

# Universal Differential Equations for Scientific Machine Learning

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## Article

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# Universal Differential Equations for Scientific Machine Learning

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## Abstract

1  
2 In the context of science, the well-known adage “a picture is worth a  
3 thousand words” might well be “a model is worth a thousand datasets.”  
4 Scientific models, such as Newtonian physics or biological gene regula-  
5 tory networks, are human-driven simplifications of complex phenomena  
6 that serve as surrogates for the countless experiments that validated the  
7 models. Recently, machine learning has been able to overcome the in-  
8 accuracies of approximate modeling by directly learning the entire set of  
9 nonlinear interactions from data. However, without any predetermined  
10 structure from the scientific basis behind the problem, machine learning  
11 approaches are flexible but data-expensive, requiring large databases of  
12 homogeneous labeled training data. A central challenge is reconciling data  
13 that is at odds with simplified models without requiring “big data”.

14 In this work demonstrate how a mathematical object, which we de-  
15 note universal differential equations (UDEs), can be utilized as a theo-  
16 retical underpinning to a diverse array of problems in scientific machine  
17 learning to yield efficient algorithms and generalized approaches. The  
18 UDE model augments scientific models with machine-learnable structures  
19 for scientifically-based learning. We show how UDEs can be utilized to  
20 discover previously unknown governing equations, accurately extrapolate  
21 beyond the original data, and accelerate model simulation, all in a time  
22 and data-efficient manner. This advance is coupled with open-source soft-  
23 ware that allows for training UDEs which incorporate physical constraints,  
24 delayed interactions, implicitly-defined events, and intrinsic stochasticity  
25 in the model. Our examples show how a diverse set of computationally-  
26 difficult modeling issues across scientific disciplines, from automatically

27 discovering biological mechanisms to accelerating the training of physics-  
28 informed neural networks and large-eddy simulations, can all be trans-  
29 formed into UDE training problems that are efficiently solved by a single  
30 software methodology.

31 Recent advances in machine learning have been dominated by deep learning  
32 which utilizes readily available “big data” to solve previously difficult problems  
33 such as image recognition [1, 2, 3] and natural language processing [4, 5, 6].  
34 While some areas of science have begun to generate the large amounts of data  
35 required to train deep learning models, notably bioinformatics [7, 8, 9, 10, 11],  
36 in many areas the expense of scientific experiments has prohibited the effective-  
37 ness of these ground breaking techniques. In these domains, such as aerospace  
38 engineering, quantitative systems pharmacology, and macroeconomics, mecha-  
39 nistic models which synthesize the knowledge of the scientific literature are still  
40 predominantly deployed due to the inaccuracy of deep learning techniques with  
41 small training datasets. While these mechanistic models are constrained to be  
42 predictive by utilizing prior structural knowledge conglomerated throughout the  
43 scientific literature, the data-driven approach of machine learning can be more  
44 flexible and allows one to drop the simplifying assumptions required to derive  
45 theoretical models. The purpose of this work is to bridge the gap by merging  
46 the best of both methodologies while mitigating the deficiencies.

47 It has recently been shown to be advantageous to merge differential equa-  
48 tions with machine learning. Physics-Informed Neural Networks (PINNs) utilize  
49 partial differential equations in the cost functions of neural networks to incor-  
50 porate prior scientific knowledge [12]. While this has been shown to be a form  
51 of data-efficient machine learning for some scientific applications, the resulting  
52 model does not have the interpretability of mechanistic models. On the other  
53 end of the spectrum, machine learning practitioners have begun to make use  
54 of scientific structures as a modeling basis for machine learning. For exam-  
55 ple, neural ordinary differential equations are initial value problems of the form  
56 [13, 14, 15, 16]:

$$u' = \text{NN}_\theta(u, t), \quad (1)$$

57 defined by a neural network  $\text{NN}_\theta$  where  $\theta$  are the weights. As an example, a  
58 neural network with two hidden layers can be written as

$$\text{NN}_\theta(u, t) = W_3\sigma_2(W_2\sigma_1(W_1[u; t] + b_1) + b_2) + b_3, \quad (2)$$

59 where  $\theta = (W_1, W_2, W_3, b_1, b_2, b_3)$  where  $W_i$  are matrices and  $b_i$  are vectors of  
60 weights, and  $(\sigma_1, \sigma_2)$  are the choices of activation functions. Because the embed-  
61 ded function is a universal approximator (UA), it follows that  $\text{NN}_\theta$  can learn to  
62 approximate any sufficiently regular differential equation. However, the result-  
63 ing model is defined without direct incorporation of known mechanisms. The  
64 Universal Approximation Theorem (UAT) demonstrates that sufficiently large  
65 neural networks can approximate any nonlinear function with a finite set of  
66 parameters [17, 18, 19]. Our approach extends the previous data-driven neural  
67 ODE approaches to directly utilize mechanistic modeling simultaneously with  
68 UAs in order to allow for arbitrary data-driven model extensions. The objects

69 of this semi-mechanistic approach, which we denote as Universal Differential  
70 Equations (UDEs) for universal approximators in differential equations, are dif-  
71 ferential equation models where part of the differential equation contains an  
72 embedded UA, such as a neural network, Chebyshev expansion, or a random  
73 forest.

74 As a motivating example, the universal ordinary differential equation (UODE):

$$u' = f(u, t, U_\theta(u, t)), \quad (3)$$

75 denotes a known mechanistic model form  $f$  with missing terms defined by some  
76 UA  $U_\theta$ . While the utility of this object has been seen before in optimal control  
77 [20] and model augmentation [21], here we demonstrate that this object can be  
78 used to solve a greatly expanded scope of problems and is thus able to be the  
79 basis of much research in scientific machine learning, from accelerating models  
80 to being a stepping stone in symbolic algorithms. We demonstrate general-  
81 izations to incorporate process noise, delayed interactions, and physics-based  
82 constraints are given by embedding UAs into stochastic, delay, and differential-  
83 algebraic equations respectively. As a fundamental object underlying so many  
84 algorithms, it then becomes essential to be able to efficiently train UDEs in  
85 any context in which they arise. In Section 1 we describe our methodology and  
86 software implementation for efficiently training UDEs of any of these forms in a  
87 way that covers stiffness, nonlinear algebraic constraints, stochasticity, delays,  
88 parallelism, and more. We then demonstrate that the following abilities within  
89 the UDE framework:

- 90 • In Section 2.1 we recover governing equations from much lesser data than  
91 prior methods and demonstrate the ability to accurately extrapolate from  
92 a short time series.
- 93 • In Section 2.2 we demonstrate the ability to utilize arbitrary conservation  
94 laws as prior knowledge in the discovery of dynamical systems.
- 95 • In Section 2.3 we discover the differential operator and nonlinear reaction  
96 term of a biological partial differential equation (PDE) from spatiotempo-  
97 ral data, demonstrating the interpretability of trained UDEs.
- 98 • In Section 3 We derive an adaptive method for automated solving of a 100-  
99 dimensional nonlinear Hamilton-Jacobi-Bellman PDE, the first adaptive  
100 method for this class of problems that the authors are aware of.
- 101 • In Section 4.1 we automate the discovery of fast, accurate, and physically-  
102 consistent surrogates to accelerate a large-eddy simulation commonly used  
103 in the voxels of a climate simulation.
- 104 • In Section 4.2 we approximate closure relations in viscoelastic fluids to  
105 accelerate the simulation of a system of 6 differential-algebraic equations  
106 by 2x, showing that this methodology is also applicable to small-scale  
107 problems.

108 • In Section 4.3 we demonstrate that discrete physics-informed neural net-  
 109 works fall into a subclass of universal ODEs and extend previous methods  
 110 directly through this formalism.

