Default Report

2017 Data Science for the Public Good Summer Program Survey - Undergraduate Students

August 2nd 2017, 7:55 am MDT

Q1 - Were the projects interesting? Why?

Were the projects interesting? Why?
Yes, the projects were interesting because we were tasked with solving real world problems. To me, project based learning is always more interesting than learning theory in a classroom.
Some of the projects were interesting. Some of them was very clear cut and got a lot of work done
Yes. All of the projects were on fairly interesting topics, and the work that needed to be done for them ended up being very interesting as well.
Yes, the projects were really interesting because I liked how they were relatable real world problems that we could work with. I also liked working on them becuase the solutions would be very beneficial to the community overall and knowing that I am doing something good made me want to work harder.
Yes, each project had their own interesting goal and objective because it gives back to the community and helping the sponsors.
They were because it was interesting to be able to work on so many different projects focused on different topics.
Yes, the projects were interesting because they involved real-life applications of data science. They were stimulating.
Yes, because all of the work we did has the potential to positively influence people's lives.

Q2 - Which project did you like best? Why?

Which project did you like best? Why?
I liked the STEM Education project the best because I had the most autonomy to develop my own ideas and research. I learned the most about doing research from this project. I had challenges as well as successes that taught me what to do and not to do on a research project involving data.
ARI, I felt like I had the most work for this project and got to utilize some of the skills I learned
I liked ARI because for the reasons for question number 1
My favorite project was the SCHEV/VLDS project, because I think I learned the most from it. It was far more intellectually challenging than my other projects, and I really enjoyed the concept behind it as well. While we didn't quite complete the project yet, I was able to finish the summer feeling as though I made good progress on the project.
WMATA was my favorite project becuase it was a very hand-on when it came to working with the data.
Each project had their own objectives that I liked. Some projects were in the beginning phase so it was hard to plan or work on it in the beginning.
I thought that the STEM edu project was the most interesting because it was very relevant to my life and I do like learning and doing research about things that apply to me and kind of expand my mind to the different possibilities of entering the STEM workforce.
I personally liked the Open Source project the best because it involved web scraping on a large scale. It was unlike my previous experience in programming, so I found it very exciting to work on that kind of project.
SCHEV because of the nature of the problem and the solutions we used. I.e. I liked the way we used regression and machine learning to asses the usability of synthetic data and enjoyed learning about how CART/ctree were modified to create synthetic data in the synthpop package.

Q4 - Comment on working in a collaborative environment.

Comment on working in a collaborative environment.
A collaborative environment is an excellent approach for conducting research, especially with an interdisciplinary team. Most people on my projects freely shared their ideas and through teamwork and discussion we were able to choose the best ideas and develop them into a conclusive product.
Good experience to work with different minds and get different perspectives on ways to approach problems
it was nice because everyone had an input into what to say
I thought it was a very good experience. While I expected to be working in teams, I did not realize that the teams would be made up of people who had interests and educational backgrounds that were so vastly different from my own.
I enjoy working in a collaborative environments because it brings about different prepectives and ideas. I also liked how we got to talk about the work with others beucase I was able to learn a lot of new things from them.
Working in teams was the best thing. I liked how each individual had their own role or some roles could be shared among two people.
It was good because everyone has different strengths and I thought we really all helped each other with out different strengths.
Very useful to be sitting next to my teammates. Any time I needed to ask a question I was within a couple steps.
I enjoyed it.

Q5 - Comment on your work load.

Comment on your work load.
The heavy work load gave us the chance to do a lot of work on several projects. Because we were all on at least three projects the progress we made was more superficial than I would have liked. My preference would have been to go deeper into fewer projects rather than cursory work on more projects.
Workload was very underwhelming. There were days where I didn't have anything to work on.
It wasn't too much
I think the workload was manageable. I appreciate that not as much work was assigned during the first two weeks so that everyone had time to review training materials and get settled in.
I think I had a decent amount of work load, but I had hoped to have more of a coding related work load.
The work load was a lot but still manageable. It helped me with my organization and time management skills.
I thought it was definitely manageable. I did feel like that at some points it was a lot but that was really before big deadlines and not all the time.
The work load was much higher than I am used to, but it wasn't impossible to balance. I think that the work load was realistic of what real-life data scientists have to deal with. Juggling work between 3 different projects at once was hard, but taught me lessons about time management.
At times it was overwhelming but overall, doable.

