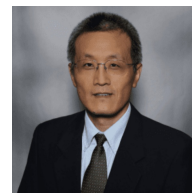# FACULTY NEWSLETTER

Dear faculty of the School of Data Science,

As we wrap up another dynamic academic year at the School of Data Science, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to our faculty, staff, and students for their dedication, innovation, and resilience. From continuous growth and expansion of our academic programs (2 undergraduate programs, 2 master programs, and one Ph.D. program) and two new tenure-track faculty hiring to groundbreaking research publications and increased faculty engagement, this year has been a testament to the strength and growth of our community. Our interdisciplinary approach continues to evolve, and it is because of your continued efforts that SDS at UNC Charlotte remains a leader in data science education and research.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the opportunities on the horizon—including the new Ph.D. program in data science and the new undergraduate program in sports analytics that will be launched this Fall, curriculum enhancements, and the expansion of our partnerships across industries. The school will also increase the support of faculty research in data science, continuously encourage multidisciplinary research collaboration and externally funded research, and strive for impactful research that can benefit the local communities and the society. As we prepare to welcome a new cohort of students in the Fall, let us take a moment to celebrate the progress we have made together in the past year and the momentum we carry forward. Thank you for being a part of this incredible year—I wish you all a restful and inspiring summer!
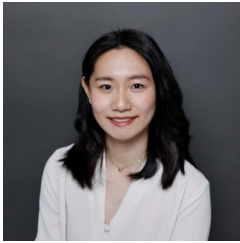
Warm regards,

Dongsong Zhang, Ph.D.
Interim Executive Director, School of Data Science

FEATURED UPDATES

The School of Data Science Welcomes Two New Faculty

The School of Data Science is excited to welcome our newest faculty members, **Dr. Sijia Qian** and **Dr. Keith Burghardt**. After reviewing 163 applications for two open positions in Artificial Intelligence, the SDS search committee narrowed the pool to 26 candidates for Zoom interviews and ultimately invited seven finalists to campus. The pool was exceptionally strong and academically diverse, ensuring the selection of top-tier talent.

Dr. Sijia Qian earned her Ph.D. in Communication from the University of California, Davis, specializing in computational social science. Her research focuses on AI for social good, the social implications of AI, visual misinformation, and media literacy. Dr. Qian is an expert in advanced computational methods, including machine learning, computer vision, and big data analytics. Her work has earned prestigious grants and fellowships, and she has published extensively in top-tier journals. We are thrilled to have her join our community this fall and look forward to her contributions to both our research and curriculum.

Dr. Keith Burghardt is a computer scientist specializing in online extremism and social media analysis. He holds a Ph.D. in Physics from the University of Maryland and currently serves as a faculty member at the University of Southern California's Information Sciences Institute. His research focuses on detecting extremist groups, studying their recruitment tactics, and developing methods for large-scale deradicalization. Dr. Burghardt has received numerous accolades, including best paper and best poster awards. His work spans a range of topics, including opinion dynamics, information cascades, and the impact of social influence on decision-making. His publications cover everything from extremist content on social media to the evolution of urban road networks. Dr. Burghardt will officially join the School of Data Science in the spring of 2025.

We thank everyone for their time and commitment to the search process over the past several months!

Call for Resources: Help Expand the SDS Ph.D. Tuition & Funding Webpage!

The School of Data Science (SDS) is enhancing its Tuition and Funding webpage by compiling a comprehensive list of external fellowship opportunities for Ph.D. students in Data Science. We need your help! If you know of any relevant graduate

fellowships in Data Science, please share them so we can add them to our existing **External** and **Internal** funding resource pages.

To assist with this effort, we ask you to help gather the following details for each fellowship:

☐ Fellowship Name
☐ Funding Source
☐ Application Deadline
☐ Academic Specialty
☐ Eligibility Criteria

We have compiled a preliminary list and would greatly appreciate your input in adding to this list. Please submit your suggestions to **Dr. Shaoyu Li** Thank you in advance for supporting our Ph.D. students in securing valuable funding opportunities.

Summer and Fall 2025 DSBA and HIA Courses

The complete list of SDS graduate course offerings for Summer and Fall 2025 is linked below. For information on prerequisites, students should refer to the Graduate Catalog (HIA and DSBA Catalog) and review past syllabi available on the program websites.
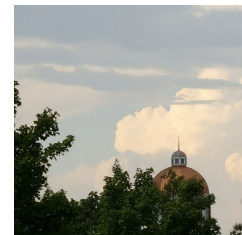
- **Summer DSBA/HIA Class List**
- **Fall DSBA/HIA Class List**