## 111 1 Efficient Training of Universal Differential Equa- 112 tions via Differentiable Programming

113 Training a UDE amounts to minimizing a cost function  $C(\theta)$  defined on the  
 114 current solution  $u_\theta(t)$ , the current solution to the differential equation with  
 115 respect to the choice of parameters  $\theta$ . One choice is the Euclidean distance  
 116  $C(\theta) = \sum_i \|u_\theta(t_i) - d_i\|$  at discrete data points  $(t_i, d_i)$ . When optimized with  
 117 local derivative-based methods, such as stochastic gradient decent, ADAM [22],  
 118 or L-BFGS [23], this requires the calculation of  $\frac{dC}{d\theta}$  which by the chain rule  
 119 amounts to calculating  $\frac{du}{d\theta}$ . Thus the problem of efficiently training a UDE  
 120 reduces to calculating gradients of the differential equation solution with respect  
 121 to parameters.

122 In certain special cases there exist efficient methods for calculating these  
 123 gradients called adjoints [24, 25, 26, 27, 28]. The asymptotic computational  
 124 cost of these methods does not grow multiplicatively with the number of state  
 125 variables and parameters like numerical or forward sensitivity approaches, and  
 126 thus it has been shown empirically that adjoint methods are more efficient on  
 127 large parameter models [29, 30]. However, given the number of different families  
 128 of UDE models we wish to train, we generalize to a differentiable programming  
 129 framework with reverse-mode accumulation in order to allow for deriving on-  
 130 the-fly approximations for the wide range of possible differential equation types.

131 Given a function  $f(x) = y$ , the pullback at  $x$  is the function:

$$B_f^x(y) = y^T f'(x), \quad (4)$$

132 where  $f'(x)$  is the Jacobian  $J$ . We note that  $B_f^x(1) = (\nabla f)^T$  for a function  $f$   
 133 producing a scalar output, meaning the pullback of a cost function computes  
 134 the gradient. A general computer program can be written as the composition  
 135 of discrete steps:

$$f = f^L \circ f^{L-1} \circ \dots \circ f^1, \quad (5)$$

136 and thus the vector-Jacobian product can be decomposed:

$$v^T J = (\dots ((v^T J_L) J_{L-1}) \dots) J_1, \quad (6)$$

137 which allows for recursively decomposing a the pullback to a primitively known  
 138 set of  $\mathcal{B}_{f^i}^x$ :

$$\mathcal{B}_f^x(A) = \mathcal{B}_{f^1}^x \left( \dots \left( \mathcal{B}_{f^{L-2}}^{x_{L-2}} \left( \mathcal{B}_{f^{L-1}}^{x_{L-1}}(A) \right) \right) \dots \right), \quad (7)$$

139 where  $x_i = (f^i \circ f^{i-1} \circ \dots \circ f^1)(x)$ . Implementations of code generation for the  
140 backwards pass of an arbitrary program in a dynamic programming language can  
141 vary. For example, building a list of function compositions (a tape) is provided  
142 by libraries such as Tracker.jl [31] and PyTorch [32], while other libraries perform  
143 direct generation of backward pass source code such as Zygote.jl [33], TAF [34],  
144 and Tapenade [35].

145 The open-source differential equation solvers of DifferentialEquations.jl [36]  
146 were developed in a manner such that all steps of the programs have a well-  
147 defined pullback when using a Julia-based backwards pass generation system.  
148 Our software allows for automatic differentiation to be utilized over differen-  
149 tial equation solves without any modification to the user code. This enables  
150 the simulation software already written with DifferentialEquations.jl, including  
151 large software infrastructures such as the MIT-CalTech CLiMA climate mod-  
152 eling system [37] and the QuantumOptics.jl simulation framework [38], to be  
153 compatible with all of the techniques mentioned in the rest of the paper. Thus  
154 while we detail our results in isolation from these larger simulation frameworks,  
155 the UDE methodology can be readily used in full-scale simulation packages  
156 which are already built on top of the Julia SciML ecosystem.

157 The full set of adjoint options, which includes continuous adjoint methods  
158 and pure reverse-mode AD approaches, is described in Supplement S1. Meth-  
159 ods via solving ODEs in reverse [16] are the common adjoint utilized in neural  
160 ODE software such as torchdiffeq and are  $O(1)$  in memory, but are known to  
161 be unstable under certain conditions such as on stiff equations [39]. Check-  
162 pointed interpolation adjoints [27] and continuous quadrature approaches are  
163 available which do not require stable reversibility of the ODEs while retain-  
164 ing a relatively low-memory implementation via checkpointing (in particular  
165 Section 2.2 and 4.1 are noted as a cases which are not stable under the re-  
166 versed adjoint but stable under the checkpointing adjoint approach). These  
167 adjoint methods fall under the continuous optimize-then-discretize approach.  
168 Through the differentiable programming integration, discrete adjoint sensitivity  
169 analysis [40, 41] is implemented through both tape-based reverse-mode [42] and  
170 source-to-source translation [33], with computational trade-offs between the two  
171 approaches. The former can be faster on scalarized heterogeneous differential  
172 equations while the latter is more optimized for homogeneous vectorized func-  
173 tions calls like are demonstrated in neural networks and discretizations of partial  
174 differential equations. Full discretize-then-optimize is implemented using this  
175 package by utilizing the step-wise integrator interface in conjunction with these  
176 discrete adjoints of the steps. Continuous and discrete forward mode sensitivity  
177 analysis approaches are also provided and optimized for equations with smaller  
178 numbers of parameters.

179 Previous research has shown that the discrete adjoint approach is more stable  
180 than continuous adjoints in some cases [43, 39, 44, 45, 46, 47] while continuous  
181 adjoints have been demonstrated to be more stable in others [48, 45] and can  
182 reduce spurious oscillations [49, 50, 51]. This trade-off between discrete and  
183 continuous adjoint approaches has been demonstrated on some equations as a  
184 trade-off between stability and computational efficiency [52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57,

185 58, 59, 60]. Care has to be taken as the stability of an adjoint approach can  
186 be dependent on the chosen discretization method [61, 62, 63, 64, 65], and our  
187 software contribution helps researchers switch between all of these optimization  
188 approaches in combination with hundreds of differential equation solver methods  
189 with a single line of code change.

190 As described in Supplement S1.1, these adjoints utilize reverse-mode auto-  
191 matic differentiation for vector transposed Jacobian products within the adjoint  
192 definitions to reduce the computational complexity while supporting advanced  
193 features like constraint and conservation equations. In addition, the module  
194 DiffEqFlux.jl handles compatibility with the Flux.jl neural network library so  
195 that these vector Jacobian products are automatically replaced with efficient  
196 pullback implementations for embedded deep neural networks (also known as  
197 backpropagation) wherever neural networks are encountered in the right hand  
198 side of any differential equation definitions. This allows for common deep archi-  
199 tectures, such as convolutional neural networks and recurrent neural networks,  
200 to be efficiently used as the basis for a UDE without any Jacobians being cal-  
201 culated in the full adjoint and without requiring any intervention from users.

202 Using this approach, the solvers are capable of building efficient gradient  
203 calculations for training ML-embedded UDEs of the classes:

- 204 • Universal Ordinary Differential Equations (UODEs)
- 205 • Universal Stochastic Differential Equations (USDEs), or universal differ-  
206 ential equations with continuous process noise
- 207 • Universal Delay Differential Equations (UDDEs), or universal differential  
208 equations with delayed interactions
- 209 • Universal Differential-Algebraic Equations (UDAEs), or universal differ-  
210 ential equations with constraint equations and conservation laws
- 211 • Universal Boundary Value Problems (UBVPs), or universal differential  
212 equations with final time point constraints
- 213 • Universal Partial Differential Equations (UPDEs)
- 214 • Universal Hybrid (Event-Driven) Differential Equations

215 as well as the combinations, such as stochastic delay differential equations, jump  
216 diffusions, and stochastic partial differential equations. A combination of over  
217 300 solver methods cover the efficient training of stiff and non-stiff versions  
218 of each of these equations, with support for adaptivity, high-order, automatic  
219 stiffness detection, sparse differentiation with automatic sparsity detection and  
220 coloring [66], Newton-Krylov implicit handling, GPU compatibility, and multi-  
221 node parallelism via MPI compatibility. Thus together, semi-mechanistic UDEs  
222 of any form can embed machine learning models and be trained using this open-  
223 source library with the most effective differential equation solvers for that class  
224 of equations.

