Virtual Reality Tools Could Bring Big Data to Life for University of Wisconsin Data Science Students

Madison, WI—May 16, 2016—Soon, students in University of Wisconsin data science courses might be putting on virtual reality headsets and bracing themselves for a spectacular ride through mountains of data. The courses are part of the online Master of Data Science degree program offered by UW-Extension in collaboration with six UW campuses.

Ryan Martinez, an instructional designer for UW-Extension, sees both a need and an opportunity to make Big Data come to life in a way that can dramatically change people's behavior. His proposal to use Oculus virtual reality technology in the online UW Master of Data Science curriculum earned Martinez a highly coveted spot at the Oculus Launch Pad Boot Camp at Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, California, on May 21.

Oculus VR will provide feedback and mentorship to Martinez and 100 other pioneers joining him at the Oculus Launch Pad Boot Camp. Following the forum, Oculus will determine which concepts will earn scholarships ranging from $5,000 – $50,000, distributed with the objective of helping leaders realize their ideas.

"If data scientists could more quickly analyze data that's already available, they could make faster decisions, act sooner, and potentially even save lives," says Martinez. "All someone needs is a phone and a

VR headset. What we can do to bring the data from virtual reality into real life—it's incredible."

"We're proud to continue to lead the way with new technologies and practices in higher education," says David Schejbal, dean, UW-Extension's Continuing Education Division. "Ryan's concept may potentially lead to innovative tools we could offer our data science students, and is an interesting option they probably haven't even considered."

About the University of Wisconsin-Extension Continuing Education Division

The University of Wisconsin Master of Data Science joins a growing list of online degree and certificate programs offered in collaboration with UW-Extension and UW System campus partners, including the existing bachelor's degree in Health and Wellness Management; bachelor's, master's, and certificate programs in Sustainable Management; a bachelor's degree in Health Information Management and Technology; bachelor of science in Nursing (RN to BSN) programs; and nine additional degree and certificate programs offered in the self-paced, competency-based UW Flexible Option format.

# # #