Data is the New Oil - UConn MSBAPM with Haley Reierson and Giovanna Nogueira Sa

[00:00:00] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:00:00] Hey everyone. Welcome back to The LAUNCH Podcast. This is Kayla Hogrefe, academic advisor for UConn School of Business on the Hartford campus

[00:00:16] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:00:16] and I'm Emma Bjorngard-Basayne, academic advisor in the school of business at the Stamford campus. In this episode we talk to Giovanna, Nogueira and Haley Reierson. Giovanna is a graduate student in the MSBAPM program, which stands for the business analytics and project management program.

[00:00:33] And Haley is a student in the 4 plus one program. So just to give you a little bit of an overview of the MSBAPM program. So the MSBAPM program equips students with business analytics and project management skills. Some of their graduates have held positions such as data analysts, analytics managers, and data scientists in industries like technology, healthcare, retail, and travel.

[00:00:58] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:00:58] And I think what's really cool [00:01:00] about this program is it prepares you for careers in a variety of industries. So every industry pretty much nowadays uses analytics from music to sports. we're going to hear a Haley and Giovanna talk about their project with Swanson baseball, and how. They are implementing their technical and soft skills and helping high school baseball players get recruited to play college baseball.

[00:01:24] So it's really cool. And it stuff that you can do remotely. you're working in person, face to face with companies. You're working with people from all over the world. so without further ado, let's listen to Haley and Giovanna share their experience with the master's program in business analytics and project management.

[00:01:49] Can you each tell us a bit about yourselves? Start with your names, and then you can share your undergraduate majors, maybe what you were involved in and your goals and interests.

[00:01:58] **Haley Reierson:** [00:01:58] My name is Haley Haley [00:02:00] Reierson. I'm a management information student, so I'm still an undergraduate right now, but I'm in the four plus one program. Sorta professionally , my goals sort of, I don't really have a short term goal, but my long term goal would potentially to be working with the MLB, in like an analytics capacity. So this I think is a really awesome way to get myself into that goal. and so. Way more short term goals is really just to get a lot of hands on experience, and learn whatever I can learn what I actually like to do.

[00:02:25]and then for interests, I have minors in Spanish and in American studies. So I really like learning, like history and culture. and then I love sports. Obviously. I love baseball. I'm an announcer for the baseball team. When we have baseball. Yeah. And then I play a couple sports. I play club field hockey, and then a couple of Gaelic sports.

[00:02:45] So I'm pretty involved in the sports scene.

[00:02:49] **Giovanna Nogueira Sa:** [00:02:49] And my name is Giovanna. I'm an international student from the program. I'm finishing my third semester in the program right now, and I'll probably be graduating in the fall. I'm from Brazil. I [00:03:00] graduated in my undergrad in industrial engineering back in my country.

[00:03:04]and as soon as I graduated, I started working for a technology company. That has always been one of my goals, doing my undergrad and about my interests. I, during the program, I developed a really big interest in to visual analytics, which is very related to what I do now. And, I got very passionate about how do we communicate better, better our results, and how do we.

[00:03:30] Make it easier for people that don't understand the data world. How do they see the data and how do they understand what we're trying to tell them?

[00:03:38] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:03:38] Great. And I'm actually interested in both of your answers to the next question. So we'll, we'll start with you again. Giovanna can you tell us why you decided to pursue the UConn master's program and business analytics and project management?

[00:03:51] **Giovanna Nogueira Sa:** [00:03:51] I've always wanted to pursue a master's degree internationally, so when I started looking at my options. I saw, I found this program that was [00:04:00] a mix of both the technical skills that I wanted and the project management side. In my previous work, I used to work a lot with, agile mindset, design thinking.

[00:04:12] So I already had the project management experience, but I really wanted the technical skills to be able to. Develop and build some models that I've, I've looked into my undergrad, but I've never got, went deeper. So yeah, I found this program and I thought it would be really interesting, interesting to go.

[00:04:31] And yeah, that's what mostly made me choose this program.

[00:04:34]**Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:04:34] and Haley, what about you? What made you choose the four plus one option?