Feature	Stiff	DAEs	SDEs	DDEs	Stabilized	DtO	GPU	Dist	MT	Sparse
SciML	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
torchdiffeq	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	0	0	0
torchsde	0	0	✓	0	0	0	✓	0	0	0
tfdiffeq	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0	0

Table 1: Feature comparison of ML-augmented differential equation libraries. First first column corresponds to support for stiff ODEs, then DAEs, SDEs, DDEs, stabilized non-reversing adjoints, discretize-then-optimize methods, distributed computing, and multithreading. Sparse refers to automated sparsity handling in Jacobian calculations of implicit methods.

## 225 1.1 Features and Performance

226 We assessed the viability of alternative differential equation libraries for univer-  
227 sal differential equation workflows by comparing the features and performance  
228 of the given libraries. Table 1 demonstrates that the Julia SciML ecosystem is  
229 the only differential equation solver library with deep learning integration that  
230 supports stiff ODEs, DAEs, DDEs, stabilized adjoints, distributed and multi-  
231 threaded computation. We note the importance of the stabilized adjoints in  
232 Section 4.1 as many PDE discretizations with upwinding exhibit unconditional  
233 instability when reversed, and thus this is a crucial feature when training em-  
234 bedded neural networks in many PDE applications. Table 2 demonstrates that  
235 the SciML ecosystem exhibits more than an order of magnitude performance  
236 when solving ODEs against torchdiffeq of up to systems of 1 million equations.  
237 Because the adjoint calculation itself is a differential equation, this also corre-  
238 sponds to increased training times on scientific models. To reinforce this result,  
239 Supplement S2 demonstrates a 100x performance difference over torchdiffeq  
240 when training the spiral neural ODE from [16, 43]. We note that the author  
241 of the tfdiffeq library has previously concluded “speed is almost the same as the  
242 PyTorch (torchdiffeq) codebase ( $\pm 2\%$ )”. Additionally, Supplement S2 demon-  
243 strates a 1,600x performance advantage for the SciML ecosystem over torchsde  
244 using the geometric Brownian motion example from the torchsde documentation  
245 [67]. Given the computational burden, the mix of stiffness, and non-reversibility  
246 of the examples which follow in this paper, these results demonstrate that the  
247 SciML ecosystem is the first deep learning integrated differential equation soft-  
248 ware ecosystem that can train all of the equations necessary for the results of  
249 this paper. Note that this does not infer that our solvers will demonstrate  
250 more than an order of magnitude performance difference on all equations, for  
251 example very non-stiff ODEs dominated by large dense matrix multiplications  
252 like in image classification neural ODEs, but it does demonstrate that on the  
253 equations generally derived from scientific models (ODEs derived from PDE dis-  
254 cretizations, heterogeneous differential equation systems, and neural networks  
255 in sufficiently small systems) that an order of magnitude or more performance  
256 difference can exist.

# of ODEs	3	28	768	3,072	12,288	49,152	196,608	786,432
SciML	1.0x	1.0x	1.0x	1.0x	1.0x	1.0x	1.0x	1.0x
SciML DP5	1.0x	1.9x	2.9x	2.9x	2.9x	2.9x	3.4x	2.6x
torchdiffeq dopri5	5,850x	1700x	420x	280x	120x	31x	41x	38x
torchdiffeq adams	7,600x	1100x	710x	490x	170x	44x	47x	43x

Table 2: Relative time to solve for ML-augmented differential equation libraries (smaller is better). Standard non-stiff solver benchmarks from representative scientific systems were taken from [68] as described in Supplement S2. SciML stands for the optimal method choice out of the 300+ from the SciML, which for the first is DP5, for the second is VCABM, and for the rest is ROCK4.

## 2 Knowledge-Enhanced Model Reconstruction of Biological Models

Automatic reconstruction of models from observable data has been extensively studied. Many methods produce non-symbolic representations by learning functional representations [69, 70] or through dynamic mode decomposition (DMD, eDMD) [71, 72, 73, 74]. Symbolic reconstruction of equations has utilized symbolic regressions which require a prechosen basis [75, 76], or evolutionary methods to grow a basis [77, 78]. However, a common thread throughout much of the literature is that added domain knowledge constrains the problem to allow for more data-efficient reconstruction [79, 80]. Here we detail how a UA embedded workflow can augment existing symbolic regression frameworks to allow for reconstruction from partially known models in a more data-efficient manner.

### 2.1 Automated Identification of Nonlinear Interactions with Universal Ordinary Differential Equations

The SInDy algorithm [81, 82, 83] finds a sparse basis  $\Xi$  over a given candidate library  $\Theta$  minimizing the objective function  $\|\dot{\mathbf{X}} - \Theta\Xi\|_2 + \lambda\|\Xi\|_1$  using data for  $\dot{\mathbf{X}}$  generated by interpolating the trajectory data  $\mathbf{X}$ . Here we describe a UDE approach to extend SInDy in a way that embeds prior structural knowledge.

As a motivating example, take the Lotka-Volterra system:

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{x} &= \alpha x - \beta xy, \\ \dot{y} &= \gamma xy - \delta y. \end{aligned} \tag{8}$$

Assume that a scientist has a short time series from this system but knows the birth rate of the prey  $x$  and the death rate of the predator  $y$ . With only this information, a scientist can propose the knowledge-based UODE as:

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{x} &= \alpha x + U_1(x, y), \\ \dot{y} &= -\delta y + U_2(x, y), \end{aligned} \tag{9}$$

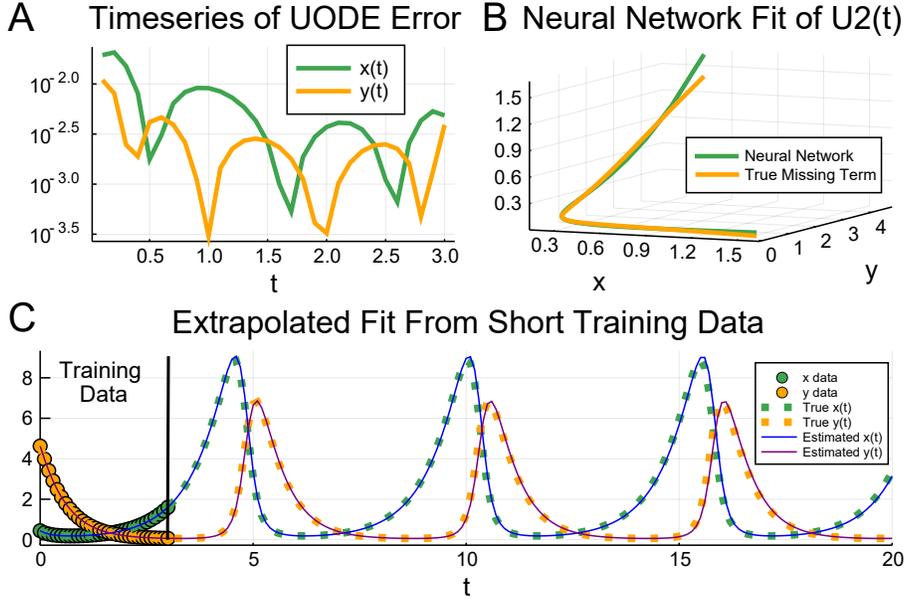


Figure 1: Automated Lotka-Volterra equation discovery with UODE-enhanced SInDy. (A) The error in the trained UODE against  $x(t)$  and  $y(t)$  in green and yellow respectively. (B) The measured values of the missing term  $U_2(x, y)$  throughout the time series, with the neural network approximate in green and the true value  $\gamma xy$  in yellow. (C) The extrapolation of the knowledge-enhanced SInDy fit series. The green and yellow dots show the data that was used to fit the UODE, and the dots show the true solution of the Lotka-Volterra Equations 8 beyond the training data. The blue and purple lines show the extrapolated solution how the UODE-enhanced SInDy recovered equations.

