After systematic and thorough self-evaluation, I have decided to pursue my graduate studies in business analytics. The decision came naturally once I weighed my academic background, my areas of interest, and my particular set of skills. As a result of the many opportunities I have had during both my undergraduate studies and my professional career, I find myself inherently drawn to the field, both due to my strong aptitude for problem solving and deduction, and my penchant for detail. I believe that the Master’s in Business Analytics at UCLA will provide me with the right curriculum, an inclusive environment, and ample opportunities to showcase and hone my skills.

While my undergraduate studies endowed me with the technical skills required to be a proficient data analyst, my work at ZS has supplemented this by providing me with real-world experience working with and drawing conclusions from data. My responsibilities as an analyst involve end-to-end process automation using Shell, development and implementation of data Quality Control measures, development of sales reports for clients,  performing end-to-end impact analyses for any issues in data (e.g. discontinuities in data reporting), and time-optimization of existing processes. During my studies at UCLA, I aim to improve on my ability to draw conclusions from vast amounts of data, and to gain actionable business insight. I also look forward to learning about and implementing state-of-the-art analytical algorithms and methods, and strengthening my decision making, communication, and leadership skills.

Furthermore, I am currently pursuing a ten-course certified Coursera specialization in Data Science, offered by Johns Hopkins University. This consists of courses such as R Programming, Exploratory Data Analysis, Machine Learning, and Reproducible Research, and is taught by Professors Jeff Leek (PhD) and Roger D. Peng (PhD). I expect to complete all ten courses before July 2018.

A rising trend in data science and analytics that I am especially interested in is the shift from industrial data processes requiring manual intervention to completely automated processing based on Artificial Intelligence tools and algorithms. With continuous research being done in the field, and AI becoming capable of a carrying out increasingly complex operations and tasks autonomously, there is no doubt that how corporations look at and process data will evolve. The characteristics of “big data”- velocity, variety, and volume- are precisely why AI has come back into mainstream discussions. Platforms that can process big data using massive degrees of parallelism, made possible by inexpensive cloud computing, are capable of providing higher cost efficiency as compared to traditional models. This shift will be predominantly seen in tasks that are repetitive and work on large volumes of identical or similar data. These are the type of tasks where human error can have a cost, and the availability of human insight can be traded off for the elimination of risk arising from human error.

Post completion of my Master’s, I intend to either pursue a career as a data scientist, or carry out research. Depending on the opportunities I am presented with, an area I would like to undertake research in is quantifying the diagnosis of common psychological disorders using first-hand data. The goal of such research would be the development of a standardized psychological test that could be used in educational institutions as a pre-emptive mechanism for tragedies like mass shootings, and for the mental well-being of young adults.