SDS Revised TA Allocation Policy for AY 2025–2026

The School of Data Science TA Allocation Policy has been updated for the 2025-2026 academic year. The proposed changes were shared during the January 2025 faculty meeting and aim to enhance teaching support by assigning Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Instructional Assistants (IAs) based on course size and instructional needs. Undergraduate IAs assist with grading and clerical tasks, while Master's TAs and IAs provide faculty support through grading, instructional material preparation, and office hours. PhD TAs and Instructors of Record (IORs) focus on direct instruction, including leading recitations and tutoring. TA allocations follow structured guidelines:

Undergraduate Courses:
- 35–45 students → 1 MS TA (10 hours/week)
- 46–60 students → 1 MS TA (20 hours/week)
- 61–90 students → 1 PhD TA (20 hours/week) OR 1 MS TA (20 hours/week) + 1 Undergraduate IA (10 hours/week)
- 91+ students → 2 MS TAs (20 hours/week each) OR 1 PhD TA + 1 Undergraduate IA (10 hours/week)

Graduate courses follow a similar structure, with increased TA support for larger classes. Assistants must maintain a 3.0 GPA, enroll in required coursework, and adhere to a 20-hour weekly work limit. Allocations may vary based on course needs.

RESARCH AND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

SCHOOL OF DATA SCIENCE
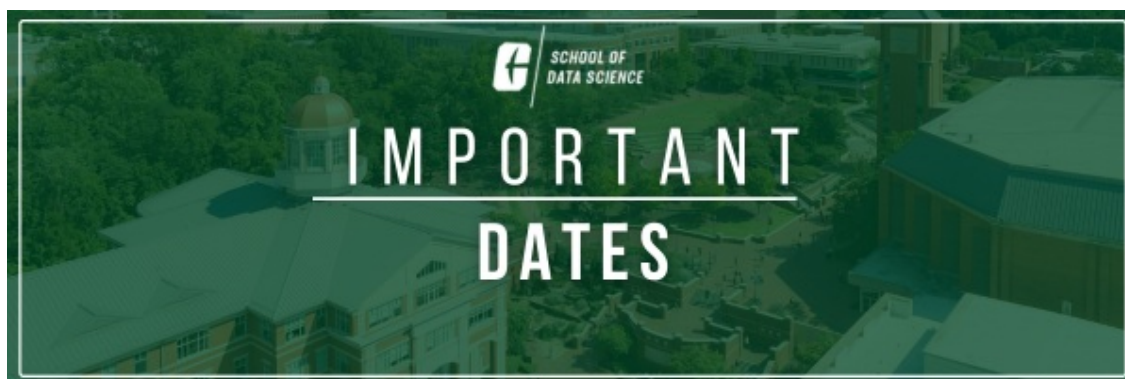
Rise AI Conference 2025

The **RISE AI Conference 2025**, organized by the Lucy Family Institute for Data & Society at the University of Notre Dame, is inviting abstract submissions on interdisciplinary, AI-driven solutions to societal challenges. This conference will focus on how AI can address complex issues while upholding the principles of Responsibility, Inclusion, Safety, and Ethics (RISE). The event will take place from **October 6-8, 2025**, with a welcome dinner on **October 6** and sessions held on **October 7-8**.

RISE AI Conference: 2025 Call for Submissions- Research abstracts are being sought that explore AI applications across various sectors, with an emphasis on ensuring responsible, equitable, and sustainable technological progress. Accepted submissions may be selected for oral presentations, and poster sessions, or invited to submit longer papers for inclusion in an edited book or journal proceedings.

- **Submission Deadline (Extended):** April 30, 2025
- **Acceptance Notifications (Extended):** May 31, 2025

For more information and to submit, please visit **RISE AI Conference Call for Submissions.**

Submit your abstract!

IMPORTANT DATES

SCHOOL OF DATA SCIENCE

Find the full SDS Calendar of Events on the program website.

- April 28: Master's Thesis Defense Deadline
- April 30: Last day of classes
- May 1: Reading Day
- May 2nd-3rd: Final Examinations begin

SDS Faculty Meeting – Friday, April 18, 2:30 – 4:00 PM, Colvard 1017

SDS affiliate and joint faculty members, please join us in Colvard 1017 for the final SDS faculty meeting of the 2024-25 academic year. The meeting will include faculty elections for the 2025-26 academic year. A Zoom link will be provided for those unable to attend in person. We look forward to seeing you there!

Triangle Symposium on Statistics and Data Science (TSSDS): May 12–13, 2025, North Carolina State University

The inaugural Triangle Symposium on Statistics and Data Science (TSSDS) will take place on May 12-13, 2025, at North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC. This event will showcase the work of local faculty, students, and researchers while featuring top experts from across the country and beyond. The program includes two plenary talks, four invited sessions, two rapid talk sessions, and a poster session. Those interested in participating can fill out the Google form on the conference website. Travel support is available for graduate students, postdocs, and early-career researchers presenting posters.

