

UC San Diego

Search for the Director, Halicioğlu Data Science Institute University of California San Diego La Jolla, California

THE SEARCH

The University of California San Diego (UC San Diego) seeks an internationally recognized leader in data sciences with the intellectual leadership, academic entrepreneurship experience, and dedication to serve as the Director of the Halicioğlu Data Science Institute (HDSI). HDSI seeks a Director to propel HDSI into the next phase of its growth, while leveraging the tremendous intellectual, infrastructural, and financial resources of the Halicioğlu School of Data Science and Computing into enabling center-scale research projects with potential for high impact.

HDSI was founded in 2018 with the philanthropic support of Taner Halicioğlu, a UC San Diego computer science and engineering alumnus ('96) and an early Facebook engineer, which led to the institute being named in his honor. Since that time, HDSI has been a world leader in establishing the scientific foundations of the field of data science, developing new methods and infrastructure, and training students and partners to use data science to address pressing global problems. HDSI serves as a hub for data science and AI advances across the entirety of UC San Diego academics and with the national and international research community to accelerate discovery in every field of inquiry and drive real-world impact.

HDSI's new Director will be a strategic, transformative leader with a compelling vision for the future of areas of data sciences, including machine learning, artificial intelligence, high-performance computing, cyberinfrastructure, and the applications and services that enable researchers to make full use of leading-edge, world-class resources to advance human knowledge, health, and well-being. The successful candidate will be someone who combines this breadth of vision with effective leadership and management as demonstrated by a solid prior track record. To be successful, the Director will address the following opportunities and challenges, outlined in greater detail on page 4 of the document:

- Create a vision for HDSI that charts the path ahead toward the future of data science at UC San Diego.
- Recruit, retain, and develop a world-class faculty and staff.
- Promote and champion interdisciplinary partnerships across HDSI and throughout UC San Diego.
- Build and scale academic programs in data science.

- Lead and develop external partnerships to expand HDSI's impact and generate philanthropic support.

A list of the desired qualifications and characteristics of the Director can be found at the conclusion of this document, which was prepared with the assistance of the national executive search firm, Isaacson, Miller. The document provides background information and details the key opportunities and challenges related to the position. All confidential applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the parties listed at the conclusion of this document.

ABOUT HDSI

In 2018, UC San Diego established HDSI with philanthropic support, including a \$75 million gift from Alumnus Taner Halicioğlu, strengthening the institution's depth in technology-related domains. Uniquely positioned as the only standalone academic unit on campus, HDSI demonstrated rapid growth in increasing enrollment, faculty, and research and grant portfolios. The interdisciplinary nature of HDSI has allowed faculty and researchers across disciplines to come together to explore new computational methods, mathematical models, and guide societal and ethical impacts of data science. HDSI is also home to the NSF-funded AI Institute for Learning-Enabled Optimization at Scale (TILOS), a \$20 million endeavor that explores AI optimization and advances chip design, networks, and contextual robots. Together, SDSC and HDSI will provide opportunities for new academic programs and research initiatives that both faculty and researchers will be able to draw closely together, meeting the demand to advance data science and AI innovations and educate the workforce for the future.

As an institute, HDSI was built upon three foundational goals: transcending department and divisional boundaries to train talent for the transdisciplinary domain, catalyzing research in data science across campus, and building a data science ecosystem of researchers and practitioners working closely with industry partners. HDSI is a campus hub for Data Science that has emerged as a strong interdisciplinary academic department with students earning degrees in data science programs include BS, MS and PhD in Data Science, as well as joint degree programs including BS in AI, Master of Data Science (online), and Master of Advanced Studies in Data Science and Engineering. In addition, the Institute is readying plans to offer new joint degree programs in Business Analysis as well as MS in Data Science for the Physicians (MD-MS).

ABOUT HALICIOĞLU SCHOOL OF DATA SCIENCE AND COMPUTING

As the newest of 12 schools at UC San Diego, the Halicioğlu School of Data Science and Computing will position the university to lead innovation and education across artificial intelligence, computing, and data science. The school uniquely combines the strengths of the San Diego Supercomputer Center (SDSC), a national leader in high-performance and data-intensive computing, and the Halicioğlu Data Science Institute (HDSI), a pioneering interdisciplinary institute that advances data science and AI education and research. The school brings together faculty across disciplines to improve the human condition by better understanding how data shapes society and to prepare the next generation of highly skilled workers driving artificial intelligence advancements.

Rajesh K Gupta serves as the Dean as well as Distinguished Professor of CSE and Data Science at UC San Diego. Professor Gupta's research is in embedded and cyber-physical systems with a focus on sensor data organization and its use in optimization and analytics.

