# Role of data grows in college programs

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Finance concept

Higher education programs in finance are feeling the influence of technology these days.

Driven by a surge in student interest and the wants of prospective employers, most local programs are placing emphasis on data analytics, which means using statistical models to do deep analyses on financial data.

Canisius College opened its Nelson D. Civello Family Financial Markets Lab in 2012, which it uses to give analyst-track finance majors real-world experience in big data.

Canisius has about 320 students who either major in finance, economics or both, which is nearly triple what it had seven years ago, said Richard Wall, a Canisius professor.

"Through our lab we have a lot of access to big databases in the industry," Wall said. "We're using those databases more broadly in our finance curriculum to teach portfolio analysis, investment programs and economics."

Canisius also hosts the Golden Griffin Fund program, where a team of finance majors tackles an in-depth research project every year. The teams have had significant success in the Chartered Financial Research Challenge contest in recent years, with this year's team advancing to the Americas Finals round.

Canisius is preparing to unveil a big data/analytics masters program for finance students as well.

In the spring, the University at Buffalo will launch a data analytics concentration, which is built to be taken with another undergraduate concentration in the School of Management. Students will take four classes that include business analytics, database management, data modeling and a fourth course.

The new concentration has been driven by student interest in business analytics courses at UB in recent years, often filling up a class even if it's not a requirement, said Deidre Marriner, director of undergraduate advisement in the School of Management.

It's expected to be popular with students with a finance concentration, who make up about 35 percent of the undergraduate business enrollment.

Niagara University has also seen the influence of big data-based decision making on its finance program.

[Tenpao Lee](#), dean of Niagara's college of business administration, pointed out that statistics has a long history of being appropriated into specific subject areas. He said Niagara keys in on translating statistics for modern financial paradigms, such as using big data to help make strategic decisions or analyze market trends.

"Students need to know information science, because technology generates a lot of information," Lee said. "You can apply this to many different industries at many different companies and kinds of ideas."



**Dan Miner**
Reporter
*Buffalo Business First*