[00:04:38] **Haley Reierson:** [00:04:38] So for me, I actually hadn't even heard about it until about a year ago. they had the networking and alumni dinner for the MIS major and I had met somebody there who was in the program and he was mentioning like how it was a really, really awesome program for somebody who's an undergrad to get more experience and then potentially get into the business world pretty quickly, [00:05:00] after graduating. And so I thought that was really interesting. And I talked to some of the other alumni there who hadn't necessarily had that program available, but said that would be something that they would have wanted to pursue what they were in an undergrad. So that sort of made me think, Hey, I should apply.

[00:05:15] And so I was able to get in for the fall. and so I guess another reason why I had applied was that I, I wanted to have more options. For once I graduated. I'm lucky enough to have a job after I graduate college, so I'm gonna be pursuing it part time. But in the moment of when I was selecting to apply, I really wanted to have the opportunity to be able to choose and say, if the job market was looking really not strong, I didn't want it to be able to know like, Hey, I can go and get an undergraduate degree or another graduate degree after I finished my graduate degree.

[00:05:47] That will give me an opportunity to put myself ahead. If a job market gets particularly competitive or difficult. and even then, I'm able to do it now as a part time program with my full time job. And that'll really [00:06:00] give me the chance to apply what I'm learning in class to my job and what I'm learning in my job to class simultaneously.

[00:06:05] So that was something that was a big draw for me.

[00:06:07] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:06:07] My understanding is that you are taking classes that apply to your undergraduate major and the graduate degree

[00:06:13] **Haley Reierson:** [00:06:13] Yes. Right now, I am taking the stats for business analytics, 5603, and then the predictive modeling class. And so they both count for undergraduate electives.

[00:06:25]and so that's, they kind of tie in because I'm a management information system, so it's kind of like business and it combined. And so it sorta. I'm focusing mostly on the technical side. I could have taken a project management as my other one, but I chose those two because I was a little bit more interested in the technical side while I'm still an undergrad.

[00:06:42] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:06:42] And I understand that you are working on a project with Swanson baseball as a part of the MSBAPM program. So I'll just throw that question out there. Whoever wants to answer, can you just tell us a little bit about that project? and maybe even if you're still working on it since we've, you know, [00:07:00] had social distancing enacted, how has that sort of pivoted since we've been there?

[00:07:05] **Giovanna Nogueira Sa:** [00:07:05] So, this one's in baseball project is part of the CABA project, which is one of the many opportunities we have in the program to work with. we will companies, and the project is basically, related to a baseball facility in which they help prospective players in, in college to, achieve their goals. And I guess Haley can explain that better after. but I think this is just one of them. Any opportunities we have to work with, we would companies and, we get the opportunity to work face to face with clients and understand their expectations and what what we can provide to them. And I think one of the main things that made me decide to apply to this specific project is the fact that it's related to a topic that I've never had like [00:08:00] a lot of experience with. Yeah. So sports, and I've always watched baseball and everything, but. I, I've never played with the data.

[00:08:10] So it's really fun for me to like learn and get in touch with like people like Haley that knows a lot about baseball. So, this is very good to me. And also, we have to deal with

like all of the unforeseen boundaries that we're dealing right now, like the covid 19 pandemic, and we have actually an opportunity to make an impact to someone's business.

[00:08:34] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:08:34] So Haley, maybe you can tell us about the baseball and aspect of it and what types of analytics you're getting and analyzing.

[00:08:43] **Haley Reierson:** [00:08:43] Yeah, so it's a really cool project. So essentially the Swanson, baseball facility is, An Academy where players can come. Usually it's high school players, but they also have younger players as well.

[00:08:55] And they come and they're able to train themselves physically. so like, obviously like strength training and that [00:09:00] sort of stuff, but also can, continue to develop their baseball skills. And so what. One thing that's been getting really big in baseball recently is analytics. And so using technology essentially to capture as much information as possible about the motions of the body essentially.

[00:09:16] And then use that information to improve as a player, potentially to provide yourself benchmarks to aim for. and so for us, what our job is, is to create a business plan that. Allows Swanson baseball to capitalize on using those analytics to improve players and helping help them get into college programs.

[00:09:39] And so a lot of things that we're doing, we're working with different technology like the, Blast motion bats, which is essentially like a cap that goes on the end of a baseball bat. And it collects a variety of pieces of data, like the attack angle and the, I think it's the bat speed and the hand speed are just three things off the [00:10:00] top of my head that it - it collects so much information and so you can use that.