See the details here!

SDS Faculty Polos–Request yours Today!

The School of Data Science has experienced significant growth over the past year, welcoming several new faculty members. When we first launched three years ago, we provided polo shirts to our joint, affiliate, and adjunct faculty. If you have not already received a polo in the first round, this is your chance to add to your wardrobe! Click the link below to fill out the form, and we'll hand-deliver your SDS polo before the end of the month.

SDS Polo Form

Student Resources
AND OPPORTUNITES

The Informatics Research Seminar Series | Virtual Sessions | Wednesday @4:00 pm

Duke University School of Medicine

The Informatics Research Seminar Series, sponsored by Duke University and collaborating institutions (UNC-Chapel Hill, NCCU, UNC-Charlotte, ECU, and WFU), offers valuable insights into Health Informatics. Join us on Wednesdays at 4 PM EST to engage with industry leaders and researchers.

Check the Fall schedule!

Funding: U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science Graduate Student Research (SCGSR)

The program provides funding for Ph.D. candidates in the physical sciences to conduct part of their thesis research at a U.S. DOE National Laboratory. This is an excellent opportunity to access cutting-edge instrumentation and facilities that may enhance the research of your faculty and the training of your students. Applications to the program require a research proposal prepared by the graduate student under the supervision of their Ph.D. thesis advisor, and the deadline for the current solicitation is May 7, 2025. More information is available at: https://science.osti.gov/wdts/scgsr.

Please find attached to this message two flyers: one aimed at faculty and one at students.

Faculty

Students

Help Shape the Future of AI Education: Join an NSF LEVEL UP AI Roundtable

The NSF LEVEL UP AI Roundtable, organized by the Computing Research Association (CRA) in partnership with AAAI, ACM, and IEEE-CS, is a community-led effort aimed at expanding undergraduate AI education and preparing an AI-ready workforce. This initiative brings together educators, researchers, and professionals to discuss strategies for strengthening AI programs across institutions, building capacity, and ensuring broad access to AI learning opportunities. If you're involved in AI education and want to contribute, consider joining one of the upcoming virtual roundtable discussions. These discussions will cover topics like AI knowledge areas, infrastructure, education strategies, and ensuring access for all. Your insights will help inform a national whitepaper on enhancing AI programs. Groups will be forming soon, so be sure to submit your interest today!

Submit your interest here. Thanks to Manuel Perez Quinones and Mary Lou Maher for sharing!

Interest Form

Looking for Campus Data?

The Graduate School recently hosted a workshop on *Accessing and Using Data for Informed Decision Making*, focusing on how data can be utilized to improve decisions in key areas like recruitment, admissions, enrollment, and retention. Participants explored a variety of essential topics, including enrollment metrics, retention, and graduation data, achievement metrics, DegreeWorks progress reports, and time-to-degree analysis. This session provided valuable insights into

how data can guide strategic planning and decision-making, helping to enhance the overall effectiveness of academic programs.

There is a live document, **Data Sources and Dashboards**, with links to a variety of sources.

Free Altair Resources for SDS Students and Faculty

Altair offers cutting-edge tools in AI, data analytics, simulation, and high-performance computing (HPC)—all free!

Explore these powerful resources:
☐ **RapidMiner Platform** – A suite of data science tools for seamless data integration and collaboration. (**More info)**
☐ **Graph Studio (Anzo)** – Translates complex data into AI-driven insights, optimizing analytics and generative AI applications.(**Video**)
☐ **AI Studio** – A user-friendly platform for designing machine learning models, featuring AutoML, **generative AI support**, and drag-and-drop workflows.

Unlock your access to these industry-leading tools today!

