

SUMMER 2023 ISSUE

# ENGAGEMENT INNOVATION IMPACT

CSULB-COLLEGE OF BUSINESS





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## VITA PROGRAM 2023

[Volunteer Income Tax Assistance \(VITA\) 2023](#)  
[| California State University Long Beach](#)  
[\(csulb.edu\)](#)

### **Example of thought leadership at CSULB, COB, Accountancy department.**

The Voluntary Income tax Assistance (VITA) program is offered by the Accountancy students. AT CSULB, VITA is a class where students get academic credit for participating in the program. Over the last 5 years, we have collaborated with CSU5 and helped the IRS in various ways outlined below. We are one of the very few Southern California locations where VITA is offered five days a week and a few Saturday tax days.

Dr. Krishnan (faculty managing the program) created the class with a regular syllabus in 2013. Students got a grade for participating in the program. This syllabus was also used by the IRS to set up VITA programs in the Inland Empire region (San Bernardino, Riverside, Palm desert) and some community colleges as well. In April 2022, the CSULB VITA program was recognized as a “creative trailblazer” as a part of partner recognition. In May 2022, Dr. Krishnan was a member of the panel for providing VITA

services at high schools. In September 2022, Dr. Krishnan was asked to participate in the IRS VITA strategic planning meeting.

In March 2023, four senior employees of the IRS from the national office came to CSULB to see how the program is administered and how the services are provided. They got to meet the Dr. Krishnan, student coordinators and volunteers.

### [Linkedin Post with IRS](#)

### Standard 9: ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

9.1 The school demonstrates positive societal impact through internal and external initiatives and/or activities, consistent with the school’s mission, strategies, and expected outcomes. Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) is an IRS program that provides free income tax return preparation for low and moderate-income individuals, the handicapped, elderly, veterans and limited English proficient individuals. It provides our students valuable experience that can help in employment opportunities in accounting and tax firms. CSULB gives students academic credit on participating in the program.





## VITA PROGRAM 2023

The students train in January over two weekends and during the first week of school take online exams offered by the IRS to be certified to prepare state and federal income tax returns. VITA starts around January last week and ends around April second week. Student volunteers use the last week before the National tax day (often April 15) to fix any rejections of the tax returns from state and federal tax authorities.

Campus media, social media, flyers prepared by student volunteers and sometimes local TV and printed media (newspapers) are used to provide publicity for the program. Due to the pandemic, we had to work harder to let our regular clients know that we are now offering VITA face to face, on zoom (a method we learnt during the pandemic) and drop-offs –allowing us minimum interaction with off-campus clients and yet providing the services. In 2022, our students were on local TV publicizing our VITA program. ([https://archive.tveyes.com/18120/3523961-57380/cd3cfa70-16cc-4fef-8f9f-4d92fd800ea5/SPECNEWS1\\_03-04-2022\\_03.21.40.mp4](https://archive.tveyes.com/18120/3523961-57380/cd3cfa70-16cc-4fef-8f9f-4d92fd800ea5/SPECNEWS1_03-04-2022_03.21.40.mp4)) and NBC (Free Tax Prep Services Available – NBC Los Angeles) . In 2023, so far, we have articles in local

(newspapers such as the Long Beach Press Telegram and the Grunion Gazette. ( <https://www.presselegram.com/2023/02/11/this-is-who-is-eligible-for-free-tax-return-help-thanks-to-cal-state-long-beach/> ). Many of our alumni have used their social media accounts to publicize our program too.





## VITA PROGRAM 2023

### VITA in numbers

VITA dates	Jan 28-Mar 29, 2019	Jan 27 – Mar 13, 2020	Jan 26- April 10, 2021	Jan 27- April 18, 2022	Jan 30-April 8, 2023
# of volunteers	75	92	50	66	48
Total returns (State + Federal)	1809	1628	1,004	1,355	1797
Total refunds (State+ Federal)	\$1,088,807	\$1,126,772	\$701,518	\$ 1,243, 359	\$767,545
Rejection rate	4.1%	3.4%	3.4%	1.2%	4.6%
Number of clients	1307	941	513	697	903
Mode	F2F	F2F	online	F2F, online, drop-offs	F2F, online, drop-offs

The VITA program has had an important impact on our society, be it our own students or the qualifying clients in the neighborhood. The refunds can make a big difference to clients whose income is below \$55,000-\$ 60,000 (VITA program income limit changes every year). Our students learn how to prepare returns (experiential learning) and increasing their opportunities for a full time tax career in accounting firms. Along with learning how to prepare income tax returns, our students also learn to communicate with clients, learn team work and leadership skills while working with other volunteers and most importantly they learn how to give bad news – when a client has to pay taxes rather than get a refund.







