

Whether it was the intriguing curiosity of trying to figure out how my favorite music app makes personalized song recommendations or the excitement of developing innovative technical programs at Deloitte, the world of technology has always mesmerized me. Throughout my academic and professional career, I have had the opportunity to explore numerous facets of technology. This journey led me to discover that my true passion lies in data and its technical aspects.

As I delved deeper into this domain, I encountered situations that highlighted the need to enhance my practical skills and deepen my understanding in certain areas. I firmly believe that doing so would enable me to become more technically proficient in fields like data analytics and data science. The desire to upskill in these critical areas of technology is the main reason I wish to pursue a Master's in Information Management at a prestigious university like UIUC.

To illustrate why I am a strong candidate for this program, I will begin by outlining the key insights I gained during my undergraduate studies. As a Computer Science major, I completed foundational courses like DSA, DBMS, and OOPS, solidifying my technical fundamentals. Furthermore, it was during an elective course on data mining analytics that I first discovered my love for working with data. The concepts of discovering hidden knowledge and novel information from data highly fascinated me. Courses like this enabled me to build a core skillset in the field of data through academic projects. They also further motivated me to pursue advanced education in these domains.

To develop my expertise and gain hands-on experience in machine learning, I collaborated with a professor on a research-based project to predict the health of a crop using various machine learning models. Initially, we faced an issue of low prediction accuracy, but by exploring different algorithms and implementing complex models like XGBoost, we improved our results. We were also able to publish and present this project at an international conference.

Moving on from my academic life, my professional experience at Deloitte significantly shaped me into a better professional, honing my technical skills and enhancing my personal abilities. In one of the projects, I worked on training a machine learning model for predicting attribute values in legal contracts. Initially, this involved writing XML-based code snippets using keywords extracted from numerous JSON documents, a manual task requiring extensive time and effort. Managing such vast amounts of data also posed considerable challenges. To address these challenges, two teammates and I developed an automated solution for keyword extraction using NLP features (TF-IDF, BERT). This automation reduced work time and effort by nearly 50%, significantly improving project efficiency.

This project was a major motivator for me to pursue a Master's in Information Management for several reasons. Firstly, it highlighted the benefits and importance of having strong expertise in practical data applications, demonstrating how such skills can significantly enhance productivity and efficiency. Secondly, it underscored the crucial role of effectively collecting, managing, and presenting data to higher management.

Throughout the project, I realized that meeting technical requirements is only part of the equation; clear communication and explanation to the client are essential for achieving the intended results.

My passion and skill set in data analytics and science were recognized by the Deloitte recruitment team, leading to my selection for a highly selective project. In this project, we developed Capture the Flag (CTF) cybersecurity challenges for Deloitte's cyber hackathon platform aimed at promoting cybersecurity awareness across colleges and forums in the US. Initially tasked with developing challenges in data analytics and science, I expanded my horizons to become the first team member to create challenges in all subcategories, ranging from cryptography to reverse engineering. This experience boosted my confidence in quickly learning new technologies like Flask and Docker. It also improved my creative thinking and out-of-the-box problem-solving skills as I designed and developed various engaging challenges. I was also involved in meetings that planned and organized these hackathons, boosting my organizational skills. A proud moment during this project was when one of my challenges was shortlisted for a conference in Rosslyn, VA.

Considering everything discussed, I strongly believe that pursuing the MSIM program at a renowned university like UIUC would enable me to upskill and advance my expertise in using tools and technologies for working with data and information. Moreover, I foresee this program transforming me into a more competent practitioner in managing and handling data proficiently, enhancing my ability to communicate and present data effectively and elegantly.

I believe the MSIM program at the ISchool is ideal for my goals for a plethora of reasons, the foremost being its flexible curriculum, especially the data science and analytics pathway. I am particularly interested in courses such as IS 577 Data Mining, which I deem necessary for improving my skills in retrieving critical information from large data sets; IS 457 Data Science Storytelling, to enhance my ability to present data in a coherent and captivating narrative; and IS 517 Methods of Data Science, to delve deeper into complex practical topics. Beyond these courses, I am excited to explore opportunities at the UIUC Research Park to gain real-world experience and develop valuable skills.

To conclude, I would like to outline my future plans. I aspire to work for a large tech company in a leadership role on projects that utilize complex technical and practical tools and technologies to build sophisticated applications by leveraging data and information. To become a strong candidate for such positions, I must deepen my skills in both technical and managerial aspects. After understanding the program outcomes, I feel confident that the MSIM program will provide the perfect platform to achieve this goal and provide an opportunity to pursue my passion. Armed with my newly acquired proficiencies, I aim to collaborate with a creative team to develop technology products that inspire and excite others, similar to the excitement and curiosity that inspired me and were the catalyst for this entire journey.

Thank you for considering my application.