

◀ Back to Unearthed News

## University of Technology Sydney Makes Hackathons Mandatory after Unearthed Sydney 2015

August 11, 2016 in [Success Stories](#), [Partners](#)



### BACKGROUND

Last year, a team of fresh faced

To say that they felt hesitant about attending the event would be an understatement, as everyone had different (mostly non-data science) backgrounds, and they were only in the first semester of their masters studies.

Despite their lack of confidence and inexperience with the hackathon format, they decided to give it their best shot.

### EXPERIENCE

Throughout the weekend they went from having absolutely no idea where to start, to gaining enough insight to commence tackling the challenge.

The biggest attractions to the event, according to Course Director

The students must have perceived it to be worthwhile from the outset, as their attendance was voluntary.

Theresa was extremely encouraged to see the excitement and energy at the event and the lightbulb moments with connections to curriculum happening in real time. "Hackathons insist on lateral thinking and moving very quickly from one idea to another. They teach you to be adaptive – responding well when you hit a dead end".

The team tackled [Anglo American's Correlate and Visualise Coal Deposits Automatically Challenge](#) and ended up coming fifth out of sixteen teams for their solution – not a bad result for their debut effort.

### PROGRESS

Following [Unearthed Sydney 2015](#), the team had the confidence to take on their next hackathon, hosted by the [NSW Data Analytics Centre \(NSW Department of Finance, Services and Innovation\)](#). The data sponsor for the event was [Transport for NSW](#); their challenge: to help identify how to increase patronage to the Parramatta area.



## RESULTS

The team won first place for their award winning solution: a machine learning system that can predict patronage based on public holidays, weather and other events, allowing [Transport for NSW](#) to redistribute their resources to meet demands and ensure a more enjoyable consumer experience.

All of the tools they lacked at [Unearthed Sydney](#), they gained by the time they attended the next event. They were able to build real machine learning models and come up with a winning product in such an incredibly short space of time. The team has gone on to attend even more hackathons since then.

In addition to their event success, the core team of four have all secured data scientist roles whilst completing their studies part time. Daniel is data consulting for [Palantir](#), Perry is working for [Commonwealth Bank](#), Passionara for the [NSW Data Analytics Centre](#), and Greg for [Westpac](#).

Perry was quick to credit [Unearthed](#) for spring boarding this trajectory.

## UNEARTHED PART OF UTS CURRICULUM

From Theresa's point of view, seeing the way that the students took to the challenge at [Unearthed Sydney](#) helped her formulate an argument to take to other staff about the necessity of embedding hackathons in the curriculum.

As a result of their experience at [Unearthed Sydney](#), Theresa has retooled the second year of the degree to make [Unearthed](#) and other hackathons a key element of the program.

*"This great initiative provides our students the opportunity to work on real world challenges with industry and peers. By means of teamwork and innovative thinking, our students bring to life an aspirational way of leveraging Big Data in a complex resources sector. It's inspiring to see young people create solutions for the future,"* Dean, Professor Ian Burnett, Faculty of Engineering and IT, University of Technology Sydney.

Students of the [Masters of Data Science and Innovation](#) will now participate in multiple real world data challenges, as they allow access to authentic data, feedback about the challenge from industry mentors, and advice about the feasibility of an idea.

Theresa notes the importance of practicing what you preach: "if you aren't finding ways to connect with industry and real life situations in the innovation arena, you are shooting yourself in the foot".

## WHAT'S NEXT?

As for their next hackathon experience, a total of 31 students from the [UTS Masters of Data Science and Innovation](#) degree will be heading along to [Unearthed Sydney 2016](#) this Friday 19<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> August, a handful of whom are only in their second week of study!

We wish them all the best of luck.

For more information about Unearthed Sydney 2016, visit the [event page](#).



Share via: [f](#) [t](#)



© 2020 Unearthed Solutions

[About Us](#) [Contact](#) [News](#) [Privacy & Terms](#)



## Announcements and news

Latest challenges and opportunities. Sign up find out first.

Email

Subscribe