October 30, 2018 | By Jan Zverina and Lisa Petrillo

SDSC Chief Data Science Officer Ilkay Altintas Named an HDSI Fellow

Altintas to Help Build Foundation for Halıcıoğlu Data Science Institute

San Diego Supercomputer Center's Chief Data Science Officer Ilkay Altintas has been named a Fellow of the Halıcıoğlu Data Science Institute (HDSI) at the University of California San Diego for her role in the stewardship of HDSI cyberinfrastructure (CI) resources and services, effective with the fall 2018 term.

Altintas will be working with UC San Diego faculty, industry partners, and students at all levels in her leadership role at HDSI.

SDSC Chief Data Science Officer Ilkay Altintas. Ben Tolo, SDSC

In addition to her CDSO responsibilities at SDSC, an Organized Research Unit of UC San Diego, Altintas is an associate research scientist and director of the Workflows for Data Science (WoRDS) Center of Excellence at SDSC. WoRDS specializes in developing scientific workflows and solution architectures used throughout data and computational science.

"I congratulate Dr. Altintas on this key appointment to the Halıcıoğlu Data Science Institute," said SDSC Director Michael Norman. "She was our very first 'Pi Person of the Year,' named after the π symbol. This award recognizes researchers who as collaborators and innovators in applied research and development have one 'leg' in a science domain and the other in cyberinfrastructure technologies. Altintas makes sure scientists across a wide variety of domains can focus their resources on their research rather than computational issues."

Halıcıoğlu Data Science Institute Fellows are extraordinary researchers who bring significant research and educational activities in core data science areas to the institute, said Rajesh Gupta, institute co-founder and director. HDSI Fellows have a demonstrated record of taking on

critical organizational roles within the institute and are among the most active participants. The program works to recognize and enable select academic leaders to take on far-reaching projects or operational activities critical to building the institute.

"Bringing such an illustrious researcher such as Ilkay Altintas to the Institute will have a strong impact on guiding our foundational programs," said Gupta in announcing her two-year appointment. "Her research is strongly relevant to the emerging domain of data sciences."

Gupta noted that since data science topics have started to capture the attention of mainstream computer scientists and statisticians as well, Altintas' work has found interest among peer communities including those involved in databases, data mining, and Knowledge Discovery in Data (KDD).

"I am honored to be selected as one of the inaugural HDSI Fellows," said Altintas. "Stewardship of CI resources for HDSI involves working with multiple organizations on campus and elsewhere to enable utilization of computing and data services for education and research at HDSI. I look forward to collaborating with all stakeholders to make it possible. This fellowship also comes at a time of significant investments by SDSC for the Data Science Hub in partnership with HDSI."

Altintas is also Principal Investigator for WIFIRE, a National Science Foundation-funded project at UC San Diego that provides real-time and data-driven simulations and predictions of wildfires. WIFIRE has been used extensively by both researchers and first-responders to track myriad wildfires in northern and southern California.

On the education side, Altintas is a lecturer in UC San Diego's Department of Computer Science and Engineering (CSE), and co-director of the MAS program in Data Science and Engineering, where she is teaches several courses. She has also been a popular MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) instructor in the field of 'big data' science, and reached out to hundreds of thousands of learners across any populated continent. As a CSE lecturer, Altintas has taught CSE 15L, a lower division course on software tools and techniques since 2013.

"This is a large course taken by CSE majors as well as many non-majors," noted Gupta, a UC San Diego Distinguished Professor and Qualcomm Endowed Chair in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering. "Dr. Altintas' reception as an instructor has been extremely positive, and has been recommended by more than 96 percent of polled students. She is an excellent role model for diverse talent in computer and data sciences."

Altintas earned her Ph.D. in Computational Sciences from University of Amsterdam in 2011. She joined SDSC in 2001 as a programmer analyst.