279 which is a system of ordinary differential equations that incorporates the known  
 280 structure but leaves room for learning unknown interactions between the the  
 281 predator and prey populations. Learning the unknown interactions corresponds  
 282 training the UA  $U : \mathbb{R}^2 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^2$  in this UODE.

283 While the SInDy method normally approximates derivatives using a spline  
 284 over the data points or similar numerical techniques, here we have  $U_\theta(x, y)$  as an  
 285 estimator of the derivative for only the missing terms of the model and we can  
 286 perform a sparse regression on samples from the trained  $U_\theta(x, y)$  to reconstruct  
 287 only the unknown interaction equations. As described in Supplement S3.1, we  
 288 trained  $U_\theta(x, y)$  as a neural network against the simulated data for  $t \in [0, 3]$  and  
 289 utilized a sparse regression techniques [81, 84, 85] on the neural network out-  
 290 puts to reconstruct the missing dynamical equations. Using a 10-dimensional  
 291 polynomial basis extended with trigonometric functions, the sparse regression  
 292 yields 0 for all terms except for the missing quadratic terms, directly learning  
 293 the original equations in an interpretable form. Even though the original data

294 did not contain a full period of the cyclic solution, the resulting fit is then able  
 295 to accurately extrapolate from the short time series data as shown in Figure 1.  
 296 Supplement S3.1 further demonstrates the robustness of the discovery approach  
 297 to noise in the data. Likewise, when attempting to learn full ODE with the  
 298 original SInDy approach on the same trained data with the analytical deriva-  
 299 tive values, we were unable to recover the exact original equations from the  
 300 sparse regression, indicating that the knowledge-enhanced approach increases  
 301 the robustness equation discovery.

302 We note that collaborators using the preprint of this manuscript have suc-  
 303 cessfully demonstrated the ability to construct UODE models which improve  
 304 the prediction of Li-ion battery performance [86] and for automated discovery  
 305 of droplet physics directly from imaging data, effectively replicating the theo-  
 306 retical results of a one and a half year study with a UODE discovery process  
 307 which trains in less than an hour [87].

## 308 2.2 Incorporating Prior Knowledge of Conservation Equa- 309 tions

The extra features of the SciML ecosystem can be utilized to encode more infor-  
 mation into the model. For example, when attempting to discover a biological  
 chemical reaction network or a chemical combustion network, one may only have  
 prior knowledge of the conservation laws between the constituent substrates. As  
 a demonstration, in the Robertson equation

$$\frac{dy_1}{dt} = -0.04y_1 + 10^4y_2y_3 \quad (10)$$

$$\frac{dy_2}{dt} = 0.04y_1 - 10^4y_2y_3 - 3 * 10^7y_2^2 \quad (11)$$

$$1 = y_1 + y_2 + y_3 \quad (12)$$

one might only have prior knowledge of the conservation equation  $1 = y_1 + y_2 + y_3$ . In this case, a universal DAE of the form:

$$\frac{d[y_1, y_2]}{dt} = U_\theta(y_1, y_2, y_3) \quad (13)$$

$$1 = y_1 + y_2 + y_3 \quad (14)$$

310 can be utilized to encode this prior knowledge. This can then be trained by  
 311 utilizing a singular mass matrix in the form  $Mu' = f(u, p, t)$ . Supplement  
 312 S1's derivation of the adjoint method describes a new initialization scheme for  
 313 index-1 DAEs in mass matrix form which directly solves a linear system for new  
 314 consistent algebraic variables in the adjoint pass without requiring the approx-  
 315 imate nonlinear iterations of [88], thus further demonstrating the efficiency and  
 316 accuracy of the SciML software's methods for UDE workflows. Supplement S3.2  
 317 demonstrates the ability to learn this system utilizing the SciML tools through  
 318 this universal DAE approach.

### 319 **2.3 Reconstruction of Spatial Dynamics with Universal** 320 **Partial Differential Equations**

321 To demonstrate discovery of spatiotemporal equations directly from data, we  
322 consider data generated from the one-dimensional Fisher-KPP  
323 (Kolmogorov–Petrovsky–Piskunov) PDE [89]:

$$\frac{\partial \rho}{\partial t} = r\rho(1 - \rho) + D\frac{\partial^2 \rho}{\partial x^2}, \quad (15)$$

324 with  $x \in [0, 1]$ ,  $t \in [0, T]$ , and periodic boundary condition  $\rho(0, t) = \rho(1, t)$ . Here  
325  $\rho$  represents population density of a species,  $r$  is the local growth rate and  $D$   
326 is the diffusion coefficient. Such reaction-diffusion equations appear in diverse  
327 physical, chemical and biological problems [90]. To learn the generated data,  
328 we define the UPDE:

$$\rho_t = \text{NN}_\theta(\rho) + \hat{D} \text{CNN}(\rho), \quad (16)$$

329 where  $\text{NN}_\theta$  is a neural network representing the local growth term. The deriva-  
330 tive operator is approximated as a convolutional neural network CNN, a learn-  
331 able arbitrary representation of a stencil while treating the coefficient  $\hat{D}$  as an  
332 unknown. We encode in the loss function extra constraints to ensure the learned  
333 equation is physically realizable, i.e. the derivative stencil must be conservative  
334 (the coefficients sum to zero), as described in Supplement S4. Figure 2 shows  
335 the result of training the UPDE against the simulated data, which recovers the  
336 canonical  $[1, -2, 1]$  stencil of the one-dimensional Laplacian and the diffusion  
337 constant while simultaneously finding a neural representation of the unknown  
338 quadratic growth term. We note that the differentiable programming integration  
339 in conjunction with the Flux.jl deep learning framework allows for the adjoints  
340 to automatically utilize efficient backpropagation of the embedded convolutional  
341 neural networks and automatically utilizes the fast kernels provided by cudnn  
342 when trained using GPUs.

## 343 **3 Computationally-Efficient Solving of** 344 **High-Dimensional Partial Differential** 345 **Equations**

346 It is impractical to solve high dimensional PDEs with mesh-based techniques  
347 since the number of mesh points scales exponentially with the number of dimen-  
348 sions. Given this difficulty, mesh-free methods based on universal approximators  
349 such as neural networks have been constructed to allow for direct solving of high  
350 dimensional PDEs [91, 92]. Recently, methods based on transforming partial  
351 differential equations into alternative forms, such as backwards stochastic differ-  
352 ential equations (BSDEs), which are then approximated by neural networks have  
353 been shown to be highly efficient on important equations such as the nonlinear  
354 Black-Scholes and Hamilton-Jacobi-Bellman (HJB) equations [93, 94, 95, 96].

