IBM Launches Talent Assessment to Help Aspiring Data Crunchers and Academia Gauge and Enhance Skills
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WASHINGTON, Nov. 12, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- IBM (NYSE: IBM) today unveiled the IBM Analytics Talent Assessment, a first-of-its-kind online platform that provides university students with data-driven insights that aim to help narrow the Big Data and Analytics skills gap and foster talent for the next-generation workforce.

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Using IBM Analytics Talent Assessment, university students can gauge their readiness for public and private sector Big Data and analytics careers and gain guidance on ways to further develop and position themselves for these in-demand jobs through a simple online questionnaire. In addition to benefitting students and universities, talent assessments help organizations identify and hire the right candidate for the right job. They can also enable them to more accurately predict performance, thereby adding greater efficiencies to an organization's human capital management strategy.

The new initiative was announced as part of a White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Big Data event held in Washington. The event is a response to the Obama Administration's call for multi-stakeholder partnerships that harness the power of Big Data to spark advancements in key national initiatives, such as economic growth, education, health, energy and sustainability.

Starting this month, students from eight universities that are piloting IBM's Assessment can access the platform, engage in an online test, and after completion receive personalized reports with guidance on how to bolster their aptitude for data-crunching jobs. These pilot universities are part of the more than 1,000 IBM Academic Initiative partners that collaborate with IBM to offer Big Data and analytics curriculum: Fordham University, George Washington University, Illinois Institute of Technology, University of Massachusetts Boston, Northwestern University, The Ohio State University, Southern Methodist University and the University of Virginia.

As employers in the public and private sectors seek to fill the 4.4 million jobs being created to support Big Data by 2015* university students worldwide are on the hunt for curriculum to prepare them for data-crunching careers. The good news: innovative coursework is being launched at a rapid clip, often via business schools with classes providing essential IT and business skills, from software proficiency to project management. However, to succeed in analytics jobs, students also need to develop a wide range of "soft skills": subtle aptitudes, personal traits and values that can be difficult to pinpoint and cannot always be learned in the classroom.

Recognizing the importance of this comprehensive skill set, IBM partnered with more than a dozen of its own clients including The Boeing Company and Nationwide Insurance to research and identify the most essential competencies and traits that indicate whether a student not only has the ability to analyze data, but can parlay it into effective business strategies for growing revenue, preventing risk, deepening customer engagement, and even saving lives.

Uncovered by real-world organizations that have hired and cultivated analytics talent, as well as IBM's Smarter Workforce consultants, these predictors of success range the gamut from the ability to assert oneself and negotiate amidst opposition to data-driven recommendations, to personal attributes such as concern for others and social assuredness.

"Information is a powerful natural resource that will play an essential role in defining and creating the jobs of the future," said Mike Rhodin, Senior Vice President, IBM Software Solutions Group. "IBM is dedicated to advancing data-driven insights to transform the skills for our future workforce. By arming them with the necessary tools and resources, we will help enable them to become world-class analytics leaders who will transform industries around the globe."

Helping Big Data and Analytics Students Set the Right Trajectory

Students who are currently engaged in analytics degrees and coursework at the pilot universities will be encouraged by faculty to register for the IBM Analytics Talent Assessment at ibm.com/business-analytics/talent-initiative.

The Assessment – which is an online test that university students can complete in approximately 30 to 40 minutes – will have four sections. The first three sections will comprise adaptive tests that measure cognitive ability, verbal reasoning and logical reasoning. The fourth part will feature a series of questions focusing on the key competencies and traits that indicate success for analytics careers.

Students who take the Assessment will engage in both traditional multiple choice questions and exercises such as interpreting on-screen shapes in ways that reveal analytical thinking abilities. The Assessment covers a diverse set of topics from mathematical problems that businesses need to solve, to questions on how students interact with peers, or how they conduct themselves in difficult situations.

After engaging in the Assessment, students will receive a personalized report via e-mail, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses relative to the competencies and traits that predict the student's likelihood to succeed in analytics. Informed by each user's unique results, the report will also provide guidance on ways students can further develop themselves, so upon graduation, they are better prepared for a career in analytics.

The eight universities collaborating with IBM on the Assessment will receive reports that show how participating students performed in aggregate. This will help faculty better understand how their curriculum is preparing students for careers helping organizations uncover and maximize of the value of Big Data insights. Longer term, IBM plans to offer the Assessment to its entire ecosystem of Big Data and analytics higher education partners.

Narrowing the Big Data and Analytics Skills Gap

IBM's collaboration with academia on the Analytics Talent Assessment is one of a multitude of initiatives the company has instituted to help narrow the skills gap between the millions of Big Data and analytics jobs being created and the number of students who have the education and hands-on experience to fill them.

IBM is partnering with more than 1,000 universities across the globe to develop curriculum that reflects the mix of business, technical and problem-solving skills necessary to prepare students for Big Data and analytics careers, across all industries. The goal: prepare students for jobs ranging from front-line analytics contributors to leadership roles such as Chief Data Officers. Through these collaborations, which span a variety of majors from business to health services, IBM provides schools with access to IBM Big Data and analytics software, curriculum materials, case study projects, IBM data scientists who visit classes as guest lecturers, and faculty grants that fuel new curriculum.

A key example of how public, private and academic collaboration can help create a data-driven workforce: the IBM Client Center for Advanced Analytics in Columbus, Ohio. The center serves as an innovation hub to advance analytics skills, drawing on the expertise of local businesses, educational institutions and industry partners to create a skilled analytics workforce. A key part of this effort is IBM's partnership with The Ohio State University to develop analytics curricula and give students access to the center's technology and thought leaders.

For more information on the IBM Academic Initiative visit: ibm.com/academicinitiative.

About IBM Big Data & Analytics

Each day we create 2.5 quintillion bytes of data generated by a variety of sources -- from climate information, to posts on social media sites, and from purchase transaction records to healthcare medical images. At IBM we believe that data is emerging as the world's newest resource for competitive advantage, and analytics is the key to make sense of it. IBM is helping clients harness Big Data & Analytics to provide insights needed to make better decisions, create value, and deliver that value to customers and society. IBM has the world's deepest and broadest portfolio of Big Data & Analytics technologies and solutions, spanning services, software, research and hardware. For more information about IBM Big Data & Analytics, visit http://ibm.co/bigdataanalytics. Follow IBM Big Data & Analytics on Twitter @IBMbigdata and @IBMAnalytics.

*Gartner Press release, Gartner Says Big Data Creates Big Jobs: 4.4 Million IT Jobs Globally to Support Big Data By 2015, October 22, 2012

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