[00:10:04] And so say a player has an angle of attack that's they're essentially batting downward. So they're hitting the ball down towards the ground. That's not something that they like anymore. They want to have a, I guess, a more positive angle of attack so that they're launching that ball out. So the launch angle is something that we hear is that it's going up into the air instead of into the ground.

[00:10:24] And so our job is to take all of those pieces of information and then create a dashboard that shows. These players like, okay, this is what your angle of attack is right now. You're sitting at like say five and you know, you really need to be able to get that up to say 15 to be able to get that ball out of the park if you have that power.

[00:10:44] So we're creating a dashboard that ties in all of the different pieces of information that the player needs so that they can. Look at that and see how to approve and like one way that that's really applicable in the real world or the not the real world cause this his real world. But in the [00:11:00] major leagues, like one way that you can see how this ties all together is, I've been listening to a lot of information from Trevor Bauer who is a pitcher and he was talking about himself and Sonny Gray, who's another pitcher, and they were talking about how through using analytics in this video technology, they were able to.

[00:11:16] Essentially, Sonny Gray was able to develop a slider, which is absolutely incredible. It's a type of pitch that moves across the zone. And he was able to develop a

really impressive slider in just a few sessions with the data analytics, which you wouldn't have been able to do before. And so what we're doing is bringing that technology and that ability to, I guess what Swanson baseball is doing is bringing that information to players so that they can continue to develop their game and improve on a really high level. so I then know that's definitely a little adept.

[00:11:47] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:11:47] Like that is so cool. And it's like listening to the two of you talk about it. You're obviously passionate about it, so it's just really great to see that you're getting these technical and tangible skills [00:12:00] like with software and statistics and analytics and predictive modeling, but you can apply it across a variety of industries and kind of mold it to your specific interests, which is cool. So do you, are you aware of any of your, like colleagues. In the program that are working in other, on other cool projects or other cool internships like in music or anything like that?

[00:12:21]

[00:12:21] **Giovanna Nogueira Sa:** [00:12:21] yeah, so I have some friends working with the experiential learning collaborative, the ELC. They work with also real world companies and I've helped them to do like a video. They are creating a webpage for the company. I don't know. The, the essence of the project, but I know they are like working with like face to face with the client and doing, all they can to like help them achieve theirgoal

[00:12:49] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:12:49] One of you or both of you could answer this next question. How do you expect the skills you've gained through your internships and courses? how do you expect that they will apply to jobs? Postgrad? and you've kind of [00:13:00] already answered this question, but if you maybe have gained new skills since we've had to pivot entirely online, or maybe you've had to work on your, communication skills with people that are from different parts of the world. So if you want to talk a little bit about that.

[00:13:15] **Haley Reierson:** [00:13:15] At least on my end. It's definitely been interesting, like getting to experience, working with people in different, different sections of the world. I have one class, where. We know we're in, two of us are in Hartford or in in the new England area, and then the other person is essentially 12 hours ahead of us in China.

[00:13:33] And so for us, creating, creating, making sure that we're creating times that's possible for all of us to communicate has definitely been a bit of a challenge, but also really interesting. And it also kind of results in a kind of cool dynamic that I hadn't. Thought of before, but you know, I can complete some work at, you know, say 10 at night, and then I can pass it over to him and he's starting it at new noon his time, and then he can pass it off to me following morning at 10:00 [00:14:00] AM and it's, it's essentially, it can be perpetually working on a project, which is an interesting sort of way of attacking things, but it definitely has meant that we've had to be very clear about one word.

[00:14:08] When we're planning to meet, so, Hey, I'm meeting at 10 10. Is that 10:00 AM Hartford time or is that 10:00 AM in China? so that's definitely required a lot of communication and just in general, getting comfortable with using these online technologies has been really important. I think even if like.

[00:14:25] Everything goes back to normal, and everybody's having those in person meetings still. I wouldn't be surprised if a lot of this technology ends up being carried over. and so I definitely am happy and able to have those skills.

[00:14:36] **Giovanna Nogueira Sa:** [00:14:36] Yeah. If I can add to what Haley said, I think. Summarizing what she said. I was talking to Meghan, our program director the other day, and she said something that I totally agree with her.

[00:14:48] She said, what we're gathering from this, these adverse times that we have, we're having is that we're getting the ability to adapt to those like, [00:15:00] adverse situations that we're having. So. That is like a, a really, high demanding skills from the companies and any company you go into there. I'm looking for candidates that have the ability to adapt and go through challenges without having to, without struggling a lot.

