A Proposal to Change the Name of the Department of Statistics
to the Department of Statistics and Data Science

We propose to change the name of the Department of Statistics to the Department of Statistics and Data Science to reflect the current status of the field as well as the educational and scholarly activities of the Department.

Statistics, since its inception, has been an applied science focused on data analysis, modeling, prediction, visualization and presentation. Data science, as an emerging discipline, while heavily overlapping with statistics, concerns principles and methods that encompass broader activities including data collection and management, integration, analysis, and computing algorithms, to tackle the challenges of the massive data generated in many disciplines with unprecedented size, scale, dimension and complexity. While a consensus in definition of data science is still lacking, statistics is regarded as one of the most important foundations of data science. Housing statistics and data science in the same department has become an increasing trend among leading institutions nationwide.

The Department of Statistics at Northwestern is distinguished for research in the applications of statistics in diverse areas such as social sciences, life sciences, economics, finance, engineering, law, medicine, and public policy. In response to the data science drive, the Department has planned strategically to develop data science programs as its first priority in the coming years. Through recent and ongoing hiring the Department is building up a strong faculty team in both research and teaching in data science. As a result two undergraduate programs were established recently, namely, minor in data science (2019) and major in data science (which will begin in Fall of 2022). Thus the proposed new name better captures ongoing scholarly and educational activities of the Department. It will help foster a physical hub at Northwestern for both statistics and data science, which will nurture our statistics and data science programs, and further broaden and promote the interdisciplinary collaboration between the department and other units at Northwestern.
Faculty vote on changing the department name result:

15 out of 15 faculty members voted on changing the department name to “The Department of Statistics and Data Science”.

Are you in favor of changing the department name to “The Department of Statistics and Data Science”?

Yes – 14
No – 1
Abstain – (none)

If you have any comments or concerns about changing the department name to “The Department of Statistics and Data Science” please provide them below.

It is a good idea, go for it!

Result recorded 10/1/21

Secret electronic ballot votes collected, and vote anonymity maintained by department assistant.