UA Hosts Tucson's First Women in Data Science Event

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From astronomy to zoology and from crunching big data to zeroing in on granular analysis, researchers who use data in their work might want to attend the first Women in Data Science event in Tucson, which will offer networking opportunities as well as presentations by people from the University of Arizona and the larger regional data science community.

The April 5 event is sponsored by the UA Data Science Institute [1], Transdisciplinary Research in the Principles of Data Science [2] initiative and Center for Biomedical Informatics and Biostatistics [3] and was spearheaded by Susan Miller, the institute's deputy director for research cyberinfrastructure.

First organized at Stanford in 2015, WiDS events welcome participants regardless of gender and today boasts more than 150 events worldwide, including a "datathon" and a popular and growing podcast [4]. Because women are so underrepresented in the field—only about 15 percent of data science and data engineering positions are held by women—the key focus of the regional events is to connect and support women already working in or interested in entering these fields.

Kathleen J. Kennedy, associate professor of practice in retailing and consumer sciences, is one of the WiDS Tucson featured speakers. Today she is focused on teaching and academic research. But prior to entering academia, she worked in marketing automation, customer insight, e-commerce and consumer neuroscience in both corporate and lab environments. She also co-founded two successful data-centric businesses.

For Kennedy, encouraging, supporting and mentoring women in the field is essential.

"A diversity of backgrounds, including gender, brings varied perspectives to the field and benefits the overall practice of data science," Kennedy says. Additionally, "data scientists add significant value to organizations and represent the highest paid and most influential positions in the broader field of data-intensive positions."

For young women considering their career trajectories, high salaries and increasing demand for data science positions represent big opportunities not only for advancement, but for the chance to shape decision-making systems.

In the retailing sector, for instance, data scientists are at the forefront of the industry's transformation. Retail data scientists apply advanced predictive analytics to help executives make better decisions, re-engineer how consumers shop, and fundamentally change how retailers operate. They are charged with developing merchandise recommendation engines, automating market basket analysis to forecast consumer demand, and even providing guidance for new product development and design.

Although working in a very different field, Aletheia Ida, assistant professor in the School of
Architecture, agrees with Kennedy that data science provides a good career path for women.

"The architecture and building engineering professions are still male dominated," Ida says, "so I believe opportunities revealed through data science offer excellent support tools to provide the level of confidence women need to succeed."

Ida, who also will be a featured speaker at WiDS ? Tucson, says data science is becoming increasingly important in informing evidence-based design methods, especially when it comes to working with climate data sets for environmentally responsive and adaptive buildings, structures and systems. From building materials to illuminance values and daylighting qualities, insulation and shading, and passive airflow effectiveness, the use of data science methodologies to test and analyze designs well before a shovel hits dirt enables architects to maximize sustainable design.

"Women in my field tend to have a great intuitive sense about the environment and designing thoughtfully in response to climate conditions and human needs," Ida says. "Having the backbone of data as evidence integrated with their design process and in support of their design proposals provides the necessary facts and proofs behind their intuition."

Women in Data Science ? Tucson will take place April 5 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the Environment and Natural Resources 2 building, 1064 E. Lowell St., Room S-107. For the full agenda and other information, visit the WiDS ? Tucson registration page. Those interested in presenting a poster or three-minute “Data Blitz” talk can sign up until March 29.

Source URL: https://uaatwork.arizona.edu/lqp/ua-hosts-tucsons-first-women-data-science-event

Links
[1] https://datascience.arizona.edu/
[2] https://tripods.math.arizona.edu/
[3] https://cb2.uahs.arizona.edu/