

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

May 2020

QUESTIONS

What do you know now that you wish you had known during your time in school?

“Networking, networking, and networking! While I was fortunate enough to land two job offers after applying to hundreds of positions upon graduation in 2020—right in the midst of the COVID pandemic—I now deeply understand how vital professional connections truly are. The longer I work in the industry, the more clearly I see the immense power and importance of building meaningful relationships. For instance, when discussing internal mobility with Managing Directors and Executive Directors at JPMorgan Chase, they’ve consistently emphasized that, out of the hundreds of applications they receive for every open role, they first consider candidates they already know, have worked with previously, or who come recommended by their peers and direct reports. Networking is an area I’m actively improving, and I genuinely wish I’d recognized its value much earlier in my journey.”

ZHONGQI LIU



Zhongqi Liu is a 2020 graduate with his Masters from the LSA Department of Statistics Data Science Program.

He is currently in industry as the Vice President, Applied AI ML Lead @ JPMorgan Chase

Linkedin:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/zhongqi-liu/>

How did the statistics program prepare you for your career?

“The diverse and interdisciplinary coursework offered by the MDS program has exceptionally prepared me for my current role. Specifically, EECS courses equipped me with a deep understanding of algorithms, enabling me to confidently develop complex solutions from scratch. Meanwhile, the practical and industry-oriented courses from the SI provided hands-on experience that closely mirrors real-world applications. Together, these complementary experiences ensured that I was thoroughly prepared and well-rounded, bridging theoretical knowledge with practical skills essential for success in the industry.”

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What do employers look for in new graduates?

“Based on my conversations with hiring managers, technical proficiency is certainly important—but there are several additional qualities employers highly value.

Clear Communication: Candidates should be able to articulate their ideas, methods, and solutions effectively and succinctly.

Strong Problem-Solving Skills: Employers appreciate candidates who can critically evaluate problems and propose practical solutions. They look for individuals who recognize when complex solutions, like billion-parameter neural networks, are necessary—and when simpler solutions, such as straightforward business rules, can be equally effective.

Professional Ethics and Integrity: Honesty matters greatly. For example, GPT and other advanced AI tools are impressive, but candidates should never use these technologies in interviews or assessments without explicit permission—hiring managers can easily recognize when responses aren't genuinely crafted by the candidate.”

Best piece of advice you'd give current students

“Take advantage of as many EECS courses as you possibly can—from foundational classes like EECS 280/281 all the way up to advanced offerings at the EECS 500+ level. There's an abundance of fascinating topics to explore, guided by exceptional professors whose expertise will deeply enrich your learning experience. Diving into these courses not only builds your technical knowledge but also significantly enhances your critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. This breadth and depth in EECS are truly what make this program shine and will serve you incredibly well throughout your career.”