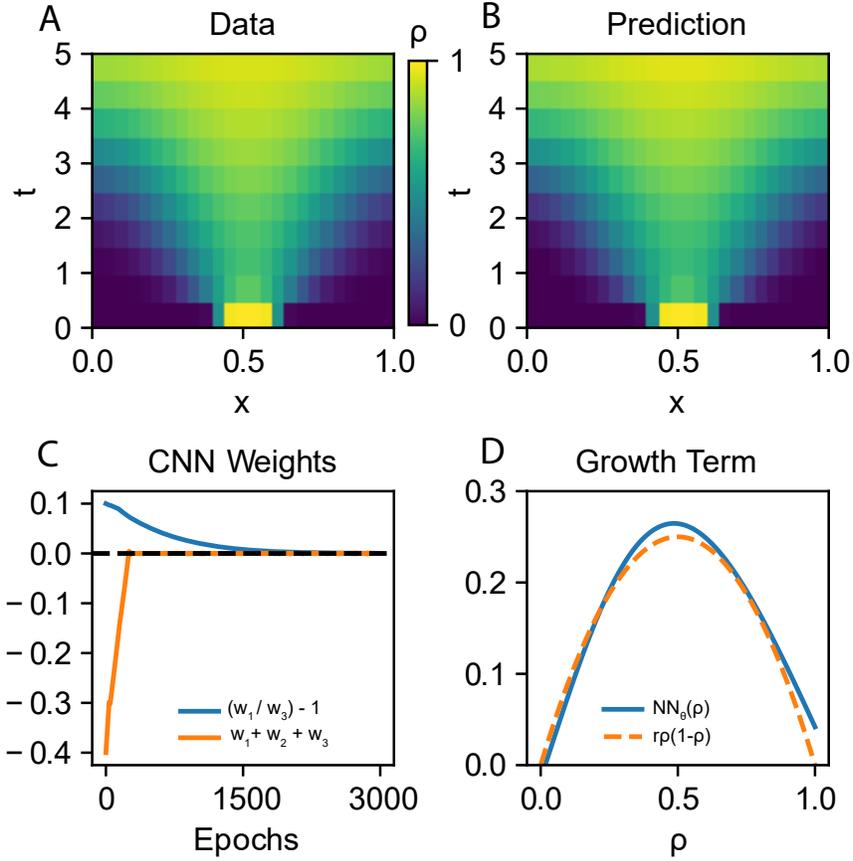


Figure 2: Recovery of the UPDE for the Fisher-KPP equation. (A) Training data and (B) prediction of the UPDE for  $\rho(x, t)$ . (C) Curves for the weights of the CNN filter  $[w_1, w_2, w_3]$  indicate the recovery of the  $[1, -2, 1]$  stencil for the 1-dimensional Laplacian. (D) Comparison of the learned (blue) and the true growth term (orange) showcases the learned parabolic form of the missing nonlinear equation.

355 Here we will showcase how one of these methods, a deep BSDE method for semi-  
 356 linear parabolic equations [94], can be reinterpreted as a universal stochastic dif-  
 357 ferential equation (USDE) to generalize the method and allow for enhancements  
 358 like adaptivity, higher order integration for increased efficiency, and handling of  
 359 stiff driving equations through the SciML software.

360 Consider the class of semilinear parabolic PDEs with a finite time span  
 361  $t \in [0, T]$  and  $d$ -dimensional space  $x \in \mathbb{R}^d$  that have the form:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial u}{\partial t}(t, x) + \frac{1}{2} \text{Tr}(\sigma \sigma^T(t, x) (\text{Hess}_x u)(t, x)) \\ + \nabla u(t, x) \cdot \mu(t, x) \\ + f(t, x, u(t, x), \sigma^T(t, x) \nabla u(t, x)) = 0, \end{aligned} \quad (17)$$

362 with a terminal condition  $u(T, x) = g(x)$ . Supplement S5 describes how this  
 363 PDE can be solved by approximating by approximating the FBSDE:

$$\begin{aligned} dX_t &= \mu(t, X_t)dt + \sigma(t, X_t)dW_t, \\ dU_t &= f(t, X_t, U_t, U_{\theta_1}^1(t, X_t))dt + [U_{\theta_1}^1(t, X_t)]^T dW_t, \end{aligned} \quad (18)$$

364 where  $U_{\theta_1}^1$  and  $U_{\theta_2}^2$  are UAs and the loss function is given by the requiring that  
 365 the terminating condition  $g(X_T) = u(X_T, W_T)$  is satisfied.

### 366 3.1 Adaptive Solution of High-Dimensional Hamilton-Jacobi- 367 Bellman Equations

368 A fixed time step Euler-Maryumana discretization of this USDE gives rise to  
 369 the deep BSDE method [94]. However, this form as a USDE generalizes the  
 370 approach in a way that makes all of the methodologies of our USDE training  
 371 library readily available, such as higher order methods, adaptivity, and implicit  
 372 methods for stiff SDEs. As a motivating example, consider the classical linear-  
 373 quadratic Gaussian (LQG) control problem in 100 dimensions:

$$dX_t = 2\sqrt{\lambda}c_t dt + \sqrt{2}dW_t, \quad (19)$$

374 with  $t \in [0, T]$ ,  $X_0 = x$ , and with a cost function  $C(c_t) = \mathbb{E} \left[ \int_0^T \|c_t\|^2 dt + g(X_t) \right]$   
 375 where  $X_t$  is the state we wish to control,  $\lambda$  is the strength of the control, and  
 376  $c_t$  is the control process. Minimizing the control corresponds to solving the  
 377 100-dimensional HJB equation:

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} + \nabla^2 u - \lambda \|\nabla u\|^2 = 0 \quad (20)$$

378 We solve the PDE by training the USDE using an adaptive Euler-Maruyama  
 379 method [97] as described in Supplement S5. Supplementary Figure 2 showcases  
 380 that this methodology accurately solves the equations, effectively extending re-  
 381 cent algorithmic advancements to adaptive forms simply by reinterpreting the

382 equation as a USDE. While classical methods would require an amount of mem-  
 383 ory that is exponential in the number of dimensions making classical adaptively  
 384 approaches infeasible, this approach is the first the authors are aware of to  
 385 generalize the high order, adaptive, highly stable software tooling to the high-  
 386 dimensional PDE setting.

## 387 4 Accelerated Scientific Simulation with Auto- 388 matically Constructed Closure Relations

### 389 4.1 Automated Discovery of Large-Eddy Model Parame- 390 terizations

391 As an example of directly accelerating existing scientific workflows, we focus  
 392 on the Boussinesq equations [98]. The Boussinesq equations are a system of  
 393 3+1-dimensional partial differential equations acquired through simplifying as-  
 394 sumptions on the incompressible Navier-Stokes equations, represented by the  
 395 system:

$$\begin{aligned} \nabla \cdot \mathbf{u} &= 0, \\ \frac{\partial \mathbf{u}}{\partial t} + (\mathbf{u} \cdot \nabla) \mathbf{u} &= -\nabla p + \nu \nabla^2 \mathbf{u} + b \hat{z}, \\ \frac{\partial T}{\partial t} + \mathbf{u} \cdot \nabla T &= \kappa \nabla^2 T, \end{aligned} \quad (21)$$

396 where  $\mathbf{u} = (u, v, w)$  is the fluid velocity,  $p$  is the kinematic pressure,  $\nu$  is the  
 397 kinematic viscosity,  $\kappa$  is the thermal diffusivity,  $T$  is the temperature, and  $b$  is  
 398 the fluid buoyancy. We assume that density and temperature are related by a  
 399 linear equation of state so that the buoyancy  $b$  is only a function  $b = \alpha g T$  where  
 400  $\alpha$  is the thermal expansion coefficient and  $g$  is the acceleration due to gravity.

401 This system is commonly used in climate modeling, especially as the vox-  
 402 els for modeling the ocean [99, 100, 101, 98] in a multi-scale model that ap-  
 403 proximates these equations by averaging out the horizontal dynamics  $\bar{T}(z, t) =$   
 404  $\iint T(x, y, z, t) dx dy$  in individual boxes. The resulting approximation is a lo-  
 405 cal advection-diffusion equation describing the evolution of the horizontally-  
 406 averaged temperature  $\bar{T}$ :

$$\frac{\partial \bar{T}}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial \overline{wT}}{\partial z} = \kappa \frac{\partial^2 \bar{T}}{\partial z^2}. \quad (22)$$

407 This one-dimensional approximating system is not closed since  $\overline{wT}$  is unknown.  
 408 Common practice closes the system by manually determining an approximating  
 409  $\overline{wT}$  from ad-hoc models, physical reasoning, and scaling laws. However, we can  
 410 utilize a UDE-automated approach to learn such an approximation from data.  
 411 Let

$$\overline{wT} = U_\theta \left( P, \bar{T}, \frac{\partial \bar{T}}{\partial z} \right) \quad (23)$$

412 where  $P$  are the physical parameters of the Boussinesq equation at different  
 413 regimes of the ocean, such as the amount of surface heating or the strength  
 414 of the surface winds [102]. We can accurately capture the non-locality of the  
 415 convection in this term by making the UDE a high-dimensional neural network.  
 416 Using data from horizontal average temperatures  $\bar{T}$  with known physical param-  
 417 eters  $P$ , we can directly reconstruct a nonlinear  $P$ -dependent parameterization  
 418 by training a universal diffusion-advection partial differential equation. Sup-  
 419plementary Figure 3 demonstrates the accuracy of the approach using a deep  
 420 UPDE with high order stabilized-explicit Runge-Kutta (ROCK) methods where  
 421 the fitting is described in Supplement S6. To contrast the trained UPDE, we di-  
 422rectly simulated the 3D Boussinesq equations under similar physical conditions  
 423 and demonstrated that the neural parameterization results in around a 15,000x  
 424 acceleration. This demonstrates that physical-dependent parameterizations for  
 425 acceleration can be directly learned from data utilizing the previous knowl-  
 426 edge of the averaging approximation and mixed with a data-driven discovery  
 427 approach.

