New College Data Science Program Secures Additional Grant Funding From USDA to Support Impactful Internships

Third year of funding supports internships that apply data science and AI to real-world agricultural challenges, preparing students for high-demand careers.

SARASOTA, FL, UNITED STATES, October 3, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Master's in Applied Data Science program at New College announced today it has received nearly $98,000 in grant funding from the Agricultural Research Agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This grant will fund paid internships for students in 2025, marking the third consecutive year the USDA has sponsored the work of New College data science students. The program leverages data science and AI to address pressing challenges in agriculture, sustainability, and environmental science, while equipping students with critical skills for high-demand careers.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for our students to apply their coursework to real-world problems identified by USDA researchers," said Bernhard Klingenberg, Director of the Applied Data Science Program at New College. "The renewed USDA grant continues to provide students with practical experiences in critical fields such as food security, sustainability, and biodiversity. I look forward to continuing our collaboration with the USDA, training the next generation of data scientists to tackle complex problems and excel in high-growth careers."

Second-year data science student April Ainsworth used last summer's USDA grant to research honeybee communication through audio data. As an experienced beekeeper herself, Ainsworth continues her research this fall with the goal of mitigating honeybee population declines.

"I applied both the foundational skills and advanced technical knowledge I gained from my Master's program at New College to my USDA internship," Ainsworth said. "Thanks to my data science training, I was able to collaborate with USDA scientists on experiments investigating honeybee communication and hive conditions, which are critical to commercial pollination."

Another student, Matthew Wilcox, spent his USDA-funded summer internship researching sustainable packaging materials derived from milk proteins. His work focuses on finding eco-friendly alternatives to plastic, addressing the global environmental challenge of reducing plastic waste.

Melvin Adkins, who graduated from the program in May, now works as an analyst for a financial

consulting company. He completed a 14-week USDA internship last spring, analyzing over 1.6 million records on high-risk arthropods intercepted at U.S. ports of entry. His work aimed to assess the risk of a costly biological invasion that could cause damage to U.S. agricultural commodities.

Now in its 10th year, the Master's in Applied Data Science program at New College has a proven track record of preparing graduates for data science careers that tackle local and global challenges. The program emphasizes project-based learning and hands-on experience across industries, from agriculture to finance. Graduates are working in roles that apply data science and AI-driven solutions to critical issues such as sustainable agriculture and supply chain resilience.

"The demand for data scientists who can use AI to solve real-world challenges is at an all-time high," said New College President Richard Corcoran. "Our program equips students with the tools to make a real impact—whether they are addressing food security, climate change, or global sustainability issues. The USDA grant is a testament to the power of combining academic excellence with practical, data-driven problem-solving, preparing our students for the future."

Taught by faculty with industry experience, the program ensures students are proficient in key technologies for data processing and predictive modeling, balancing theory with hands-on application. To learn more about the program, visit ncf.edu/grad-applied-data-science or follow it on LinkedIn.

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