Last fall, Lake Forest College launched data science, a new interdisciplinary academic offering, to meet an intensifying demand for expertise in the management and analysis of data.

The new program emphasizes instruction and training in the areas of quantitative finance and economics, statistical analysis, and computer science—particularly, computer vision and “big data” strategies. While it falls under the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, the program is designed to add value to and complement any major and is easily accessible to all students, requiring no previous computing instruction and only successful completion of high-school mathematics. This accessibility allows students from all fields to easily study data science and apply that knowledge to their own careers and fields of study.

“The field of data science has grown out of the reality that everything in society today revolves around data,” said DeJuran Richardson, Ernest H. Volwiler Professor of Mathematics, Chair of Mathematics and Computer Science. “There’s the need to be able to acquire data in an efficient way, store it in an efficient way, summarize it in meaningful ways, and then analyze it in order to make decisions. Data science deals with all of that.”

Students are working with faculty on many data science research projects, including statistical analysis of the intensity and rate of helmet contacts in college football, image-based classification of body language poses to emotions, applying machine learning and statistical algorithms on the human genome to predict colorectal cancer, and developing software in collaboration with the Department of Preventive Medicine at Rush University Medical Center of Chicago.

Because of those research opportunities and training, Foresters studying data science have already found internships at Abbott Laboratories, Accenture, Airspace, Wolverine Trading, and many other companies. Students who have studied data science have gone on to pursue career paths in actuarial science, biostatistics, data analytics, financial analysis, machine learning engineering, marketing analytics, and sports analytics. Based on the growing need for data science experts, faculty anticipate enrollment in this major to out-pace those in math or computer science.

Students already enrolled in the new major are enthusiastic about the program. “What the College is doing with its data science program is giving students a very strong basis in computer science as a whole,” said George Napier ‘20, a double major in computer science and neuroscience.

While exploring master’s degree programs for his next step after graduating from Lake Forest College, data science major Leo Carrico ‘20 has discovered the work he is doing now at the College will have a big impact on his future success. “When I’m talking to recruiters for those programs, they always mention that doing both research and getting an undergraduate degree in data science is extremely beneficial to work on my master’s and to find a job after graduation,” Carrico said.

Nationally, Illinois is becoming a leader in the field of data science. The state ranks fourth nationally with 9,160 professionals employed in data science-related occupations. Statewide, jobs in the field have grown by 16.6 percent annually since 2013—more than twice the national growth rate of 7.9 percent.

The Illinois Science and Technology Institute—a STEM-focused nonprofit that provides programs and partnerships to connect companies with classrooms—featured Lake Forest College’s data science program in its 2019 Talent Index. ISTI has connected 1,700 students from 40 schools with over 450 mentors from companies around the state.

—Linda Blaser

Watch the video and learn more about Data Science at lakeforest.edu/datascience
COMING SOON:
OPPENHEIMER CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

The right learning and work environment can make all the difference as today’s students look for new ways to collaborate, innovate, and problem solve. That’s why the College is creating a new center for entrepreneurship and innovation in a prime space in the Donnelley and Lee Library, centrally located on Middle Campus.

Designed specifically for the College’s most popular and growing minor, the Oppenheimer Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (OC) will “facilitate collaboration in the pursuit of identifying problems worth solving and mobilizing the people, resources, and networks to solve them,” Chair of Entrepreneurship and Innovation and Associate Professor of Economics Amanda Felkey said.

The new space is made possible by a donation from two alumni, Jim ‘65 and Harry ‘66 Oppenheimer, along with their brother, Ted. Located on the second floor of the library in the area that once housed the College’s periodical reading room, “the OC will be designed to provide spaces and opportunities for students to think, do, and share in a way that will foster the entrepreneurial mindset, and spark and nurture entrepreneurial activity and innovation,” Director of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program (ENTP) Patricia “Trish” Thomas said.

In addition to providing a home for the ENTP program, the new center will be a place for students to collaborate with each other, faculty, mentors, and community members. To that end, students enrolled last fall in Thomas’ Entrepreneurial and Social Ventures I: Product-Market Fit class worked together to develop the programming needs for the new space, including areas to think, do, and share. “Their work informed and interacted with designs for the space professionally developed in the same timeframe,” President Schutt said.

As a result of that collaboration, the Oppenheimer Center will feature shared workspaces, a classroom that can convert to a public presentation space, video conferencing screens, whiteboards, locked storage, designated workspaces for students pursuing real-world ventures, and as much sound-absorbing material as possible.

“The Oppenheimer Entrepreneurship and Innovation Center will give all students an effective and meaningful space to collaborate with each other, mentors, and community stakeholders in a positive, functional, and flexible environment,” Thomas said. Watch for the grand opening in September 2020.

—Linda Blaser

Extraordinary things are accomplished when Foresters come together.

February 27, 2020: a day when hundreds of Foresters—alumni, parents, faculty, staff, students, and friends—celebrate the Forester Family and give back. Foresters will gather online and in-person to advance the College’s future.

We are Lake Forest. This is Forester Day.

Advocate Share Celebrate

For more information, go to lakeforest.edu/foresterday
“The Prophet” is a slim, 107-page collection of prose poetry fables that was among the best-selling books of the 20th century. Selling more than 9 million copies in the US alone, “The Prophet” is one of the most translated books in history.

“I have always found the quality of the language intriguing, and when I learned that the book had come into the public domain, I knew this would be a perfect vehicle for one of my music projects,” said Meyer, professor of music. “I also knew we had a talented group of student musicians this year and was excited about the opportunity to feature them on the album.”

Inspired, Meyer spent last summer writing original music to 15 of the book’s 26 poems with specific student musicians and a student narrator in mind. The resulting pieces were performed in a combined live music and spoken word concert in Lily Reid Holt Memorial Chapel on November 21. Meyer hand-picked Fernand Qvyjt ’20 to provide the vocal narration. “I was so happy to help Professor Meyer on this project,” Qvyjt said. “I wanted to give back to him for helping me so much throughout my four years at the College.”

Pianist Tam Nguyen ’20 felt much the same. “I think the whole idea and concept of this album is very unique,” she said. “I was struck by the beautiful words and I love that the performance features real musicians who are students, like me. I was very excited to be performing at the concert as part of this fantastic ensemble.”

The pieces, featuring nine student musicians, a narrator, and Meyer, is available on CD. The CD was recorded in the Lake Forest sound studio V/ES Lachot Design Group, which is headed by Dustin Bennett who has a Lake Forest College connection: He is the grandson of late Lake Forest College Professor of English Ken Bennett.

—Peter DiPietro ’20
SAVE THE DATE

HOMECOMING WEEKEND
OCTOBER 9–10, 2020

Featuring Signature Weekend Events: Grand Opening of the Oppenheimer Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, FanFest, Football Game vs. Macalester College


HOMECOMING IS OPEN TO ALUMNI, PARENTS, AND FRIENDS OF THE COLLEGE.

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