Q9 - Comment on the number of meetings.

Comment on the number of meetings.
The number of meetings was fine. I found most of the meetings to be productive. At meetings, we shared progress, answered questions, and challenged each other's ideas and findings. The outcome was that the overall quality of work was better.
Too many meetings. Most weekly updates were unnecessary and the things we talked about could've easily been discussed through an email.
there were I think too many meetings because I feel like we could have sent an email and figured out what to do from there instead of meeting sometimes 3 times a week for a project
For the most part, I think there were the right amount of meetings.
I think the number of meetings were balanced just right beucase it gave us time to catch up and figure out what to do next. And since all the meetings were once a week, it gave us enought time to complete our tasks.
The number of meetings given through this program was the right amount.
I thought I had plenty of meetings for my projects and that we always tried to make the meetings productive and informative.
at first, the number of meetings was way too high. I felt overwhelmed because we had so many meetings that I didn't get to delve into the data and start exploring. The pace during the middle and end of the program was good: meeting about once a week for each project.
I think most of the meetings were necessary.

Q33 - Did you find the weekly wrap-up meetings to be useful? Why?

Did you find the weekly wrap-up meetings to be useful? Why?
The weekly wrap-up meetings were somewhat useful because the required us to review and summarize our progress, which is an important step to do regularly during the research process. But, I say somewhat because having them every week was too time-consuming. Having progress reviews every other week would have been a more efficient schedule in my opinion.
No, again I found them to be kind of pointless and a waste of time. The wiki was a good idea and I think just updating that was good enough to keep everyone updated on what was going on with each project.
I feel like since we put everything on the wiki we could have just reflected off of that
I think bi-weekly wrap-up meetings may have been better. In the beginning of the program, many projects are off to a slow start, and I don't think it's necessary to update each other on literature reviews on a weekly basis. Making the meetings bi-weekly (while keeping the Wiki updates weekly) might ensure that each project has some sort of new or exciting progress to present.
The weekly wrap-up meetings were helpful since it gave us practice on presenting.
It was useful at first, but then sometimes it wasn't because some weeks, the projects were still not progressing fast enough, so the weekly wrap up presentations were repeated things from the previous week.
Not really. They were interesting but did take a lot of time out of our Fridays and kind of made us drop everything and work on our presentation for the meeting.
No, I think that the hour and a half could have been used to further my work. It was cool at first to see everybody's progress as they worked, but it took away from when I needed to code. I think I would rather write reports, and then have bi-weekly wrap-up meetings.
Personally, I did not. I felt as if I didn't get much work done on Fridays because preparing for them would take me 45+ minutes, especially if my team last met on Monday/Tuesday as I would have to ask my team members for updates.

Q10 - Which training were helpful? Which ones were not?

Which training were helpful? Which ones were not?
The git bash and github trainings were the most helpful. I understood the workflow and how to navigate the server on command line which I needed to do throughout the semester. Some of the R trainings were not as helpful. At the end of the trainings I had learned something, but by the time I needed to apply what I learned to the projects I had forgotten a lot of what I had learned.
Most of the training with R and Git were very helpful. Some of the training that didn't really relate to the work that I did such as Bayesian analysis, or the SQL training.
I feel like the training was very helpful, in that it gave me a solid foundation before I dug in to coding.
All of the trainings were helpful.
All of the training were very helpful! The only one that I didn't have the need for in the projects was the sql, but it was still good to know.
R-studio training was helpful and the bash training was helpful. I think all the trainings were pretty helpful.
I really liked the R training because I had never used R before it really helped me. I really can't remember any unhelpful trainings because I felt like the material and skills I learned in the trainings that I remember are the ones that I really used. So a lot of the trainings' usefulness does depend on the skills being used while working on the projects.
ALL of Dan's training was perfect. Better than what I have been taught at Virginia Tech. The more statistics-related training sessions were not as helpful because they required a base knowledge of statistics. I found myself getting lost in them.
All of the R, as well as the SQL training and the Latex brown bag.

Q11 - Which training would you recommend for next year's DSPG?

