

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

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December 4, 2025

Rebecca Jo Plant
Chair, Academic Senate, San Diego Division

SUBJECT: School of Computing, Information and Data Sciences Name Change Request

Dear Chair Plant:

I am pleased to endorse the attached proposal to rename the School of Computing, Information and Data Sciences (SCIDS) to the “[Donor Name] School of Data Science and Computing.”

No curricular, programmatic or new resource requirements will result from this renaming. The change is sought to accommodate popular and accepted changes in the nomenclature of the academic discipline, concurrent with a pending philanthropic naming of the School.

We appreciate the Senate’s consideration of this request.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth H. Simmons".

Elizabeth H. Simmons
Executive Vice Chancellor



OFFICE OF THE DEAN
SCHOOL OF COMPUTING, INFORMATION AND DATA SCIENCES
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December 3, 2025

Proposal for a Simple Renaming of the School of Computing, Information and Data Sciences (SCIDS) to the “[Donor Name] School of Data Science and Computing”

1. Executive Summary

This is a request to the Academic Senate for a simple renaming of the academic portion of the name of the *School of Computing, Information and Data Sciences (SCIDS)* to the ***School of Data Science and Computing***.

This request meets the criteria for a simple renaming set forth in **Section III.B.2** of the University of California Compendium: University Review Processes for Academic Programs, Academic Units, & Research Units, as follows:

- **Accepted Nomenclature:** The change is sought to accommodate popular and accepted changes in the nomenclature of the academic field, specifically the industry-wide shift favoring "Data Science" and "Computing" over the legacy inclusion of "Information" in this specific engineering context.
- **No Programmatic Changes:** The renaming does not involve a fundamental modification of the program or curriculum. The academic substance of the school remains exactly as approved in the original establishment proposal.
- **No New Resources:** The name change does not require new resources.

Please also note that there is a concurrent proposal in an advanced stage of donor engagement via the appropriate administrative channels for adding a donor's name to the school (e.g., **[Donor Name] School of Data Science and Computing**).

Strategic Context: A convergence of brand strategy, market alignment, and stakeholder feedback drives

this recommendation. While the establishment of the School represents a monumental step in UC San Diego's trajectory as a leader in the AI and digital revolution, the current nomenclature—specifically the inclusion of "Information" and the resulting acronym "SCIDS"—presents immediate branding challenges. Accordingly, we propose a small modification to the name of the academic unit that also accurately reflects its primary growth drivers, student composition, and external market perception. The proposed name, **School of Data Science and Computing**, accomplishes three critical objectives:

1. **Mitigates Brand Risk:** It eliminates the problematic "SCIDS" acronym, which has generated negative linguistic associations during the socialization phase.
2. **Aligns with Market Trends:** It prioritizes "Data Science," the primary enrollment driver and research frontier, aligning with the naming conventions of top-tier peer institutions.
3. **Maximizes Philanthropic Impact:** It creates a fluid, prestigious naming convention for the incoming donor, ensuring the school's title carries appropriate gravitas.

2. Strategic Rationale for Renaming

2.1. Addressing Brand Vulnerability: The "SCIDS" Acronym

A primary motivation for this request is the feedback received regarding the acronym "SCIDS". In higher education branding, acronyms inevitably become the colloquial shorthand for schools (e.g., SIO, GPS, JSOE).

Feedback from faculty, alumni, and potential partners indicates that "SCIDS" suffers from unintended negative phonetic associations (phonetically identical to "skids"—implying downward movement or lack of control, "one the skids", "skid-row", and several other negative slang uses of skids) and medical associations (Severe Combined Immunodeficiency).

A department or school name acts as the "first impression" for recruiters and students. A name that requires explanation or invites hesitation creates friction in recruitment and fundraising. By reordering the components to the **School of Data Science and Computing**, we not only remove the "Information" redundancy but also eliminate the vulnerable acronym. If the donor name is included (e.g., The *Smith* School of Data Science and Computing), the shorthand becomes the donor name, which is the optimal outcome for philanthropic stewardship.

2.2. Removing "Information"

The original proposal for the school was titled "School of Computing, Information and Data Sciences". The inclusion of "Information" was intended to capture broad fields; however, a strategic review suggests this is unnecessary:

- **Redundancy:** In the proposal, the word "Information" appears almost always in conjunction with "Data" without a clearly articulated difference between the two. In the modern technological

context, "Information" is increasingly viewed as a subset of Data Science and Computing rather than a distinct pillar requiring title-level elevation.

