

Empowered by Data Visualizations: Career-Changing Training in Visual Analytics

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Data visualization and visual analytics techniques are key to understanding and acting on the complex data encountered in most industries today. Without these components, data collection can feel overwhelming and the cost of collecting and organizing large data sets can seem hard to justify.

This was the case with Leah Scherschel in 2019. With a bachelor's degree in biology, Leah had a good job working as a quality control microbiologist at a local pharmaceutical company where the team was struggling to make good use of massive amounts of data. The data wasn't clean, it wasn't particularly well organized, and she was lacking the tools to "unlock" the data. It was frustrating.

At about this time Leah enrolled in the [Visual Analytics Certificate \(VAC\) course](#) offered by the Cyberinfrastructure for Network Science Center (CNS) in the Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering at Indiana University. She and other students in the course used their new skills and knowledge to identify user needs and priorities. They then learned how to identify the best data, algorithms, and workflows for solving real-world challenges through case studies from well-known, contemporary corporations and through data from their own organizations.

The class changed the trajectory of Leah's career. Impressed with the high caliber coursework and an approach that set students up for success, Leah experienced firsthand how to create visualizations that guide strategic decision-making and facilitate new insights. She found the class so beneficial that it solidified her decision to obtain a master's degree in data science at the Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering. "The class provided a step by step approach to create visualizations that provide actionable insights for stakeholders and clients. This was exactly what I needed in my pharma job and realized that data science is the work that I actually wanted to do." After obtaining her master's degree she was hired as data science research assistant at CNS.

Multiple employers have sent staff to the Visual Analytics Certificate class, including Eli Lilly and Company, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), The Boeing Company, the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Crane Division (NSWC Crane), and others. Participants who successfully complete the course earn 3 CEUs and a professional certification in Visual Analytics.

If you are looking to add to your skillset or wish to make a career shift, enroll in the 2021 VAC class. You might also consider giving the gift of knowledge to friends and colleagues for the holidays! The next 6-week VAC course begins on January 18, 2021 and runs through February 28. For more information and to register, visit: <https://visanalytics.cns.iu.edu/> or contact Nancy Ruschman, CNS Project Manager, at nruschma@indiana.edu.