## MSIS DYNAMIC HACKATHON

<https://www.cspace.csulb.edu/news/article/insightful-team-of-msis-students-earn-first-place-at-dynamic-data-hackathon>

Shortly before graduating from the intensive Master of Science in Information Systems (MSIS) program at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), three students drew upon their recently acquired technology and business skills to achieve success at one of the area's most respected meetings for those working in their field.

MSIS students Priyanka Katre, Ruchi Isaac, and Chakrapani Suresh—all of whom just completed the program in Spring 2023—formed a team for the annual Data Hackathon, where they won both the 1st place prize and the coveted Best Insights Award. The two-day event, organized by the Southern California R Users Group and the Merage Analytics Club, was held on April 22-23 at the University of California, Irvine's Paul Merage School of Business. Participants were invited to use teamwork to study a set of raw data and transform it into a final "product" or useful insight.

"The pressure, the last-minute technical errors, and still managing to complete everything on time—I wouldn't have wanted it any other way," said Priyanka, whose team worked with a set of data from the mobile app Yelp. "We wanted it to be as simple and effective as it could be. I feel we had great competition from other teams, but somehow, we managed to stand up against all of them!"

Priyanka, Ruchi, and Chakrapani were joined by two UCI students on a five-person team that tackled the challenge of producing a valuable analysis of the Yelp data. Since the restaurant industry had the greatest number of entries in their set, that became the starting point for the team to filter through the data and produce as many different visualizations of it as they could. Soon they realized that one idea connected all the data sets: some customer ratings on Yelp had anomalies or biased reviews that were contrary to the popular consensus. This unique line of thinking set the team apart from all their competitors and led to their award-winning presentation at the event.

"The hackathon was such a lovely opportunity to test out our level of skill," said Ruchi, who praised her MSIS professors for patiently helping her attain skills in machine learning and database management. "That's what makes this program so special, because I get to watch industry professionals deliver their ideas and interact with them."

By the time they attended the Data Hackathon, the MSIS students had already become well-trained on industry-standard tools including Tableau, Python, and Oracle as well as important concepts such as statistics, business analytics, and cybersecurity. In their final semesters, they also dove into state-of-the-art Deep Learning and Machine Learning models, which are developing rapidly through applications like ChatGPT.



## MSIS DYNAMIC HACKATHON

“The most appealing thing about the program is how modern it is, covering the most in-demand and innovative technologies,” Chakrapani said, adding that evening classes, affordable tuition, and the Southern California location were what drew him to the MSIS program in the first place. “What AI is doing to every industry today is nothing short of a revolution. As a data analyst, it excites me for the challenges and opportunities that are waiting.”

“I was also able to learn about entrepreneurial thinking and working with a team for enterprise designing thanks to the IBM Certifications that were a part of our curriculum,” said Ruchi. “I believe being up to date on all the changes brought about by AI is a key to success in a tech person’s professional life.”

In addition to a comprehensive understanding of the latest technologies, these classmates gained valuable business acumen through networking opportunities, real-world case studies, industry panel meet-ups, and the mentorship of their professors.

“Thanks to the MSIS program, I have become well-equipped with the proper knowledge to navigate the industry,” said Ruchi. “The concepts taught in the courses of this program were absolutely refined and I use them to this day to work on projects of mine.”

“Now I am confident I can make that pitch to recruiters and fit in when I start working in corporate environments,” Chakrapani added.

“I learned about how the systems in an organization actually work and how each of them plays an important role in the smooth functioning of a company,” said Priyanka, who worked at an IT firm before enrolling in the MSIS program and now assists with data visualizations for the Director of Architecture at CSU’s Office of the Chancellor. “Be it the design aspect of it or the storage of data, everything has a crucial part to play.”

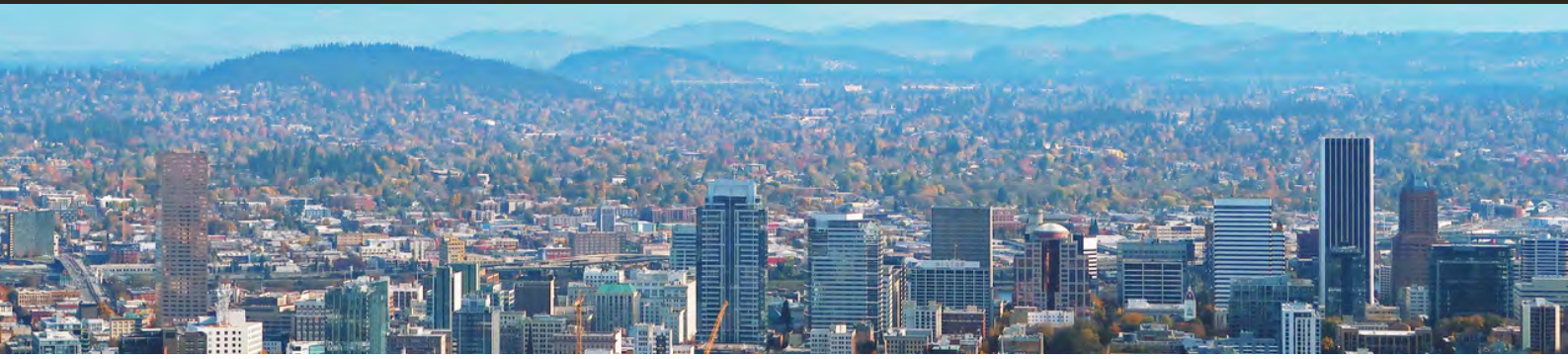
“When I decided to pursue my master’s degree, I knew I wanted to work in the data domain, and this program is helping me with that,” she added. “I can say confidently that I am a grown person now in terms of knowledge, skill sets, and personality.”

