

A message from Dr. Gregory Longo, Assistant Dean,  
The School of Mathematics and Computational Sciences



### **MS in Applied AI & Eastern's AI principles**

One of the most exciting times for an institution is the launch of a new degree program. Faculty and staff have put in countless hours thinking about every possible aspect of the degrees, from marketing and communications to advising and student support. The MS in Applied AI is particularly exciting because of when we're launching it - right in the midst of the inescapable explosion of AI capabilities and adoption.

Our program is designed for professionals who want to lead in AI-powered organizations, not just those who want to code. We want to help students think about how to integrate AI responsibly, strategically, and effectively to make an impact on real-world problems and organizations.

One of the biggest differences between this program and our other graduate programs is that we do have prerequisites - this is not a "for all" program. Students who jump into our AI program must have at least an introductory understanding of many of the concepts we cover in lower-level MS coursework, such as those in DTSC 520, 575, and 580. If you're interested in transitioning to this program, please contact your academic advisor. To learn more about the program, [click here](#).

This announcement of this degree is a natural time to discuss Eastern's AI principles. As you know, everything we do at Eastern is built on our faith foundation. This gives us clear purpose and direction, especially when something new and transformative like AI comes along. First and foremost, Eastern must make sure AI is always deployed to improve lives. Our vision of AI education is one in which students, faculty, and staff use AI to augment skills and improve capabilities, not one where we look to replace humans to save money. AI must always help us be more human, and not replace human interaction with automation.

Second, our educational offerings will incorporate more and more AI to ensure you don't just understand coursework at an academic level, but truly understand how to utilize it in real-world situations. You need to have a deep understanding of the technical tools you're using, not a surface-level "get it done" mindset, if you really want to get the most from AI. We want to provide you with both in-depth understanding and practical application, which truly is what employers are looking for.

At a time when AI continues to transform education and the workplace, Eastern's steadfast commitment to faith, reason, and justice will always guide how we take on these challenges and prepare you to lead in this new world. We're really excited to be with you on this journey.

# SPOTLIGHT

## JONATHAN BRADSTREET



Meet Jonathan Bradstreet, an alum of our MS in Data Science program and a true example of grit and perseverance. Learn about what sparked his passion for programming and automation, the challenges he faced along the way, and how it all led to his current role. Jonathan's journey is full of lessons in determination, creativity, and the power of never giving up. We're excited to have him share his story.

### **What inspired you to pursue the MSDS program at Eastern University?**

I've always wanted to earn a Master's degree, particularly one that would allow me to dive deeper into programming. When I looked into Eastern University, I couldn't beat the price even before the generous alumni discounts. Every other school I looked into for a data science masters at the time was \$20,000 or more, so Eastern just made sense. I was a bit hesitant at first, but once I applied and started my first class, I fell in love with the program and never looked back.

### **Can you tell us about your current role and how you landed it?**

I wrapped up my Master's degree in February of 2024, eager to put my new skills to the test. A friend of mine introduced me to VBA, and I was hooked. I'd never realized that Excel had a "Developer" tab where you could automate nearly anything with code. I started with a limited understanding of macros but quickly dove into the tutorials by Chelsea Doheman on YouTube, working my way through her beginner, intermediate, and advanced courses.

From there, I used AI as a tool to expand my knowledge even further. I soon realized that my new skills in automation were incredibly valuable within our district's environment. I started collaborating with our resident "data person," asking to assist on projects and offering my help to different departments. I created a ledger to track all my work, recording details like project hours, departments served, and, most importantly, the time saved for each employee. Over the next eight months, I completed 29 projects, dedicating over 330 hours to building them on top of my responsibilities as a computer technician.

The payoff was incredible. My work saved the district over 11,700 hours—that's roughly four years of time. The following year, they offered me a position as a Data Analyst. In just two and a half months in this new role, I've already saved an additional 14,000 hours of time. It's been a truly remarkable journey.