[00:15:20] So I guess this would be my main takeaway from this experience.

[00:15:24] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:15:24] Why, in your opinion, should they go ahead and apply and become a part of the program?

[00:15:30] **Giovanna Nogueira Sa:** [00:15:30] I think that nowadays everything has data and every market you look, you can find, something to work with and something you need to like thrive to go to.

[00:15:41] And a lot of people say that data is the new oil. So looking at an analyst perspective. Adding to the technical part, the project management side can only bring the best results possible because you will be able to communicate better and like gained the explainability of the data that you have. [00:16:00] and of course they will be challenged, but at the same time, they feel that the expertise that they are gaining can be applied to any field as we said, doing all these podcasts. And. I think that they will also can expect a very, good support from all this amazing staff that we have, the faculty that program advisors, career counselors, they're always like working really hard so that they can deliver to us the best content and experience that they can.

[00:16:30] **Haley Reierson:** [00:16:30] I definitely agree with that. I, I've only really been doing things, for for a semester, but I mean, already in this semester, I've been able to gain invaluable skills in, in predictive modeling and really start to understand statistics in the business context. And in addition to that, I've, you know, I've been able to in my first semester as a senior in undergrad, help out with a real business case and help, Swanson and baseball [00:17:00] as they develop something that they're probably going to be using in years in the future. And so it's really cool how, like, I, I hadn't even known that that was an option. And then, my predictive modeling professor was like, Hey, like, I think I had just mentioned it in an offhand comment.

[00:17:14] Like, I really like baseball and I want to. I dunno, I think I was looking through data and I wanted to do something related to baseball. And she, she was saying, you know, Hey, have you heard about this baseball, opportunity? And I hadn't heard of it at all cause I just had an in. so she, she essentially got me the chance to come and give it a go.

[00:17:32] And I definitely wouldn't have had that chance if I didn't have such a supportive teacher. So I think as Jay was saying, that the support is really incredible. And, and everybody there really wants you to do well. And I mean also you're getting really good skills. And even if you don't necessarily remember or know how to use everything, you know, say five years from now, it doesn't mean that you haven't learned how to learn those skills that are going to be applicable.

[00:17:56] I mean, data is constantly changing. Technology is [00:18:00] constantly changing. And so the. Specifics might change, but the underlying context and what you've learned will be able to help you move forward, and really be that adaptable person as you continue throughout your career. Cause I think as you were saying, adaptability is a really important part of being a good employee.

[00:18:29] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:18:29] that was such a great interview, Kayla. I love that you could hear how passionate they both are about the project they're working on and how exciting it is that they can use their interests. In their work through the MSBAPM program, and it really seems like the MSBAPM program provides students the opportunity to use what they're passionate and interested in and build that into the work that they are leading.

[00:18:54] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:18:54] Yeah. It seems pretty customizable like that you have that analytics, know how [00:19:00] that software and programming and some statistics. And you can really hone in on your industry. So whether that's music or health care or sports, or even if you want to work for a casino and like run analytics on the casino aspect of things, energy, all of those different industries are a great opportunity to use those analytic skills.

[00:19:19] So I agree with you. They seem to really into it. I also really love how they articulated, like the ability to apply the skills they're learning, whether that's working with people across the world in different time zones, working remotely like we have to do now. you can pivot those skills to, even when we come back to normal after being home during this pandemic.

[00:19:41] There are skills that can be applied to their jobs.

[00:19:43] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:19:43] Yeah. I also really liked something that Haley mentioned about how, you know, things change in terms of technology and data constantly. It's so even if you forget something you learned five years ago or it is no longer relevant, you have [00:20:00] gained the skills to learn what you learned and you can always draw on that in the future. As you learn new things and develop new skills. I just liked that kind of perspective.

[00:20:10] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:20:10] Yeah, I agree. And as always, if you are interested in the MSBAPM and maybe the four plus one program, we'll put the links to those websites in the episode notes and you can explore those and talk to your school business advisor for more information as well.

[00:20:25] We can definitely put you in contact with the right people and get you set up there.

[00:20:29] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:20:29] And remember what Giovanna said that data is the new oil.

[00:20:34] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:20:34] Data is the new oil, everyone.