SDSC

UC San Diego has a deep and long history in computing and computational sciences. Established in 1985 by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) as one of the nation's first supercomputer centers, SDSC transformed academic scientific communities by addressing the shortage of advanced computing resources. SDSC continues to provide computing resources to a range of stakeholders and federal agencies, state agencies, and the UC San Diego and UC system, providing researchers with in-house computational and data resources to accelerate scientific discovery. Recently, SDSC has launched an "AI for UC San Diego and Partners" program to advance state-of-the-art AI applications across industry and academia to build on UC San Diego's global leadership in AI with the goal of operating a high-performance AI infrastructure and providing partners with access to AI experts.

Frank Würthwein is the Director of SDSC. He holds faculty appointments at UC San Diego in the Physics Department and HDSI. His research focuses on globally distributed computing and data systems (e.g., OSG, NRP, OSDF), experimental particle physics, and distributed high-throughput computing.

ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR OF HDSI

Reporting to the Dean of the Halicioğlu School of Data Science and Computing, the Director is responsible for the strategic direction and operational management of HDSI, including academic programs. The Director will play a key role in shaping the future of data science research nationally and will contribute to the next wave of scientific innovations in a collaborative and competitive global arena. At the same time, HDSI's new Director will continue to strengthen its engagement and alignment with UC San Diego's academic mission and advance the data sciences.

The Director will lead an academic department with 53 faculty, 17 staff, and 1600 students with a budget of approximately \$12M.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DIRECTOR

To be successful in this role, the Director will address the following key opportunities and challenges, serving as an effective leader, relationship builder, change agent, and representative for all the members of HDSI:

Create a vision for HDSI that charts the path ahead toward the future of data science at UC San Diego.

HDSI has quickly launched as a hub of data science to the broader campus by bringing together leading scholars and researchers in the field. The organization is in a transitional phase, moving from its founding to a first-of-its-kind academic department and a campus-wide institute. In consultation with the HDSI

faculty, the Dean of the Halicioğlu School of Data Science and Computing, and campus leadership, the Director will build on the established success of HDSI by developing a vision and establishing priorities for its future that are mutually beneficial to HDSI, the Halicioğlu School of Data Science and Computing, UC San Diego, the UC system, and the broader international field of data science. The Director will provide intellectual and administrative leadership by articulating and implementing a vision that builds on HDSI's research and academic efforts. This will involve evaluating and redesigning operational and administrative structures for HDSI to ensure the organization is primed for success. Leading a unit in start-up mode will require the Director to be comfortable navigating ambiguity while managing conflicting advice to build consensus among key stakeholders that positions HDSI as a connector, innovator, and leader to the campus and beyond.

Recruit, retain, and develop a world-class faculty and staff.

Central to the mission of HDSI is the excellent faculty and staff who advance the institute toward fulfilling its goals. The Director will serve as the chief attractor of talent, strengthening HDSI's faculty and staff, while also growing its research base across innovative growth areas in the field. HDSI's combined departmental budget and endowment funding enable interdisciplinary research groups and operational research staff not typically available in standard departments. Given the interdisciplinary nature of HDSI, the Director will identify, proactively explore, and build research teams and projects that respond to prominent calls and opportunities offered by various related research funding organizations. This will require the Director to oversee HDSI's staffing and operations, while being strategic and fiscally responsible for the hiring of faculty and staff to advance its pursuits.

The Director will also invest in retention efforts and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, including supporting junior faculty in tenure and promotion. A critical component of HDSI includes its culture, which the Director must maintain in an inclusive environment that supports the development of a talented and ambitious faculty and staff.

Promote and champion interdisciplinary partnerships across HDSI and throughout UC San Diego.

HDSI is positioned as a hub that integrates with other units through joint appointments, shared programs, and collaborative research initiatives, which have been foundational to the institute's success as a bridge across campus in data science. The Director will continue supporting these efforts by consulting and collaborating with campus academic leaders in areas of mutual interest and on major new undertakings and investments that will further enhance UC San Diego's deployment of innovative data science infrastructure, resources, techniques, and services to advance its mission. As a leading spokesperson for data science research infrastructure and collaboration, the Director will engage those on campus, within the UC System, and beyond, in supporting a novel approach to advancing data science research and academic programs. This will require the Director to take on a campus-wide role, not just a departmental one, by focusing on cross-unit influence and coordination.

Build and scale academic programs in data science.

