

## Northwestern Mutual Data Science Institute names directors for Marquette University and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

MILWAUKEE, Sept. 3, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- The Northwestern Mutual Data Science Institute has announced its university directors, Dr. Edward Blumenthal of Marquette University and Dr. Purush Papatla of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM). The directors play an integral role in providing strategic direction for the Northwestern Mutual Data Science Institute and are responsible for setting research priorities, enhancing the data science programs at the universities, growing data science skillsets in the Milwaukee region and establishing the Institute as a national and global leader of data science.

Blumenthal, who will be Marquette's interim director for the 2019-2020 academic year, is currently the associate dean for research and graduate affairs in Marquette's Klingler College of Arts and Sciences. Papatla, who had been serving as director for the Northwestern Mutual Data Science Institute on an interim basis, has been appointed as UWM's director and a Northwestern Mutual Data Science Institute Professor of Marketing.

"I'm excited to welcome Dr. Blumenthal to the team and to continue working with Dr. Papatla as we advance the Northwestern Mutual Data Science Institute," said Keri McConnell, executive director of the Northwestern Mutual Data Science Institute. "Both Ed and Purush bring unique perspectives from their experience and research that will help position the Northwestern Mutual Data Science Institute as a premier organization to build our talent pipeline and solve problems with data science. I would also like to thank Dr. Thomas Kaczmarek for his thought leadership as Marquette's interim director as he helped launch the Northwestern Mutual Data Science Institute and for the passion he brought to the team."

Blumenthal is a geneticist by trade and has been quick to embrace the role of data analytics in a leadership role within the biological sciences department. While department chair, he worked to create a jointly housed bioinformatics program with what is now the Department of Computer Science. The goal was to partner biologists who create data sets with computer scientists who are trained to analyze them. He has also overseen departmental integration into a new university Core Curriculum while leading work groups to develop department standards on promotion, tenure and teaching of faculty.

"Marquette has made a broad commitment to its data science initiative with the development of academic programs and disciplines to answer the call for ethically centered data science research and education," Blumenthal said. "I am excited about the multidisciplinary nature of data science and breakthroughs that are possible in a wide array of areas, including health care, criminal justice, sports and exercise, and the natural sciences."

Papatla incorporates a mechanical engineering background and a deep interest in psychology and anthropology into his data science work, studying why and how people engage with visual, audio and textual content and why they make the choices they do. One study used Instagram data to determine which photos showing products were most successful in selling products. He determined that images focused on people's faces were counterproductive because humans are hardwired to look at each other, distracting from the presentation of products. Another study used data from Uber and New York City taxis to determine why and when people chose rideshare services over traditional taxis.

"Data science at UW-Milwaukee spans a remarkable range of fields like business, cybersecurity, engineering, political science, public health and social welfare," Papatla said. "I look forward to working through the Northwestern Mutual Data Science Institute to further expand teaching and research in data science across our entire campus and graduating more and more students skilled in data science. I am also committed to helping the Institute and UWM use data science to have a significant positive impact on our community."

The Northwestern Mutual Data Science Institute is an industry and academic partnership between Northwestern Mutual, Marquette and UWM formed to inspire and cultivate passion for data science in the Milwaukee region. Leveraging the strengths of the three institutions, the groundbreaking partnership will contribute \$40 million over five years to help build a technology ecosystem and advance southeastern Wisconsin as a national hub for technology, research, business and talent development, while creating an organic pipeline of tech talent in the area.

To learn more about the Northwestern Mutual Data Science Institute, visit [nmdsi.org](https://nmdsi.org).

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## About Marquette University

Marquette University is a Catholic, Jesuit university located near the heart of downtown Milwaukee, Wis., that offers a comprehensive range of majors in 11 nationally and internationally recognized colleges and schools. A Marquette education offers students a virtually unlimited number of paths and destinations and prepares them for the world by asking them to think critically about it. Marquette's mission is the search for truth, the discovery and sharing of knowledge, the fostering of personal and professional excellence, the promotion of a life of faith and the development of leadership expressed in service to others. Along the way, they ask one thing of every student: Be The Difference.

## About University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Recognized as one of the nation's 131 top research universities, UW-Milwaukee provides a world-class education to 27,500 students from 91 countries on a budget of \$689 million. Its 15 schools and colleges include Wisconsin's only schools of architecture, freshwater sciences and public health, and it is a leading educator of nurses and teachers. UW-Milwaukee partners with leading companies to conduct joint research, offer student internships and serve as an economic engine for southeastern Wisconsin. The Princeton Review named UW-Milwaukee a 2020 "Best Midwestern" university based on overall academic excellence and student reviews.

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