

Fall Analytics Day at KSU

Friday, November 21, 2025 | 8:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m. | KSU Center

Congratulations to our Poster Winners!



Undergraduate Students

1st Place - Anaya Tention - ["Buckets to Binnings: Predicting NBA Player Re-Injury Using NETRtg"](#)

2nd Place - Minaahil Cheema - "Tiny Tales: When Maternal Morbidities Makes Smaller Stories"

3rd Place (tie) - Manu Johnsen & Charles Lane - ["The Fatal Mix: Alcohol, Speed, and No Seatbelt"](#)

3rd Place (tie) - Luz Corral Parra & Anna Seville - "Predicting Circuit Board Failure Using Machine Learning"

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Graduate Students

1st Place Ph.D. - Charles Fanning - ["U-Net with Persistent Homology for Retinal Vessel Segmentation"](#)

1st Place Masters - Alexandra Barrett - ["A Song of Text and Fidelity: Analyzing Textual Similarity and Critical Reception in Game of Thrones"](#)

2nd Place Masters - Andy Lewis - "Diving into the Data: Risk Factors for Routine Pool Inspection Failures in 2025"

3rd Place Masters - Rohan Jonnalagadda - ["One Family to Rule Robust Optimal Transport: The Weighted r-Power Framework"](#)

Agenda

7:30 - 8:30am: Student Poster Competition Judging (sponsors only)

8:30 - 10:30am: Student Poster Presentations and Breakfast

10:45 - 10:50am: *Welcome*

Sherry Ni, Ph.D., Director, School of Data Science and Analytics, KSU

10:55 - 11:25am: *Keynote Presentation*

Warren Hearnes, Ph.D., Founder, OptML AI

11:30am - 12:20pm: *Journeys Beyond the Ph.D.: Alumni Reflections and Insights*

Panel Discussion featuring:

Trent Geisler, Ph.D., Deputy Director, Analysis Group, US Army Materiel Command

Jessica Rudd, Ph.D., Staff Data Engineer, FanDuel

Lauren Staples, Ph.D., Senior Data Scientist, Microsoft

Moderator - Herman E. Ray, Ph.D., Director, Ph.D. of Data Science and Analytics Program

12:25pm: *Announcement of Undergraduate Poster Presentation Winners*

Austin Medford, Manager, Power Supply, Cobb EMC

12:30pm: *Announcement of Graduate Poster Presentation Winners*

Omar Kitosi, Manager, Data Analytics and Reporting, Southern Company

Keynote Speaker



Warren Hearnes

Dr. Warren Hearnes is an expert in optimization, machine learning, and artificial intelligence with over 30 years of experience applying these technologies to solve business challenges. He currently leads OptiML AI and Sportslytx, where he applies AI and ML to industry challenges and educates executives on these technologies. He also teaches AI courses to Department of Defense personnel.

Previously, Warren was Chief Data Scientist at Best Buy, where he led AI/ML strategy, vision, and execution, driving AI/ML growth, sophistication, and impact across the enterprise. His career also includes key roles at Cardlytics, The Home Depot, UPS, and Lucent Technologies, where he implemented AI/ML systems for customer analytics, inventory management, fraud detection, pricing optimization, and operational improvements, generating significant business value through reduced costs, increased revenue, and faster throughput.

A U.S. Army veteran, Warren graduated from both Airborne and Ranger Schools and served as a Field Artillery officer. He holds a BS from West Point (1989) and an MS and PhD (1999) from Georgia Tech, where his research focused on reinforcement learning for robotic control. He contributed to early ML research funded by the National Science Foundation, the Electric Power Research Institute, and NASA.

Warren is actively involved with INFORMS (Institute for Operations Research and Management Science) as VP of Technology Strategy and Chair of the AI Integration Committee. He serves on analytics advisory boards for graduate programs at Georgia Tech and previously served a similar role at Emory University. His current interests include AI education for executives, sports analytics, and leveraging large language models to assist in optimization modeling.

Panel Speakers



Trent Geisler

Colonel Trent D. Geisler is the deputy director and senior military advisor for the Army Materiel Command Analysis Group at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama.

COL Geisler was commissioned in 2004 from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. Upon completion of Engineer Dive training in 2005, he was assigned to the 74th Engineer Dive Team in Fort Eustis. COL Geisler served in multiple roles at Fort Eustis, with notable assignments as the team commander for both the 74th and 544th Engineer Dive Teams.

Upon completion of graduate studies in 2013, COL Geisler was assigned to the Department of Mathematical Sciences at West Point where he served as an instructor and taught classes in calculus, statistics, and computational finance. In 2015, he was assigned to the US Army Marketing and Research Group (AMRG) in Crystal City, Virginia where he served as the data and analytics team lead to quantify the return on the Army's marketing investments. Following his assignment at AMRG, COL Geisler returned to graduate school with a follow-on assignment at West Point in the Department of Systems Engineering where he taught classes in statistics and open-source coding techniques and applications.

COL Geisler is a graduate of the Basic Diving Course, Salvage Diving Course, Sapper School, and Airborne School. He graduated from the Engineer Basic Officer Course in 2004 and from Command and General Staff College in 2015. He holds a BS in Mathematical Sciences from the United States Military Academy, a Master of Science in both Operations Research and Business Administration from the Georgia Institute of Technology, and a PhD in Data Science and Analytics from Kennesaw State University.



Jessica Rudd

Jessica M. Rudd, PhD, is a Staff Data Engineer at FanDuel, where she leads the design and implementation of critical data infrastructure to power analytics and data science across the company. With over 15 years of experience, she specializes in building scalable, secure, and ethical data systems that translate complex challenges into reliable solutions.

Previously at Intuit Mailchimp, Jessica was the capability owner for Analytics Modernization, where she led the strategic migration of over 400 ungoverned workflows into a unified, version-controlled environment, significantly improving data governance and reducing costs. A recognized technical leader, she is skilled at mentoring peers and driving engineering best practices in areas like CI/CD pipeline development and cloud architecture.

Jessica's diverse career spans roles from co-founding a generative AI startup to serving for a decade as an Epidemiologist at the CDC. She holds a PhD in Analytics and Data Science from Kennesaw State University and an MPH in Global Epidemiology from Emory University. Passionate about democratizing access to high-quality data, Jessica is a Google Developer Expert and a relentless problem-solver dedicated to enabling teams to move faster with trust.

In her spare time, she is passionate about learning new languages, traveling the world, and running really long distances.



Lauren Staples

Lauren Staples is a Senior Data Scientist at Microsoft, specializing in advanced analytics, machine learning, and operational excellence within the Microsoft Threat Protection Research US OPEX team. With expertise in Python, Azure Machine Learning, and data-driven performance evaluation, Lauren designs scalable solutions that optimize business processes and enhance decision-making.

Lauren has been at Microsoft for 3+ years. Prior to Microsoft, she spent a year forecasting sales at Inspire Brands. Her dissertation research was on reproducible clustering frameworks with healthcare data.

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