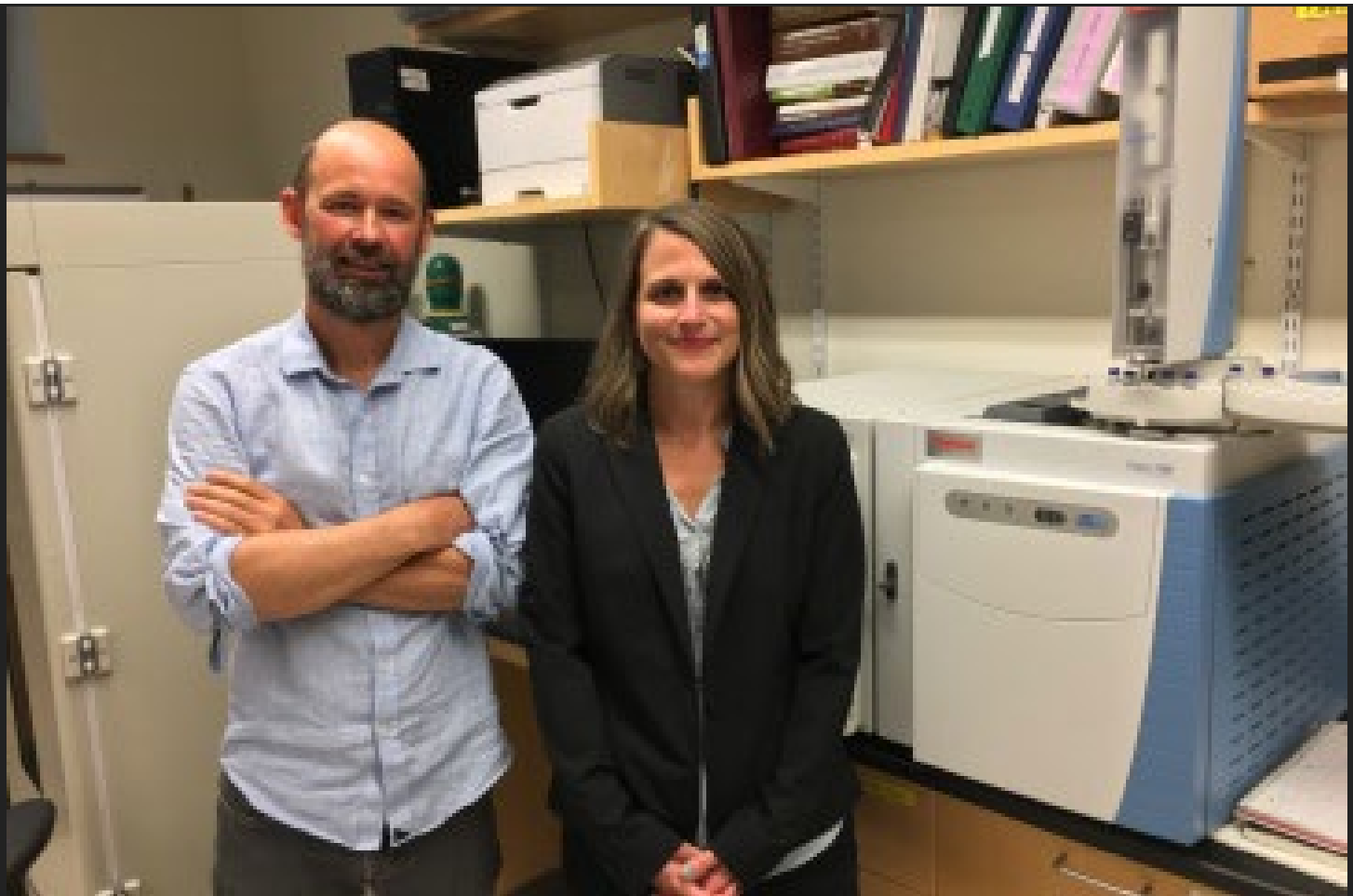
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