## 428 4.2 Data-Driven Nonlinear Closure Relations for Model 429 Reduction in Non-Newtonian Viscoelastic Fluids

430 All continuum materials satisfy conservation equations for mass and momentum.  
 431 The difference between an elastic solid and a viscous fluid comes down to the  
 432 constitutive law relating the stresses and strains. In a one-dimensional system,  
 433 an elastic solid satisfies  $\sigma = G\gamma$ , with stress  $\sigma$ , strain  $\gamma$ , and elastic modulus  
 434  $G$ , whereas a viscous fluid satisfies  $\sigma = \eta\dot{\gamma}$ , with viscosity  $\eta$  and strain rate  $\dot{\gamma}$ .  
 435 Non-Newtonian fluids have more complex constitutive laws, for instance when  
 436 stress depends on the history of deformation,

$$\sigma(t) = \int_{-\infty}^t G(t-s)F(\dot{\gamma}(s)) ds, \quad (24)$$

437 alternatively expressed in the instantaneous form [103]:

$$\begin{aligned} \sigma(t) &= \phi_1(t), \\ \frac{d\phi_1}{dt} &= G(0)F(\dot{\gamma}) + \phi_2, \\ \frac{d\phi_2}{dt} &= \frac{dG(0)}{dt}F(\dot{\gamma}) + \phi_3, \\ &\vdots \end{aligned} \quad (25)$$

438 where the history is stored in  $\phi_i$ . To become computationally feasible, the  
 439 expansion is truncated, often in an ad-hoc manner, e.g.  $\phi_n = \phi_{n+1} = \dots = 0$ ,  
 440 for some  $n$ . Only with a simple choice of  $G(t)$  does an exact closure condition  
 441 exist, e.g. the Oldroyd-B model. For a fully nonlinear approximation, we train  
 442 a UODE according to the details in Supplement S7 to learn a closure relation:

$$\sigma(t) = U_0(\dot{\gamma}, \phi_1, \dots, \phi_N), \quad (26)$$

$$\frac{d\phi_i}{dt} = U_i(\dot{\gamma}, \phi_1, \dots, \phi_N), \quad \text{for } i = 1 \text{ to } N \quad (27)$$

443 from the numerical solution of the FENE-P equations, a fully non-linear consti-  
 444 tutive law requiring a truncation condition [104]. Figure 3 compares the neural  
 445 network approach to a linear, Oldroyd-B like, model for  $\sigma$  and showcases that  
 446 the nonlinear approximation improves the accuracy by more than 50x. We  
 447 note that the neural network approximation accelerates the solution by 2x over  
 448 the original 6-state DAE, demonstrating that the universal differential equation  
 449 approach to model acceleration is not just applicable to large-scale dynamical  
 450 systems like PDEs but also can be effectively employed to accelerate small scale  
 451 systems.

### 4.3 Efficient Discrete Physics-Informed Neural Networks as Universal ODEs

To further demonstrate the breadth of computational problems covered by the  
 UODE framework, we note that the discrete physics-informed neural networks  
 can be cast into the framework of UODEs. A physics-informed neural network  
 is the representation of a PDE’s solution via a neural network, allowing machine  
 learning training techniques to solve the equation [12]. These works note that  
 the continuous PDE can be discretized in a single dimension to give rise to the  
 discrete physics-informed neural network, simplified as:

$$u^{n+c_i} = u^n - \Delta t \sum_{j=1}^q a_{ij} \mathcal{N}[u^{n+c_j}] \quad (28)$$

$$u^{n+1} = u^n - \Delta t \sum_{j=1}^q b_j \mathcal{N}[u^{n+c_j}] \quad (29)$$

454 These results have demonstrated that the discrete form can enhance the com-  
 455 putational efficiency of training physics-informed neural networks. However, we  
 456 note that this directly corresponds to training the universal ODE  $u' = \mathcal{N}(u)$  us-  
 457 ing an explicit or implicit Runge-Kutta method in the SciML ecosystem. This  
 458 directly gives rise to the further work on multistep discrete physics-informed  
 459 neural networks [70, 80] by training the UODE via a multistep method, but  
 460 also immediately gives the generalization to Runge-Kutta-Chebyshev, Rosen-  
 461 brock, exponential integrator, and more formalizations which all are available  
 462 via the SciML tools.

## 5 Discussion

464 While many attribute the success of deep learning to its blackbox nature, the  
 465 key advances in deep learning applications have come by developing new archi-  
 466 tectures which directly model the structures that are attempting to be learned.

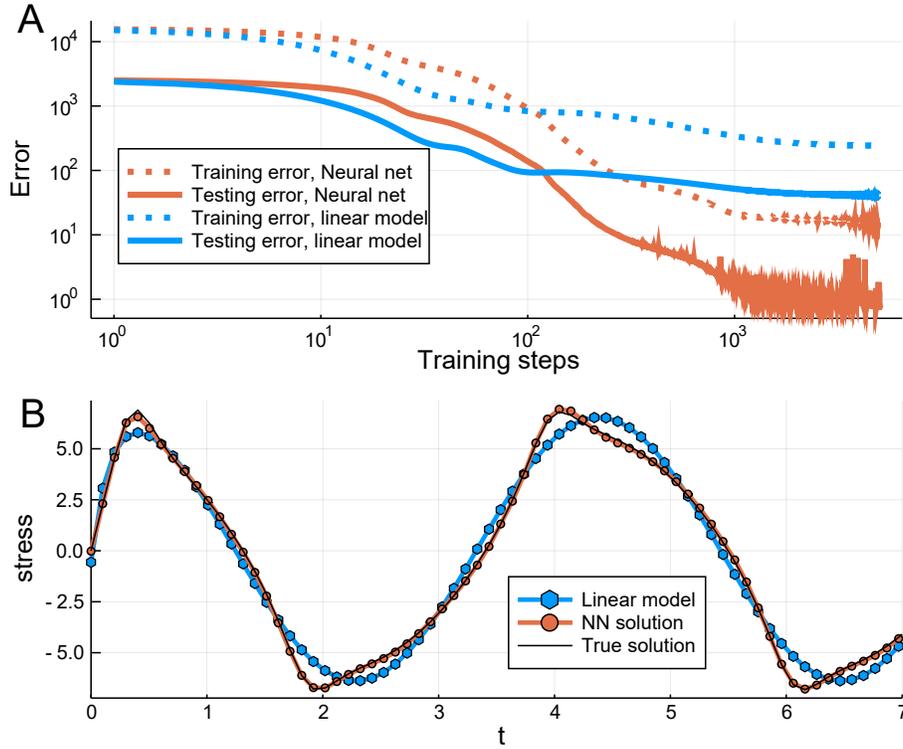


Figure 3: Convergence of neural closure relations for a non-Newtonian Fluid. (A) Error between the approximated  $\sigma$  using the linear approximation Equation 7 and the neural network closure relation Equation 26 against the full FENE-P solution. The error is measured for the strain rates  $\dot{\gamma} = 12 \cos \omega t$  for  $\omega = 1, 1.2, \dots, 2$  and tested with the strain rate  $\dot{\gamma} = 12 \cos 1.5t$ . (B) Predictions of stress for testing strain rate for the linear approximation and UODE solution against the exact FENE-P stress.