### **Were there any specific courses, professors, or experiences that had a major impact on your journey?**

Dr. Walt Huddell and Dr. Nicola McLallen were incredibly patient with my antics during my time at Eastern, always providing the time and guidance I needed to grow. I spent countless hours in their offices and probably should have spent more just trying to grasp the incredible concepts they taught. I also had the rare opportunity to be taught physics by my own father, who instilled in me the discipline to buckle down and work hard. Eastern gave me the support I needed to grow into the academic I am today, and for that, I am truly grateful to all of them.

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# SPOTLIGHT

## JONATHAN BRADSTREET

### **What challenges did you face during your career transition, and how did you overcome them?**

For six years, I felt stuck in the same role while others moved ahead, and that was tough. I knew deep down that programming and automation were what I wanted to do, but it was frustrating at times—especially when the physical side of my job, like mounting heavy equipment, started to wear on me. Another challenge was easing fears that my automation projects might replace people’s jobs. I had to show them that the tools I built still needed someone to run them, and that they were there to make work easier, not take it away.

What got me through was persistence and a willingness to learn from mistakes. Once I started creating projects that really made a difference, the appreciation from my district came quickly, and people began to see me as a resource they could count on.

### **What advice would you give current students or recent graduates looking to break into the field?**

I've found that my worst work came from comparing myself to others. My best work happens when I just dig into a project and stop worrying about what other people might think. There were many nights during my Master's program where I was so frustrated with an assignment that it felt impossible to solve. In those moments, I'd take a walk or do something else to let my brain "simmer" and come at the problem from a different angle. This worked about 80% of the time. The other 20%, I'd ask my professors and GAs for help.

If you've just graduated and feel frustrated because you can't find a job right away, please don't give up. I've been there. I submitted 99 resumes and heard nothing but crickets. My advice is to keep applying and start acquiring skills from the job requirements of positions you find interesting. It took over a year for my district to create a Data Analyst position for me, and even now, I'm told I'm "pioneering" something new in education.

Lastly, and most importantly for me, I prayed constantly throughout the entire process. I gave all my fears and worries to the Lord and let him guide me. When opportunities appeared, I took them, and if nothing came of them, I simply pressed on. I remember going to a job social event once, and it was so uncomfortable that the only thing I got out of that four hour venture was a conversation with someone who helped me revamp my resume and showed me what skills companies are truly looking for. So don't give up. You are capable of so much more than you think, and if people doubt your ideas, just ignore them and keep going!





# 2025 VIRTUAL CAREER PANEL: DATA SCIENCE

**8 OCT  
2025  
8 PM ET**

Engage in a meaningful discussion with professionals ready to share lessons learned and practical tips. Hear from professionals, then join in on networking conversations with other students!



**LORI SMOTRYSKI**  
Data Scientist  
MS Data Science '24



**JONATHAN BRADSTREET**  
Data Analyst  
MS Data Science '24

**REGISTRATION LINK**



**JEREMIAH STEVENSON**  
Business Analysis Manager  
MS Data Science '24

If you have questions, please contact the Data Science account at [datascience@eastern.edu](mailto:datascience@eastern.edu)

# Introducing Amy Ballard, Online Career Coach

Amy Ballard is the Online Career Coach for Eastern University's Center for Career Development. She provides career support and education to the online student population through individual appointments, online webinars and events, and networking opportunities. Amy has over a decade of experience supporting adult learners in finding their next steps.



## 💡 Message for Students:

It's never too early to plan your next career move! Whether you're:

- Looking for a job or internship
- Working on class or personal projects
- Updating your résumé
- Exploring future career paths

...the Center for Career Development is here to support you every step of the way.

Students can make an appointment on [Handshake](#) (log in with your EU email) or [check out our events](#) to get connected!

## Stay Connected: MS in Data Science and Analytics Programs Page on Brightspace

The [MS in Data Science and Analytics Programs page](#) on Brightspace is your go-to resource for all students enrolled in a graduate-level DTSC course, regardless of your degree or certificate program. Here's what you'll find: student connection and resources, advising resources, and course information & syllabi.

### Contact Us:

General Questions: [datascience@eastern.edu](mailto:datascience@eastern.edu)

Advising Questions: [dsadvising@eastern.edu](mailto:dsadvising@eastern.edu)

Fees and Billing: [student.accounts@eastern.edu](mailto:student.accounts@eastern.edu)

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