HDSI offers students the opportunity to earn degrees in data science at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. As the demand for data science degrees continues to grow, the Director will ensure HDSI remains proactive and responsive to these needs by building interdisciplinary academic programs. This is a rare opportunity to define new academic programs, research structures, and long-term institutional models that could scale into multiple national institutes for HDSI. The Director will advise on activities that add to the financial strength of HDSI, including devising and operating executive training and certification programs. In turn, these programs will drive undergraduate and graduate enrollment for HDSI. Given UC San Diego's culture of interdisciplinarity, HDSI will better position the university in fulfilling its research and academic goals.

Promote, develop, and lead external partnerships to expand the impact of HDSI and generate philanthropic support.

The Director will serve as the leading voice of HDSI in national and international forums, educating and enlightening audiences about the exciting work advancing the field of data science. The Director will engage and partner with public and private organizations, including industry and research labs, providing them with the opportunity to support, define, and fund new research, educational, and community engagement activities consistent with HDSI's mission. As a spokesperson for HDSI, the Director will lead fundraising efforts and seek to establish connections as a means to create new opportunities for faculty, students, and staff, and increase revenue streams for the unit. To be successful, the Director will partner with the Dean of the Halicioğlu School of Data Science and Computing to ensure alignment between the goals of both units when engaging external partners to support the broader vision of data science at UC San Diego.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful applicant will be appointed to a tenured full professorship in HDSI. Upon completion of their tenure as Institute Director, which is for an initial period of three years with the possibility of up to two renewals, the position will revert to that of a professor or professor of practice as necessary. The desired qualifications and experience of an ideal Director include the following:

- Distinction as a researcher in a field relevant to HDSI's mission, and a distinguished record of innovations in and contributions to that field.
- Accomplishments in education or in training that are suitable for a tenured appointment at a campus of the University of California.
- A widely recognized record of leadership in areas of data science pertinent to a research, development, and service enterprise whose programs span the scientific foundations of data science and an expanding array of applied domains such as climate and the natural environment, health and medicine, economics and society, public policy, and all other areas of human life and well-being.
- Demonstrated integrity, fairness, candor, selflessness, and the highest ethical standards.

- A commitment to and success in advancing organizational priorities related to equity, diversity, and inclusion that will be manifest in experience working with diverse communities, creating an inclusive culture, and integrating practices and programs that foster equity, diversity, inclusion, and access in the core priorities of a technically and scientifically focused enterprise.
- Broadly recognized national and/or international stature in a relevant field.
- Leadership skills for team building and for accomplishing successful collaborative programs and projects.
- Management skills to direct a large, complex, and swiftly evolving organization, including evidence-based decision-making and process-improvement experience.
- Extensive track record of industry engagement and ability to raise funds.
- The ability to communicate and interact effectively with faculty, administrators, and staff at UC San Diego, across the UC System, and with other U.S. and international universities, government agencies, and industrial organizations.

LOCATION

UC San Diego's main campus is located near the Pacific Ocean on 1,200 acres of coastal woodland in La Jolla, California, just north of the city of San Diego. The campus sits on the ancestral homelands of the Kumeyaay Nation. Kumeyaay people continue to have an important and thriving presence in the region. UC San Diego is fortunate to have a thriving community of world-class research institutions at its doorstep. Preeminent institutional partners include Scripps Research, Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute, La Jolla Institute for Immunology, and the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, among others. The opportunities for scientific collaborations and resource sharing are an unparalleled asset for UC San Diego. In addition, corporate entities in the region include major pharmaceutical and biotech companies, such as Ionis Pharmaceuticals, Illumina, CSL Limited, and Arena Pharmaceutical.

La Jolla is known for its rolling hills, high cliffs, and miles of Pacific shoreline. Founded as a small, quiet village, well isolated from the bustle of downtown San Diego, La Jolla boasts a vibrant economy and, thanks in large part to UC San Diego's presence, serves as an intellectual and cultural hub for Southern California. San Diego is the eighth-largest city in the United States and the second-largest city in California. With a population of 1.38 million, the city is an ethnically diverse area with a near-perfect climate and easy access to beaches, mountains, and deserts. San Diego is also a vibrant cultural center, with world-class museums, theater, and music imbued with the traditions of the many cultures that coexist within the city limits, with immediate access to the border with Mexico.

To learn more, see <https://www.sandiego.org>.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-california-san-diego-halicioğlu-data-science-institute/director>.

UC San Diego is required to provide a reasonable estimate of the compensation range for this role. This range takes into account the wide range of factors that are considered in making compensation decisions, including but not limited to experience, skills, knowledge, abilities, education, licensure and certifications, and other business and organizational needs. Salary offers are determined based on the final candidate's qualifications and experience. The budgeted salary range that the University expects to pay for this position is \$200,000-\$400,000.