467 For example, deep convolutional neural networks for image processing directly  
468 utilized the local spatial structure of images by modeling convolution stencil op-  
469 erations. Similarly, recurrent neural networks encode a forward time progression  
470 into a deep learning model and have excelled in natural language processing and  
471 time series prediction. Here we present a software that allows for combining ex-  
472 isting scientific simulation libraries with neural networks to train and augment  
473 known models with data-driven components. Our results show that by build-  
474 ing these hybrid mechanistic models with machine learning, we can arrive at  
475 similar efficiency advancements by utilizing all known prior knowledge of the  
476 underlying problem’s structure. While we demonstrate the utility of UDEs in  
477 equation discovery, we have also demonstrated that these methods are capable  
478 of solving many other problems, and many methods of recent interest, such as  
479 discrete physics-informed neural networks, fall into the class of UDE methods  
480 and can thus be analyzed and efficiently computed as part of this formalization.

481 Our software implementation is the first deep learning integrated differen-  
482 tial equation library to include the full spectrum of adjoint sensitivity analysis  
483 methods that is required to both efficiently and accurately handle the range  
484 of training problems that can arise from universal differential equations. We  
485 have demonstrated orders of magnitude performance advantages over previous  
486 machine learning enhanced adjoint sensitivity ODE software in a variety of sci-  
487 entific models and demonstrated generalizations to stiff equations, DAEs, SDEs,  
488 and more. While the results of this paper span many scientific disciplines and  
489 incorporate many different modeling approaches, together all of the examples  
490 shown in this manuscript can be implemented using the SciML software ecosys-  
491 tem in just hundreds of lines of code each, with none of the examples taking  
492 more than half an hour to train on a standard laptop. This both demonstrates  
493 the efficiency of the software and its methodologies, along with the potential to  
494 scale to much larger applications.

495 The code for reproducing the computational experiments can be found at:

496 [https://github.com/ChrisRackauckas/universal\\_differential\\_equations](https://github.com/ChrisRackauckas/universal_differential_equations)

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# Figures

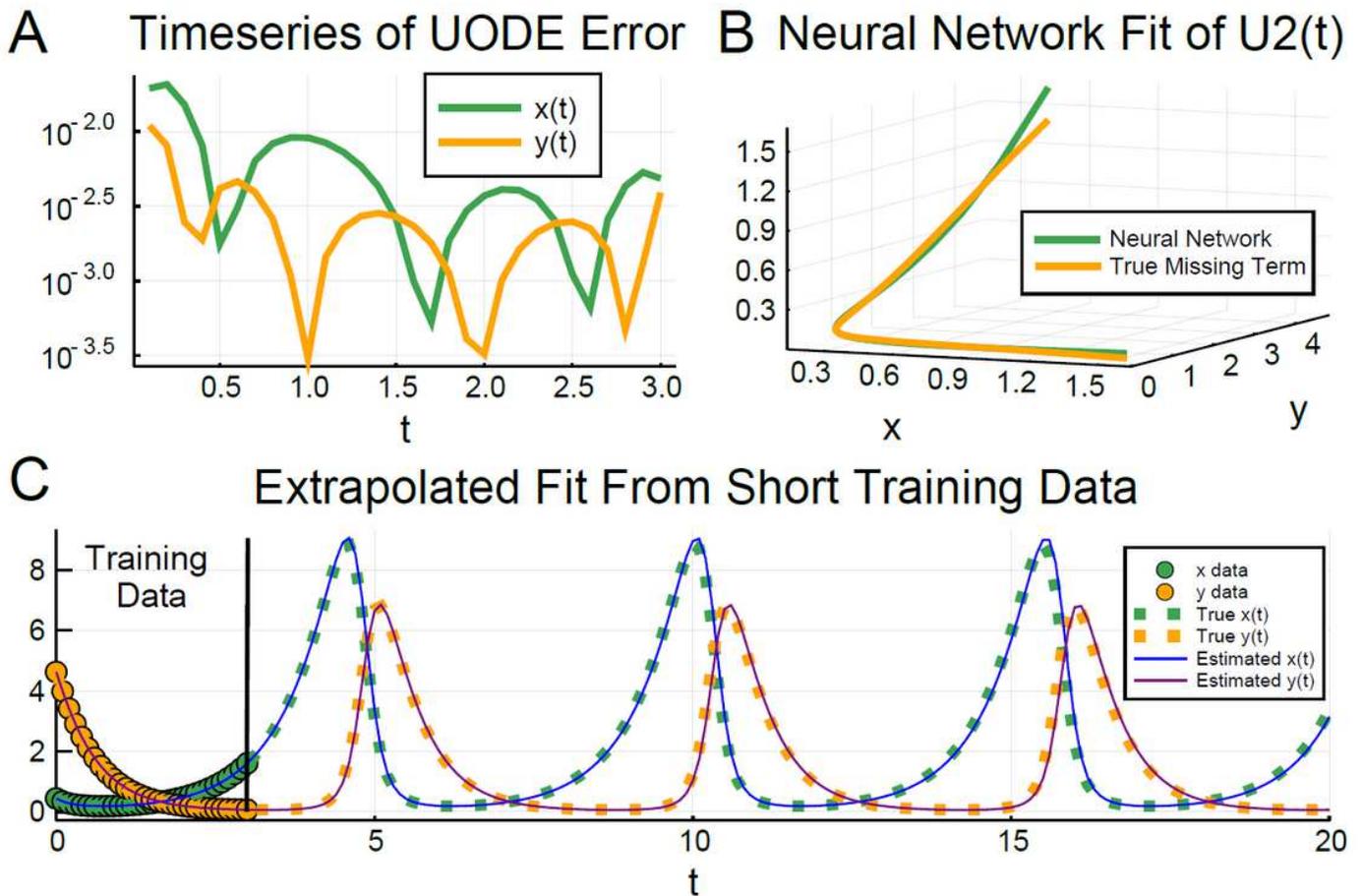
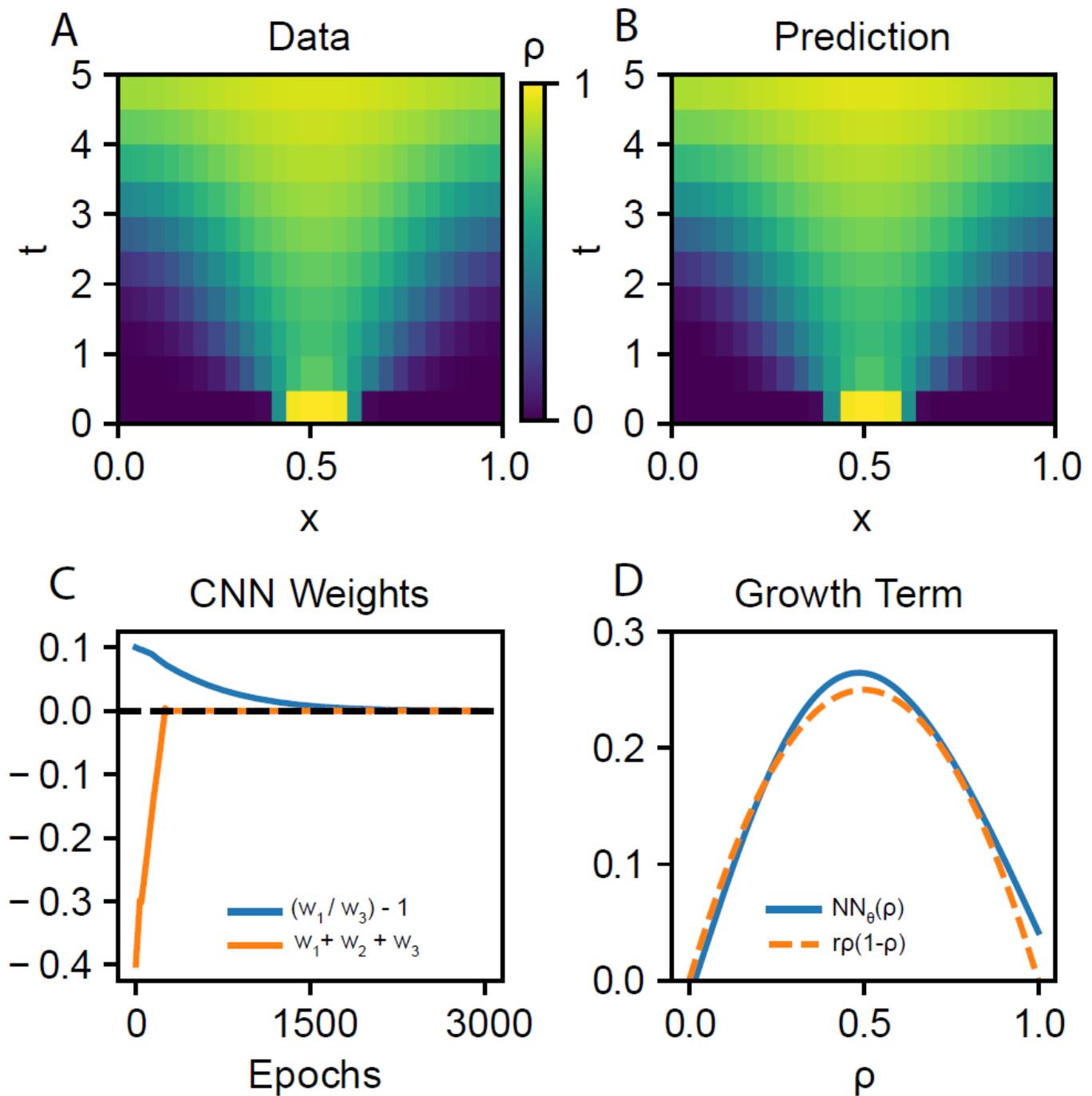