Which training would you recommend for next year's DSPG?
All of the content of the trainings were useful and I would recommend.
If you're going to do SQL training at least incorporate it into the work we do
I would recommend the webscraping portion. Pretty useful to gather data off of websites that doesn't give you a solid table or plots
Very heavy training in R.
I would say keep doing the training we did but give the students a project and hold them accountable for it. This way the can apply the trainings more easily and understand them better.
Definitely the r-studio training and the web scrape training
More Shiny training! I thought the dashboards created this year using Shiny were really interesting and it was really nice that they were interactive and I would really like to know more about using Shiny.
everything that Dan taught: Git, Bash, R, Object-oriented programming, ACS and tigris/OGR. ALSO I would like to see an refresher on basic statistics.
Replace something with another web-scraping lesson/practice.

Q12 - Did you receive sufficient mentoring? Did you find it useful?

Did you receive sufficient mentoring? Did you find it useful?
Yes, I received sufficient mentoring. It was hard to focus on mentoring after everyone got really busy around week 6.
Not really I met with my mentor once and we just talked about how I liked the program. Nothing really followed after that
My mentor was very helpful. Made sure I was ready for my presentation and making sure my workload was okay. Also helped out with my future goals and life outside of DSPG.
Yes. I did not technically ever meet with my assigned mentor, but I always felt I could ask Gizem or Aaron about anything I needed help with.
Yes I really liked my mentor and it was helpful to know that I can go to them if I needed help.
Yes, I love my mentor and it was useful to talk to her about each project and ask for help/advice.
Absolutely. I really felt like my mentor cared and was really encouraging in terms of wanting me to come to them with questions. I really appreciated having someone of the SDAL staff that I got to know pretty well and felt really comfortable with and really helped me with any questions I had or anything else.
Yes, the mentoring helped me relax at work and get some more information about future career paths
Yes, I did receive sufficient mentoring. I found it useful.

Q13 - How can the mentoring process be improved?

How can the mentoring process be improved?
Provide a rubric to mentor and mentee to guide the process.
Have a better idea of what mentors should be doing because it seemed like some mentors were more involved with their students than others and others didn't really know what their role was (ex: my mentor)
I think she did an awesome job and truthfully wouldn't change anything
Assign mentors that meet with the students, because while I enjoyed my meeting with Gizem in week 10, it may have been more useful to space out a few meetings during the semester (Gizem was not my assigned mentor, she met with me after realizing I hadn't met with my assigned mentor all summer).
I didn't have a problem with the mentoring process, but maybe assign mentors earlier on into the program.
I think the mentoring process is fine as it is.
For me, I thought my mentoring experience was perfect but I do know some people who were assigned to mentors that were really busy didn't get as good of an experience as I. So maybe don't assign people to be mentors if they didn't really follow through this year or are really busy.
replace brownbags with mentor - mentee lunches. I feel that the brownbag discussions would be better to have on the personal level with a mentor
No comment.

Q21 - Was having a fellow on your projects helpful? Why?

Was having a fellow on your projects helpful? Why?
Yes, they facilitated my progress and contributions to the projects we worked on together.
Yeah they provided a lot of insight and guidance for most of the projects
Yes. The fellows were an easy point of contact for basic or day-to-day questions.
Yes it was very helpful because they're knowledge really helped me learn about coding and other processes. They also keep things on track and organized.
Yes, very helpful because they were the leaders and knew how to divide tasks.
Definitely because it was really nice having someone who was really skilled in statistical analysis and plot making etc being there and being on the same page as what I was doing so they would be able to help me do whatever I needed to do and also help me what I was doing.
Yes, Extremely helpful. They gave insight into their experiences but also helped us along every step of the project.
Yes. It was good to have a second person for me to come to with questions for my projects because since the program has many more projects than PI's, sometimes they aren't available when I have a question, but the fellows almost always are.

Q23 - What did the fellows do well?

What did the fellows do well?
The fellows acted as leaders and instructors.
They were always asking if we understood what we were doing and did they're best to help us if we didn't understand something
The fellows were great for providing expertise in R and in statistical modeling concepts, and for being able to easily answer any basic project questions I had.
They were very helpful when ever I had a question or concern. They were organized and were on top of they're work. They were also very good at assigning tasks and making sure everyone got they're work done.
The fellows recapped really well and they knew what they were doing all the time.
They helped keep us on track with our projects and made sure we were getting everything done on time and making sure we had the resources to do our best even if we were new to working on these types of research projects.
They explained code, taught us about visualizations and statistical methods, and were easy to talk to
Everything. They would usually drop whatever they were doing and help undergraduates with questions. They communicated with everyone well and always went the extra mile for their teams.