- **Curricular Reality:** The academic core of the school is the Halıcıoğlu Data Science Institute (HDSI). The curriculum focuses on machine learning, AI, and statistical methods. "Information" as a standalone title term often connotes Library Science schools (iSchools), which misrepresents the hard-computing and engineering focus of this new unit.
- **Clarified Identity:** The vast majority of the new school's faculty and students are situated in Data Science and Computing. Removing "Information" creates a tighter, more forceful brand identity that accurately reflects our composition. Information, on the other hand, at UC San Diego campus is most commonly associated with "Information Theory" as a part of the Charter in Electrical and Computer Engineering and the California Institute of Information Technology and Telecommunications (Cal-IT2).

In summary, there is expected to be no impact on the new School's ability to launch, host, or jointly participate in programs related to Information theory, biomedical informatics, or bioinformatics, as discussed in the School establishment proposal (Page 57), because of this name change. On the other hand, a simplified name brings the new School's name closer to the campus standard nomenclature for schools (such as engineering, business, physical sciences, biological sciences, social sciences etc.) that seeks to focus on the highest abstraction levels for their academic fields than attempt to capture all individual components.

3. Alignment with Job Market and Research Trends

3.1. The "Data Science First" Strategy

The proposed renaming places "Data Science" at the front of the school's title. This is a deliberate strategic move to align with the explosive growth of the field and the specific strengths of UC San Diego.

- **Enrollment Drivers:** The Data Science major has seen extraordinary growth, becoming one of the most sought-after majors on campus at the BS, MS, and PhD levels. "Data Science" is the volume driver for the new school and deserves billing parity or primacy.
- **Industry Signals:** Students occasionally face an "identity crisis" with recruiters who do not immediately understand their degree based on complex department names. By front-loading "Data Science," we align the school's identity with the specific terminology used by top-tier employers (Google, Amazon, Biotech) who are recruiting for "Data Scientists" and "AI Specialists," not "Information Scientists".

3.2. National Benchmarking

Applying a benchmarking strategy to our new school, we see a distinct trend toward "Computing" and "Data Science" as the dominant nomenclature among peer institutions:

- **UC Berkeley:** Division of Computing, Data Science, and Society (CDSS).
- **MIT:** Schwarzman College of Computing.
- **UVA:** School of Data Science.

Renaming to the **School of Data Science and Computing** aligns UC San Diego with the nomenclature of our immediate competitors, ensuring we are not viewed as an outlier with an antiquated "Information" designation.

4. Strategic Implications for Philanthropy

The pending donor naming provides a critical window of opportunity to execute this change. Naming opportunities are most successful when the underlying entity has a clear, powerful, and prestigious title.

- **Acoustics and Flow:** "[Donor Name] School of Computing, Information and Data Sciences" is cumbersome (14+ syllables). "[Donor Name] School of Data Science and Computing" is tighter and emphasizes the highest-value keywords (Data, Computing) immediately following the donor's name.
- **Donor Intent:** Philanthropists currently investing in this space are motivated by Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, and the "Data Deluge" mentioned in the original proposal. Aligning the school's name with the donor's likely vision for *future* innovation (Data Science/AI).

5. Implementation and Transition

5.1. Academic Senate and Administrative Review

The original proposal has already undergone rigorous review. This renaming request does not alter the *substance* of the school—the curriculum, FTEs, and financial models remain as approved in the Full Proposal.

5.2. Justification via Compendium Criteria Per Section III.B.2 of the University of California *Compendium*, this proposal constitutes a "simple name change." We confirm the following criteria are met:

- **Nomenclature Update:** The change is sought to accommodate popular and accepted changes in the nomenclature of the academic discipline, specifically the primacy of "Data Science" and "Computing" in modern academic and industrial vernacular.
- **No Substantive Programmatic Changes:** This name change is not associated with any fundamental modification of the program or degree requirements. The academic structure remains exactly as approved.
- **No New Resources:** There are no new resources required for this name change.

6. Conclusion

The establishment of this school is a recognition that "transforming data into knowledge" is the "most compelling need of modern times". The name of the school must be equally compelling.

Retaining the "SCIDS" acronym creates unnecessary branding friction. Retaining "Information" dilutes the focus on the high-growth areas of AI and Computing. By pivoting to the **School of Data Science and Computing**, we achieve a trifecta of strategic wins:

1. We eliminate a problematic acronym.
2. We align our brand with the desires of top-tier students and faculty.
3. We provide our naming donor with a prestigious, modern title that matches the magnitude of their investment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rajesh Gupta".

Rajesh K. Gupta
Distinguished Professor and Dean