

**SMU**World Changers
Shaped Here

How to Start the Conversation About Tuition Reimbursement With Your Employer

Enrolling in the online Master of Science (MS) in Data Science program from Southern Methodist University (SMU) will equip you with the skillset you need to help your organization make strategic, data-driven decisions and advance their position in the global market. As a result, your employer may be interested in helping you fund your education. To help guide this conversation, we have compiled a list of tips to help prepare you for the important discussion ahead.

Explore Available Resources at Your Workplace

Before you request tuition support from your employer, it's important to research professional development resources that may already be available at your organization. These resources may include:

**Career counseling****Mentorship opportunities****Flexible work hours****Professional development courses**

Keep in mind that all organizations are different, and your employer may only offer partial tuition reimbursement or have other eligibility guidelines, such as GPA requirements or proof of skills learned.

Data scientist has been ranked top three on Glassdoor's Best Jobs in America list for four consecutive years.¹

Familiarize Yourself With the MS in Data Science Program

With the online DataScience@SMU program, you will develop the technical and analytical skills you need to become a data expert, and apply your new learnings to real-world problems through the capstone project. As a student, you will learn the critical statistical methods and principles used to effectively process data and implement solutions from faculty members who have close connections to Fortune 500 companies.

To clearly explain why you want to pursue your master's, we recommend that you research the available courses and specializations in the DataScience@SMU program. Consider the skills you may gain and how you can customize your experience in the program to best benefit your organization. This way, you'll be ready to convey how this degree will add value to your professional work.

Interested in one of our specializations?

Start thinking about which one — Machine Learning or Business Analytics — will align with your field and your career goals. Completing a specialization can help position you as an expert within your organization.

¹50 Best Jobs in America for 2020. (2020). Glassdoor. Retrieved March 5, 2020, from https://www.glassdoor.com/List/Best-Jobs-in-America-LST_KQ0,20.htm

Emphasize How Your Employer Will Benefit

As you speak with your employer, you should emphasize how this degree will not only help you in your career, but also how it will positively impact your organization. Be sure to explain how the skills you learn will apply to your specific role and how you can use them to grow within your team, both short-term and long-term. Here are just a few of the benefits you may want to mention:

- This data science program is designed to provide you with the highly sought-after skills required to work with unstructured data, big data processing, statistical analysis, text mining and machine learning. You'll be able to synthesize findings into actionable results for an organization of any size by the time you graduate.
- The program is delivered online, which means you can apply those skills learned in class in real time while you continue to work. This way, you're maintaining relevant, data science skills that can help provide insight on your company's business needs.
- An expanded professional network through SMU can give your employer valuable connections in Dallas, Texas — home to companies such as AT&T, Lockheed Martin and Toyota (US).
- The capstone project allows you to focus on real-world problems that you are passionate about and align with your field. At the conclusion of the program, you'll be able to leverage new learnings against issues within your organization and make a significant impact on business decisions.

Explain the Financial Commitment

Once you feel you have sufficient information regarding the resources at your organization, talk to your employer about the different options — like DataScience@SMU — available beyond what is currently offered. When discussing the financial commitment, it is important to:

- Be specific in the amount you will be required to pay for your degree.
- Explain that the tuition support may be tax deductible for your employer.
- Request that your sponsorship be based on a quarter system, rather than paid all at once. This translates to better budget forecasts.

We know that the process for requesting support from your employer can include an in-depth conversation. We hope that the tips in this guide will help streamline that process and better prepare you to pursue your Master of Science in Data Science online with SMU.

For more information visit
datascience.smu.edu, or reach out
to the admissions team at
1-844-768-4637
with any questions.

“ I solve a variety of new problems using what I've learned in the data science program. You learn a lot of information, but it is the foundation for a data science career.”

— Jim Taber, DataScience@SMU Graduate