Q22 - What could the fellows have done better?

What could the fellows have done better?
At times the fellows did not collaborate as effectively as they could have in terms of delegating work and facilitating progress. Overall they did well on this but the could have been more consistent throughout the program.
For the WMATA project, I felt like they did most of the work with the data and left us with the boring and more repetitive work (ex: map making, subsetting data)
Possibly try to delegate some modeling tasks. It seemed that on most projects, when it was time to make a statistical model, the fellows took over. I understand that the undergrads don't have much expertise in this area, but it would have been nice to at least understand what process was occurring.
It would have helped if some of the fellows did a wrap-up of what needs to get done at the end of a meeting.
I think the fellows could be a little bit more organized, but I know that they have a lot of work to do already so I understand.
I think it would have been better for everyone (including the fellows) if there were more because they were always so busy being on so many projects and that made it hard for them to be able to help us because they were so busy.
they need to share their food more
Nothing.

Q27 - Was having the DSPG alumni as part of the program useful?

Was having the DSPG alumni as part of the program useful?
Yes they were useful because they had expertise in R and working with data.
Yes Adrienne was wonderful
I don't know if Adrienne was a fellow, but she was very helpful in one of the projects
Yes! Maddie and Adrienne were great to have nearby whenever I had questions about how posters or presentations should be done.
Yes it was helpful to gain insights from the DSPG alumni of how to do things and learning about their expereince.
Yes, it was.
Definitely because they know a lot about how the program works and how the midterm presentations and the final poster presentations work and were able to tell us what to expect and everything.
Yes, they were super useful in clearing up what needed to be done each week and also were very friendly
Yes.

Q29 - What did the alumni do well?

What did the alumni do well?
They contributed quality work to their projects.
Everything, without Adrienne, ARI would've been a mess. She's the GOAT
The alumni were extremely accessible and friendly.
The alumni was open to sharing their experiences.
They already know the projects from previous years so I thought it was helpful when they knew what to do and how this program works.
They were good and letting us know what had been previously done on projects that had been started before this summer so we could properly continue past work.
They were useful in bridging the gap between the project leads and the students
Act as 5th and 6th graduate fellows. They were very good at helping everyone with questions on their projects and communicated well with everyone on their projects.

Q28 - What could the alumni have done better?

What could the alumni have done better?
They could have taken on more of a leadership role than just working at the same level as the other undergrads.
I would've liked to hear more about their past experiences and things they've learned from the program and what we could've been doing to get the most out of the program
N/A
Provided more direction when working on the projects
I feel like they could've helped out more in the beginning but a long the way they were more helpful.
I think similar to the fellows we could have benefitted from more because they knew so much about work that had been done on these projects in the past and were really helpful in that aspect because of their understanding of the needs in terms of next steps of the projects. I think it would be really helpful to encourage people to come back in future summers to provide this knowledge to new students.
nothing
Nothing.

Q6 - What skills do you wish you had come with?

What skills do you wish you had come with?
I wish I had come with more skills on cleaning data.
More knowledge on just general terms when it comes to working with data
I wish I had come with more advanced statistical knowledge, and more knowledge on economics.
I wish I had known the basics of R before I came because then I could have learned more during the trainings.
I wish I was experienced in r-studio.
I wish I came in knowing at least a little bit of R because it would have helped me build on my prior knowledge during training.
I wish I had come with more skills on statistics
SQL, Web-scraping, Tidyr, dplyr (piping R in general)

Q7 - What skills did you learn or improve on?

What skills did you learn or improve on?
I learned a lot about R coding and working with data.
R and learning how to analyze, subset, and clean data
I definitely improved with data cleaning and profiling, R programming, a few statistical concepts, and working in teams.
I learned R skills, web-scraping, and working with ACS data.
Teamwork, time management, and organization
I learned how to use R, how to use Git, and how to web scrape which became kind of something I turned out to be really good at because it kind of took my prior knowledge of programming logic concepts and let me apply them to programming in R.
I learned so much about visualization and mapping. I didn't think I would be producing any graphics this summer but I am glad that I learned so much about it.
Latex, SQL, Using piping in R, Dplyr, making prettier ggplots and web-scraping.

