

The data science revolution in education: a report from the front lines

Matthew Brett

Undergraduate data science

... academic institutions should encourage the development of a basic understanding of data science in all undergraduates.

National Academies of Sciences and Medicine (2018)

I think it likely that in ten years' time every undergraduate programme will have to include some teaching in data science.

Professor Sir Adrian Smith, Director of Turing Institute, October 2019.

But:

- What is data science?
- What should we teach?

Data science in Berkeley

- February 2013: Supporting Data Science Workshop
- 2013: Berkeley Institute of Data Science
- 2015: Foundations of data science course
- 2018: National workshop on data science education
- 2018: Division of data science: announced

Berkeley teaching programme

- Massive (~1500 student) course Foundations of data science - “Data 8”. No requirements in mathematics or programming. Running since 2015.

- Large (~900 student) intermediate course Principles and techniques of data science with further requirements in Python programming and linear algebra.
- 27 Connector courses: domain applications of teaching methods from the foundation course.
- “... embracing a reinvention of statistical education in the era of pervasive computation.” Report by Data science education rapid reaction team
- The greatest change in undergraduate teaching in a generation.

Data 8 elements

- **No Prerequisites** - There are no prerequisites besides the high school math that it took you to get to UC:
 - No Math or Programming Background Required
- **Easy to Access** - There is an easy-to-use computing platform that is integrated into every aspect of the course and works on any browser with no technical requirements
 - No specific computer, software license, install needed
- **Coding and Statistics** - There are advantages to learning coding at the same time as learning statistics - *Computational Thinking, Inferential Thinking*
- **Visualize First** - represent the data graphically in order to motivate questions about inference and concepts of statistics
- **Minimize Formulas** - Don’t show or depend on formulas, delay formulas until the concept is explained, intuition and interpretation are more important
- **Re-Sampling** - guide students towards non-parametric approaches by motivating resampling for hypothesis testing

Eric Van Dusen - slide deck from 2019 conference

Principles of the course

- Teaching statistics “assuming computers exist, rather than assuming they don’t exist.”
- “Express in code what we would otherwise express in equations.”

John DeNero, 2018 Webinar

Analyzing data: the three main steps

- The question, from some domain; reasonable assumptions about the data; choice of method
- Visualization and calculations
- Interpretation of the results in the language of the domain, without statistical jargon

Ani Adhikari - slide deck from 2019 conference

The old approach

- The question, from some domain; reasonable assumptions about the data; choice of method
- Visualization and **calculations**
- Interpretation of the results in the language of the domain, without statistical jargon

Data 8, extending the Berkeley approach

- The question, from some domain; reasonable assumptions about the data; choice of method
- Visualization and computation
- Interpretation of the results in the language of the domain, without statistical jargon

A demo

To follow along: http://bit.ly/swains_jury

It's huge



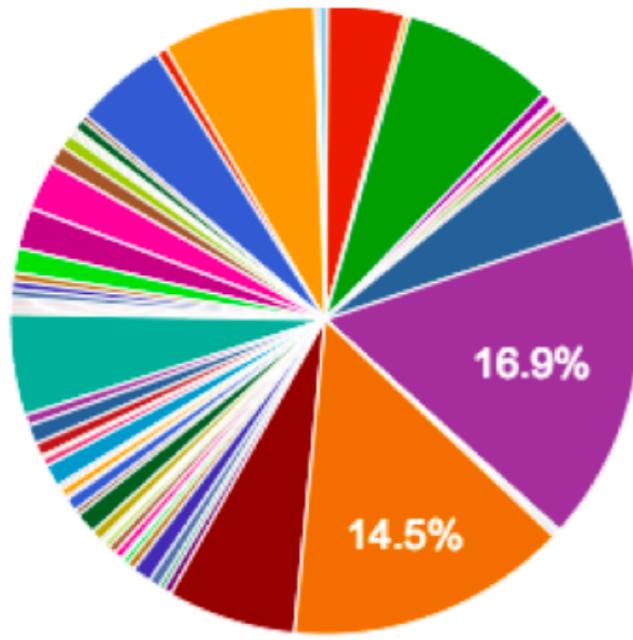
Students, Spring 2019

- 49% first-years, 35% second-years
- 55% female
- 21% consider themselves to be a member of an underrepresented ethnic or racial minority within UC Berkeley
- Over 60 different majors
- At the start of the term, 38% said, “I have no skill at programming”

Ani Adhikari - slide deck from 2019 conference

Students, Spring 2017

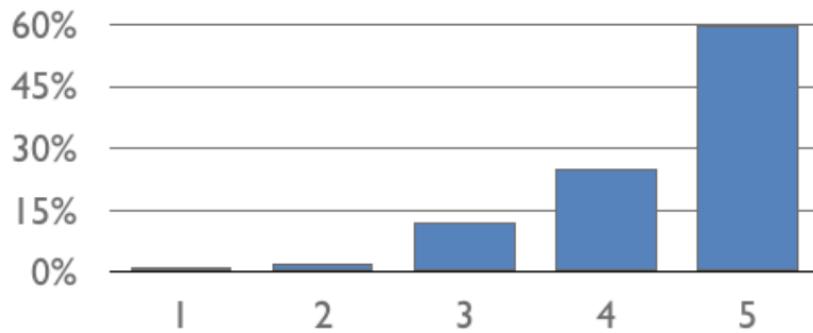
What is your declared or intended major? (618 responses)



Wide range of majors, > 14% slices are economics, computer science – John DeNero, 2018 Webinar materials

Student feedback

How happy are you about your decision to take Data 8?
(418 responses)



John DeNero, 2018 Webinar materials

Student feedback, Spring 2019

- I never thought I would ever code or program but this class made it really approachable.
- Learn[ed] to code in a way that I feel will actually be useful for me in the future, even as someone in a social sciences major.
- Loved the problem-solving skills this class taught me and how Data 8 showed me the various ways data science could be applied to multiple disciplines!
- Data manipulation helped change literally how I see the world.

Ani Adhikari - slide deck from 2019 conference

Spreading across campus



Coding is not a specialist skill

- understand what algorithms are, how they are implemented as programs on digital devices, and that programs execute by following precise and unambiguous instructions;
- create and debug simple programs;
- use logical reasoning to predict the behaviour of simple programs

- use technology purposefully to create, organise, store, manipulate and retrieve digital content

Coding is not a specialist skill

- understand what algorithms are, how they are implemented as programs on digital devices, and that programs execute by following precise and unambiguous instructions;
- create and debug simple programs;
- use logical reasoning to predict the behaviour of simple programs
- use technology purposefully to create, organise, store, manipulate and retrieve digital content

National curriculum in computing: Key stage 1 (5-7 year olds).

Undergraduate data science at the University of Birmingham

- 2017: Bioscience second year undergraduates; Introduction to R programming language.
- 2018: “Data science for everyone” WHM
- 2018: Geography first year undergraduates; Introduction to R.
- 2019: Introduction to programming second-year undergraduate / MSc module (10 UK credits, run over one term).
- Plans to extend this approach across modules and schools.

What do we need?

- debate
- vision
- mechanism

What can we do?

- CPD to explain pedagogy.
- Harness commitment from faculty and students.

The end

Materials at http://bit.ly/hefi_ds.

References

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018. *Data Science for Undergraduates: Opportunities and Options*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25104>.