Click here to learn more about CSULB’s [Master of Science in Information Systems](#) program.



*MSIS students Chakrapani Suresh and Ruchi Issac, MSIS program director Mohamed Abdelhamid, and student Priyanka Katre with their awards at the 2023 Data Hackathon.*





## WDSI ANNUAL MEETING 2023, PORTLAND OREGON

[WDSI 2023 Program Book.pdf \(wdsinet.org\)](#)

Western Decision Sciences Institute (WDSI) is a regional division of Decision Sciences Institute that brings together academics and professionals from multiple disciplines (such as business, MIS, education, supply chain, military applications) to share information and research at its annual conference.

WDSI held its 51st annual conference from April 4-7, 2023 at the Marriott Portland Downtown Waterfront in Portland, Oregon . Over the last 51 years, WDSI members have made significant contributions in research, teaching, and practice, impacting many disciplines. Western Decision Sciences Institute (WDSI) brought together academics and professionals from multiple disciplines to share information and research at its annual conference. This year continued that tradition with 20 of COB Faculty presenting 15 papers.







## **59TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL COLLEGIATE BUSINESS STRATEGY COMPETITION (ICBSC)**

### **COB Students win 7 trophies!**

[CSULB Business students Compete, and Win 7 Trophies | California State University Long Beach](#)

This spring universities from all over the US, Canada, and the UK participated in the 59th International Collegiate Business Strategy Competition (ICBSC), the world's longest running and most comprehensive business competition providing an exciting and challenging experiential learning opportunity for business students.

22 teams in 3 undergraduate and 2 MBA/graduate worlds started their experiential learning journey in late January 2023 with a 10-week remote phase which extended over five simulated years, one calendar quarter at a time. Here, students, by assuming different leadership roles in their teams, gained the experience of running their own manufacturing company competing for the best performance against their rivals, companies run by other teams in their worlds, and learned first-hand how a group effort can result in synergy and enthusiasm. The competition culminated in week 12 with a three-day on-site intensive phase and an awards ceremony on April 19-21 in Anaheim, CA.

The outstanding performance of the three CSULB

teams, which competed in three different worlds, was recognized by the judging panels of savvy business strategy faculty and industry executives with seven awards, at least two trophies per team.

Our undergraduate team, *Revised*, received an award for the Best Documents and was the 2nd Runner Up Overall in its world. Both of our MBA teams, *Kittle and Shakin'*, were the Overall Runner Ups in their worlds. In addition to that, our MBA teams were acknowledged for the first one winning in the Best Presentation, as well as being the Runner Up in the Best Documents categories, and the second one winning in the Best Documents category in their worlds.

The undergraduate team participants were CEO Samantha Fay, CFO Isabella Paine, COO Justin Hosler, CIO Catherine Dao, VP of Marketing Scott Tomlinson, and Controller Anna Lair. Team members on one of the MBA teams were CEO, Kathy Borkowski, COO, Carmen Guzman, CMO, Laura Radivoyevitch, CFO, Angel Martinez, and CIO Adam Sharief. The other MBA team consisted of COO Anna Rad, CFO, Alejandro Robles, COO, Juan Gomez, and VP of Marketing, Brenda Acosta



## **59TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL COLLEGIATE BUSINESS STRATEGY COMPETITION (ICBSC)**

### **COB Students win 7 trophies!**

The most important and valuable feature of the ICBSC is that there are no losers. Everyone is a winner here. Yes, the competition gives its participants the taste of battle with, at times, stirring success, or, at times, stunning failure—at least in the perspective of the moment. However, as one of our Evening MBA program students, Kathy Borkoski, wrote in her competition testimonials: “I’m proud to announce that I just lost a competition in my business class. I learned so much more by losing than if it was easy. I think I got back the full value of my MBA in one semester because I’m already applying so much of it to real life... You learn more when things don’t go right the first time.”

The overwhelming amount of exceptionally positive feedback we received this year from all competition participants, including students, advisors, judges, and our student-volunteers, once again confirmed that the ICBSC sets a perfect environment for the business students’ experiential learning. Every ICBSC student-participant, without any exception, stated that the ICBSC was the most invaluable and rewarding hands-on experience of their college career.