Data Science Community Newsletter

Published by the ADSA, this is one more resource to keep in the know for new tools, events, job postings, and developing trends in data science. Download this month's newsletter **here**.
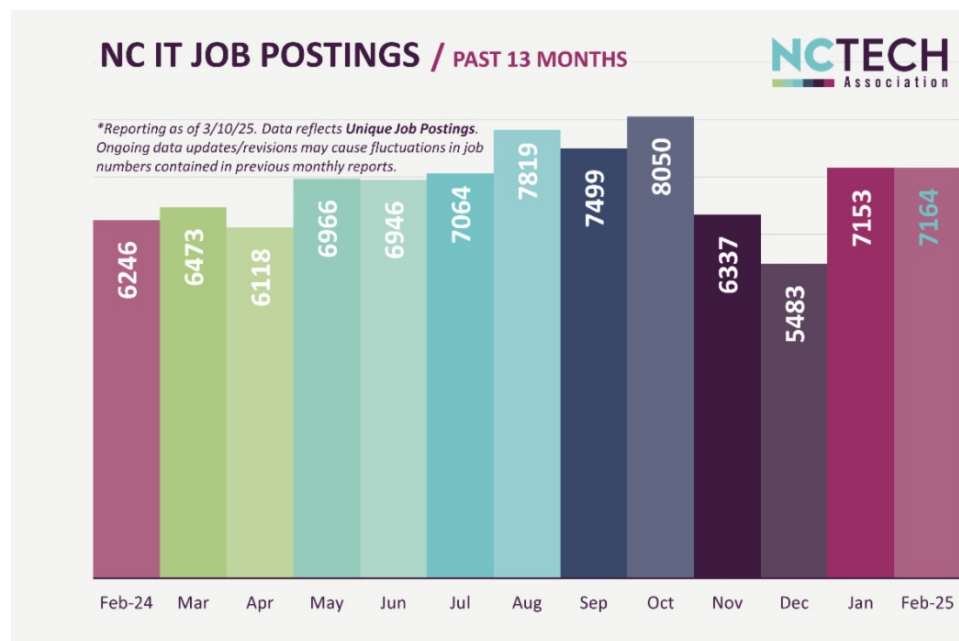
- **Central Projects for Rescuing Government Data-** In their last issue, they discussed the disappearing and reappearing of U.S. government data. In their latest issue, they highlight the **Data Rescue Project**, a tracker that monitors government data, its rescue status, and access points for recovered versions. While some major datasets, like the U.S. Census American Community Survey, are still incomplete, many datasets are now fully accessible. Environmental data enthusiasts can also check out the **Public Environmental Data Partners**, who are working to recover and distribute environmental data. However, the status of lesser-known datasets remains unclear. If you know of any missing datasets, please contact the Data Rescue Project or Public

Environmental Data Partners and get involved. **From DSC Community Newsletter**

<div style="text-align:center">

View the full newsletter!

</div>

NC TECH Job Trends Summary – February

The NC Technology Association (NC TECH) has released its latest IT Job Trends Dashboard, providing key insights into North Carolina's IT job market. February job postings in North Carolina remained steady from January but saw a 15% increase compared to February 2024. Nationally, IT job postings dipped slightly month-over-month but are up nearly 10% year-over-year. North Carolina was ranked #1 for Women in Tech, with women making up 37.7% of the state's tech workforce. Additionally, Charlotte, Durham, and Raleigh were recognized as Best Places for Women in Tech by CoworkingCafe. NC TECH continues to support women in tech through initiatives like Lean In Circles, the Summit for Women in Tech, scholarships, and leadership programs.

NC IT JOB POSTINGS / PAST 13 MONTHS

NCTECH Association

*Reporting as of 3/10/25. Data reflects **Unique Job Postings**. Ongoing data updates/revisions may cause fluctuations in job numbers contained in previous monthly reports.*

Feb-24	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb-25
6246	6473	6118	6966	6946	7064	7819	7499	8050	6337	5483	7153	7164

For more information, visit the IT Job Trends Dashboard here.

Other Newsletters and Resources

Suggestions are always welcome- please email lindsay.lennon@charlotte.edu with any questions or recommendations.

- American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA) SmartBrief's Newsletter. This weekly publication shares news and insights about Health informatics.

- Data Science Community Newsletter- Published by the ADSA, this is one more resource to keep in the know for new tools, events, job postings, and developing trends in data science. Download this month's newsletter here.

  ADSA Data Science Community Newsletter

- Data Science Current- A monthly newsletter from the Data Science

Council of America.

- **empowHERed**- Focuses on women in the sports industry they offer webinars, a newsletter, and networking events to our Mentor Program and Career Pipeline.

- **Essential Data**- From **Data Leaders**, a global data solutions firm, targeted to Chief Data Officers.

- **KDnuggets**- KDnuggets is an online site for Data Science, Machine Learning, AI, and Analytics, edited by Matthew Mayo. KD stands for Knowledge Discovery.

- **Kaggle**- Kaggle, owned by Google LLC, is a platform and community for data scientists and machine learning practitioners. Users can discover and share datasets, create models in a web-based environment, collaborate with others, and compete in data science challenges.

- **Medium**- Medium is an open-source online publishing platform where anyone can publish and share insightful perspectives and useful knowledge. It has a wide-ranging offering of topics including Programming, Data Science, Technology, self-improvement, Machine Learning, etc. In addition to their website, they also publish a daily e-newsletter.

- **National Consortium for Data Science (NCDS)**- The National Consortium for Data Science (NCDS) brings together academia, industry, and government to tackle 21st-century data challenges. It aims to leverage digital data for creating jobs, advancing healthcare, making scientific discoveries, and giving industries a competitive edge.

- **SouthBDHub**- The monthly newsletter contains a listing of news, events, and opportunities in data science, analytics, engineering, and policy. A selection of stories and announcements are below.

Follow us on social media!