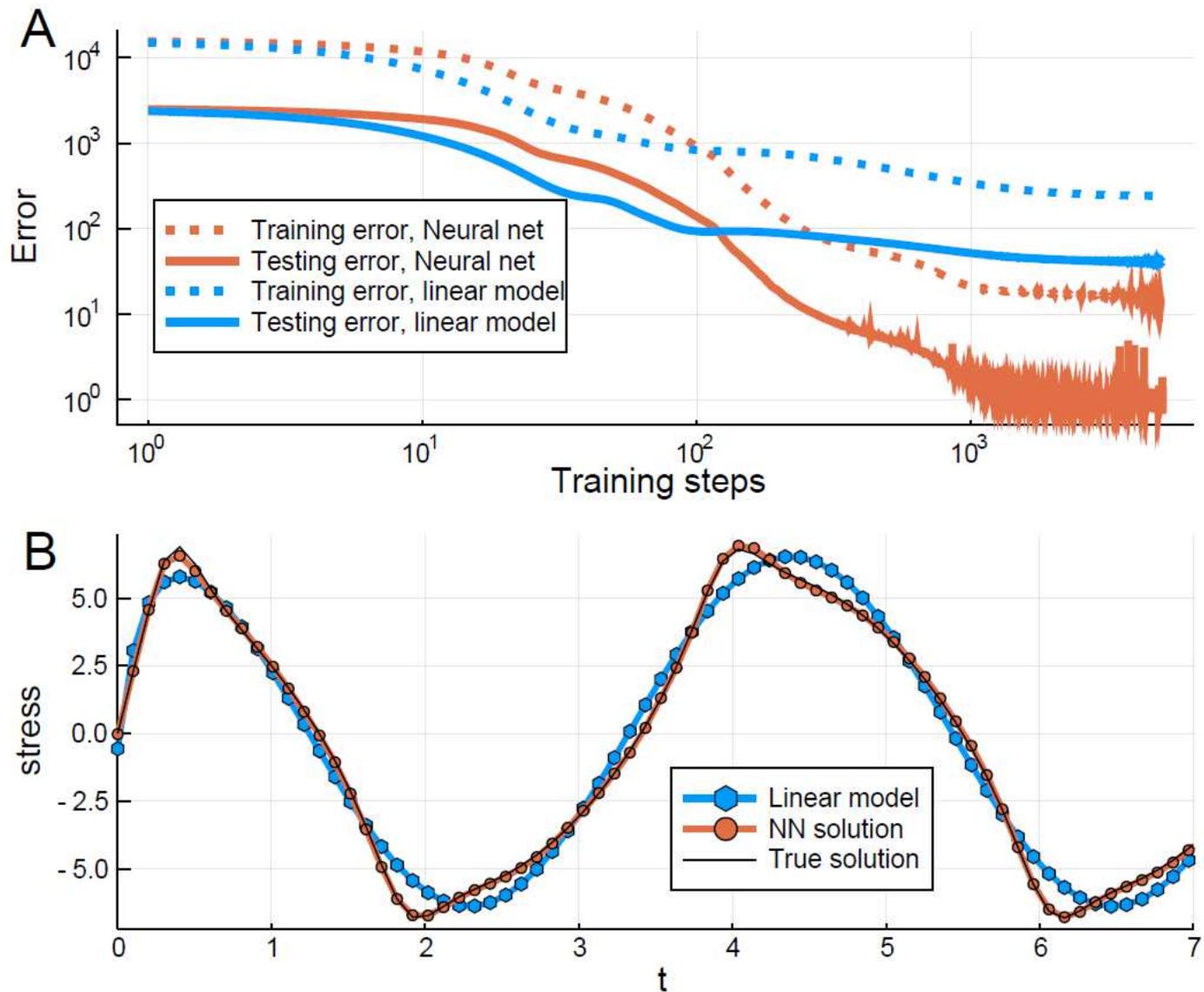
Figure 1

Automated Lotka-Volterra equation discovery with UODE-enhanced SInDy. (A) The error in the trained UODE against  $x(t)$  and  $y(t)$  in green and yellow respectively. (B) The measured values of the missing term  $U_2(x; y)$  throughout the time series, with the neural network approximate in green and the true value  $xy$  in yellow. (C) The extrapolation of the knowledge-enhanced SInDy fit series. The green and yellow dots show the data that was used to fit the UODE, and the dots show the true solution of the Lotka-Volterra Equations 8 beyond the training data. The blue and purple lines show the extrapolated solution how the UODE-enhanced SInDy recovered equations.



**Figure 2**

Recovery of the UPDE for the Fisher-KPP equation. (A) Training data and (B) prediction of the UPDE for  $\rho(x, t)$ . (C) Curves for the weights of the CNN filter  $[w_1, w_2, w_3]$  indicate the recovery of the  $[1, -2, 1]$  stencil for the 1-dimensional Laplacian. (D) Comparison of the learned (blue) and the true growth term (orange) showcases the learned parabolic form of the missing nonlinear equation.



**Figure 3**

Convergence of neural closure relations for a non-Newtonian Fluid. (A) Error between the approximated  $\sigma$  using the linear approximation Equation 7 and the neural network closure relation Equation 26 against the full FENE-P solution. The error is measured for the strain rates  $\dot{\gamma} = 12 \cos \omega t$  for  $\omega = 1, 1.2, \dots, 2$  and tested with the strain rate  $\dot{\gamma} = 12 \cos 1.5t$ . (B) Predictions of stress for testing strain rate for the linear approximation and UODE solution against the exact FENE-P stress.

## Supplementary Files

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- [UniversalDifferentialEquationsSupplement.pdf](#)