Statistics department: Potential for the future

Revenue Generation

There are two programs that the Statistics Department is currently engaged in with potential to generate revenue as early as Fall 2026

1. Online MS in Data Science program co-developed by Statistics, Mathematics and School of Computing: This is going to be a completely online 2-year master’s program that will provide a natural extension to the current BS in Data Science program. As per the market analysis conducted by AVC Kevin Shriner, the projected tuition generating potential of this Program in AY 26-27 is $406,980 and in AY 27-28 is $876,906. With Statistics being one-third contributor to this program, it is expected that the projected tuition generated by statistics department will be $135,660 and $292,302, during AY 26-27 and AY 27-28, respectively.
2. UNL-VIT (AP) joint BS-MS program: Recently a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between UNL and Vellore Institute of Technology-AP (VIT-AP, India) to put together a joint accelerated Master’s degree program (**date? BB**). The simplest version of the program will have 4+1 configuration with students’ going through a 4-year BSc in Data Science (Hons.) in VIT-AP and spend 1 year (30 credits) at UNL to earn MS in Statistics. This is completely a self paid program. Currently, VIT-AP’s B.Sc + M.Sc Data Science has an approximate intake of 30 students per year ([VIT-AP University](https://vitap.ac.in/vitiebot)). In most recent year, I around 5 students in the Data Science program of VIT-AP went for Study Abroad. Conceivably, with an accelerated Master’s program in place, we can attract 3 students to join our program generating $100,710 in AY 26-27.

There are two other revenue generation paths that the Statistics department is considering to deploy in AY 26-27. The department has necessary resources to design the following two initiatives within a short span of time. We need required administrative approvals to launch these initiatives:

1. Evening classes for working professionals: Dual Track Extension Instructors are required to complete a master’s degree within five years, but many cannot step away from their full-time responsibilities to attend daytime classes. Offering evening sections of our current set of master’s level statistics courses would allow some of these professionals to continue their work while pursuing the coursework they need. This kind of flexibility would not only support professional growth but also help the department attract more students, generate additional revenue, and show the value of statistics and data science in real-world practice (**KS: please check for accuracy**).
2. Digital badging initiative: Digital badges have emerged as a strategic asset for statistics programs in U.S. universities, expanding revenue streams by attracting non-traditional learners through micro-credentialing and modular learning pathways. SC3L, embedded in the statistics department, already offers hands-on workshops for R programming to UNL students. This could be marketed to local companies and offered on-site as a upskilling course. We have undergrad and grad level courses on data visualization and machine learning taught by regular faculty. All these elements can be packaged to offer stackable badges for specialized skills in AI, data visualization, and Machine learning. This stack of badges is not currently available in UNL’s portfolio of Digital Badges ([Continuing Education | Online Education | Nebraska](https://online.unl.edu/micro-credentials/continuing-education/)). The closest AI-related badge ( *AI Foundations and Applications: A Youth Teaching Guide*) is designed by one of our faculty members, Dr. Kimberly Stanke, and is offered through NE Extension. This course was launched in September 2025. Using the fee structure of this course ($100 for the entire course) and enrollment target (100 enrollment /year), we anticipate the proposed stack of AI-badges can potentially generate $10000 in AY 26-27 (**KS: please check for accuracy**).

Additionally, Instats has reached out to some of our faculty members to put together a initiative wherein they offer training UNL personnel for free but we get paid for every person that takes it outside of UNL. (**SvP: Please check for accuracy**)

Increasing Enrollment:

All the foregoing 4 initiatives will necessarily increase enrollment. In addition, following processes have been initiated to increase our undergraduate enrollment.

1. Accelerated Masters in Statistics: The department is working on designing an accelerated Masters degree in Statistics to increase retention and enrollment in our undergraduate SDAN program. Statistics department already offers multiple cross-listed 400/800 level courses (for example 430/830, 442/842, also 450/870 has been taught in cross-listed fashion recently). We will leverage these courses to design the accelerated Masters program. No other NU system school offers an accelerated Masters in Statistics or Data Science. We anticipate this will differentiate UNL’s Statistics program and help increase recruitment and retention.
2. Extensive Outreach effort to recruit students: A team of Statistics faculty visited several high schools in Omaha area. There appears to be significant demand among the high school students for Statistics undergrad program. For example, Central High School in Omaha has 90 students in AP Statistics program, but they are not aware of the undergrad SDAN program offered by UNL. Faculty members visiting the Scottsbluff area also reported that high school students in the region are eager to learn how to analyze data but lack adequate support in the form of guidance, mentoring, and expertise. Department plans to run regular data analysis bootcamps, R workshops in these areas to help high school students with their data analysis process and make them interested in our SDAN program
3. Collaborating with State Science Fair organizers: Faculty members in the Department of Statistics are collaborating with Randall Lienemann, President of the Nebraska Junior Academy of Science, to mentor high school students on their Science Fair research projects. Guided by a faculty committee, graduate students and senior undergraduates will provide training in data analysis and visualization to the high school students participating in State Science Fairs. This initiative will raise awareness of our undergraduate program, foster connections that will lead to increased enrollment. (**BB: please check for accuracy**)
4. Overhauling Statistics graduate curriculum: Statistics faculty are working actively to overhaul our current graduate curriculum. The department is considering a 30-credit master’s degree that students can complete in 1 year (12credits each in Fall and Spring and 6 credits in summer). This compact time frame will potentially appeal to unsupported graduate students and can help increase international enrollment in our graduate program.
5. Increased opportunity to earn MS minor in Statistics: Currently we require 10 credits of Statistics courses to earn MS minor in Statistics. Most students take Stat 801, 802 (4 credits each) and two additional credits of their choice to obtain their minor. The foregoing courses cater to IANR grad students. So, grad students from other colleges who do not think 801 or 802 are relevant for their major discipline have little opportunity to obtain a Stat minor within their MS time-frame. We plan to diversify our grad level service courses and arrange them in a sequence so that students from CAS or CoE can earn Stat minor within 1 year. For example, we plan to make Stat 885 (Intro to Data Mining and Machine Learning) a 4-credit course by adding a lab section. This would enable non-IANR students to earn a Stat minor thru Stat 850, 885, 870/873 within 1 year.

Apropos of Kent’s comment on future scenarios:

Susan points out: “ Consider moving Statistics programs to School of Computing – they are big on marketing, and part of the reason we have more DS majors in Computing is that they move their CS majors that wash out into other programs… having them working with us would be a huge advantage. There are also a lot of efficiencies in teaching – we send our people over there to take classes (many of our grad students take their intro to machine learning course from CS when 885 is not offered in a year) and there are a lot of classes we could potentially share at both undergrad and graduate levels. (e.g. they have a 400/800 Data Vis class, simulation classes, etc.)”

Math-stat has always been a natural functional merger. Given the current emphasis on data science and AI, integrating statistics in school of computing would probably be most efficient in terms of cutting down redundancies and developing a centralized cohesive program to train a AI-proficient workforce.