Q8 - What skills would you liked to have learned or improved on?

What skills would you liked to have learned or improved on?
I would have liked to have learned more about statistical analysis/model fitting but the time was too short to get to that depth on all three projects.
More SQL training for experiences and job opportunities.
I would have loved to learn more about more advanced statistical concepts.
I wish I had learned a bit more on creating maps
I would like to improve on shiny and web scraping.
I think I would have liked to learn more about traditional mathematical statistics concepts and methods just to help me understand the mathematical aspect behind some of the statistical findings.
I thought that I would have learned more about statistical methods this summer but I am not upset that I didn't
More web-scraping.

Q17 - Did the DSPG program meet your expectations?

Did the DSPG program meet your expectations?
Yes it was a challenging experience and I learned a lot.
Yes!
Yes it did meet my expectations
Yes it did.
I think it far exceeded my expectations because I learned so much more than I expected and I felt like I was more valuable to the projects than I expected to be
Yes
Yes

Q18 - Would you consider working in the public sector after graduation? Why?

Would you consider working in the public sector after graduation? Why?
Yes I would consider it because there is a need for well-trained people to go into the public sector.
Not really, the public sector kind of bores me
Yes, it seems to be a good way to serve your community.
I think I would beucase I want to be involed in helping solve community-related issues.
I do not know.
I think so because I did really enjoy the work I did this summer and using research like this to help people would be really rewarding in the future.
Maybe. I know that most of the money is in doing analytics for private companies, but I would like to make an impact on people's lives by influencing data-driven policy.
Yes, I wouldn't mind continuing some of these projects, or similar ones.

Q19 - What was your favorite part of the DSPG program?

What was your favorite part of the DSPG program?
The collaborative environment was a positive experience.
Lunchtime my favorite part of every day, I love food
My favorite part was being able to work closely with upper level researchers. And also making friends.
My faortie part was being able to work with everyone and learning a lot of new skills. And I really liked how welcoming and helpful the staff was.
Working in teams and codes working.
I really liked being able to work with so many different people with so many different disciplines and backgrounds. It was interesting and everyone provided a unique perspective on approaches to answering the research questions as well as how to present research or what to include or not in terms of the final poster and presentation.
Working with real, useful data. I loved the fact that my work was going to be used by someone else to help others.
Sharing useful knowledge from lit-reviews/ new ways to code things.

Q20 - Provide suggestions on how we can improve the DSPG program.

Provide suggestions on how we can improve the DSPG program.
I would suggest that the number of projects be shrunk to allow for more in depth research.
Maybe decrease the number of projects everyone works on to one or two so there is more focus on gettings
I think taking on a few less students would be good for next year.
It could a little more organized
The program could be improved by being more organized in the beginning and just making explanations more clear.
I really don't have any suggestions other than the first few weeks we definitely needed some more direction other than just training because before we really had work to do on projects we didn't really have that much to do when we weren't in training.
The first three weeks or so were very awkward in terms of dynamics. I don't want to suggest icebreakers but it took a while for people to warm up
Reduce the student/project ratio to 1:2 next time.

Q25 - What would you change about the program?

What would you change about the program?
See Q20
Pay the students gives much more incentive to work
I would not change much, possibly just accept a few less students and take on 1 or 2 less projects.
It would be good to know what is expected of us when it comes to leaving early or going on vacations.
Overall, this program could be a bit more organized but overall, it was a good program.
I don't think there was really anything I would change other than maybe getting rid of the weekly wrap ups because although they were interesting they kind of took away a lot of time from us that we could have spent working on our projects.
Consider changing the brownbag discussions into something where the mentor and the mentees have lunch together and discuss the topic more casually. I think it would help the undergrads participate in the discussion more.
Reduce the student/project ratio to 1:2 next time.

Q26 - What did you think of the DSPG Symposium?

What did you think of the DSPG Symposium?
It was a nice way to wrap up the summer. It ended things on a fun and positive note. Also, it was a great networking opportunity.
Good way to show off the work we did for the summer. Elevator speeches were terrifying and would not recommend doing that again
I thought the symposium was very well run and went very well.