This search is led by David Bellshaw, Luciano Zuniga, and Salem Adisu of Isaacson, Miller

The University of California San Diego is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Diversity is a defining feature of the University of California, which embraces it as a source of strength. Differences — of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, socioeconomic status, abilities, experience and more — enhance the university's ability to achieve its core missions of public service, teaching and research. The UC welcomes faculty, staff, and students from all backgrounds and wants everyone at UC to feel respected and valued.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by The University of California, San Diego. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by The University of California, San Diego would supersede any conflicting information in this document.

APPENDIX I

University of California (UC) System

The University of California San Diego is one of ten campuses in the UC system. Founded in 1868, the UC system is recognized as one of the world's largest and most successful academic institutions, with a tripartite mission of research, teaching, and public service. The ten campuses that make up the UC system – Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, Los Angeles, Merced, Riverside, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz – collectively enroll approximately 301,093 students and are supported by more than 266,000 faculty and staff, and 2.5 million alums living and working around the world. Another half million people benefit from UC's continuing education courses each year, as well as from research centers and educational programs operating throughout the state. UC extends its work beyond its campuses through national laboratories, medical centers, and outreach programs in neighboring communities throughout California, worldwide, and online. To learn more about the UC System, please see: <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/about-us>.

University of California, San Diego

Founded in 1960, UC San Diego has grown into a world-class public university that has increased social mobility, research productivity and civic engagement across California. In 2025, *US News and World Report* listed the campus as the 6th best public university in the country and 21st overall on the complete list of over 400 of the nation's colleges. UC San Diego solidified its reputation as a leading global academic institution and ranked 4th among U.S. public universities, and 20th overall, by *Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)*.

UC San Diego enrolls a diverse student body of 45,273 (as of Fall 2024), including 34,955 undergraduates and 10,318 graduate and professional students. The university's focus on student success, inclusive instruction, and social mobility serves students of wide-ranging socioeconomic, cultural, and academic backgrounds. Over one-third of new matriculants identify as first-generation college students, and nearly one-third are from historically underrepresented groups.

UC San Diego offers more than 140 degrees and programs through its 12 academic and professional schools: School of Arts and Humanities, School of Biological Sciences, the Halicioğlu School of Data Science and Computing, Jacobs School of Engineering, School of Physical Sciences, Rady School of Management, School of Global Policy and Strategy, School of Medicine, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science, and School of Social Sciences. As one of the nation's ten largest centers for science, engineering, and medicine, the campus' research funding has grown to \$1.7 billion in sponsored research support in fiscal year 2025.

One of the features that sets UC San Diego apart from other major universities in the U.S. is its family of undergraduate residential colleges: Revelle, John Muir, Thurgood Marshall, Earl Warren, Eleanor Roosevelt, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth. Each of the undergraduate colleges has its own residential facilities, staff, traditions, general-education requirements, and distinctive educational themes.

The campus is home to an outstanding faculty of over 1,700 full-time tenure and tenure-track faculty representing a diverse array of backgrounds. Faculty honors include two Fields Medalists; four Pulitzer Prize winners; five MacArthur “Genius” Fellows; three recipients of the National Medal of Science; 169 members of the National Academies, including the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and National Academies of Medicine; and several other major honors including a Tony Award, a Grammy Award and a Presidential Medal of Freedom. Sixteen Nobel Laureates have taught at UC San Diego. Shared governance—a hallmark of the University of California—is an especially important feature at UC San Diego, where the Academic Senate sets admissions and graduation requirements, and advises on the budget and other matters pertaining to the conduct and welfare of the campus.

UC San Diego has over 256,000 alumni worldwide, including 23 percent who live in San Diego County. For more information about UC San Diego, please visit <https://ucsd.edu>.

Leadership

Pradeep K. Khosla, an internationally renowned electrical and computer engineer, is the eighth Chancellor of the University of California San Diego, and a Distinguished Professor. Chancellor Khosla initiated and led UC San Diego’s first-ever [Strategic Plan](#) and the ambitious 10-year, \$2 billion Campaign for UC San Diego. The Campaign raised \$3.05 billion, exceeding its original goal by more than \$1 billion, and making UC San Diego the youngest institution ever to complete a multi-billion-dollar fundraising campaign. The Strategic Plan and Campaign for UC San Diego have worked in concert to transform the university physically, culturally, and intellectually. With these efforts, Chancellor Khosla has expanded college access and affordability for underserved populations, initiated interdisciplinary research initiatives to foster collaboration and address societal challenges, and strengthened university-community relationships and partnerships. The campus is currently in the process of refreshing the strategic plan to ensure continued progress toward the vision to be a destination public university that is student centered, research driven, patient dedicated, and service oriented.