

News from the CFS RDRC



The CFS RDRC Launches Year Four with New Scholars, Research, and Programs

The University of Wisconsin—Madison’s Center for Financial Security (CFS), as part of the Retirement and Disability Research Consortium (RDRC), is pleased to launch year four of the five-year cooperative agreement with the Social Security Administration. One of just [four RDRC centers](#) supported by SSA, the UW-Madison center has a particular focus on the financial well-being of economically vulnerable families, older people, people with disabilities, low-wealth households, and children.

“The pandemic has really highlighted the financial vulnerability of many families, and how important safety net programs are to keep people financially stable,” says CFS Faculty Director Dr. J. Michael Collins, Fetzer Family Chair in Consumer and Personal Finance in the School of Human Ecology and Professor at the La Follette School of Public Affairs. “We are grateful for the SSA RDRC to be able to support this research, including work related to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 for disability, retirement and social insurance programs.”

This year’s award funds [13 major research studies](#), over half of which are led by University of Wisconsin—Madison faculty. In addition, the funding renews support for mentored fellowships and for the Junior Scholars in Training (JSIT) program, which trains and mentors early-career researchers and junior faculty in the retirement and disability fields. This year also included new support for a training program aimed at developing undergraduate researchers: the Social Insurance Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF). *To read a full press release on the year four award, visit our website [HERE](#).*

**Annual Junior Scholars Intensive
Training Sees Success,
Research Awards Announced**

For a week in June 2021, the Center

for Financial Security (CFS)—in collaboration with Howard University’s Center on Race and Wealth—held the annual summer workshop of Junior Scholar Intensive Training (JSIT) program. JSIT is an intensive training program for emerging researchers, and made possible with funding from the Retirement and Disability Research Consortium of the Social Security Administration (SSA).



Throughout the summer, the cohort also worked asynchronously on their data skills in DataCamp. Mary Hamman, Professor of Economics at UW-La Crosse, lead the data science training in DataCamp, and provided invaluable one-on-one time with each scholar.

In September the scholars submitted their refined research proposals to the small JSIT Research Competition. CFS awarded the following five projects (click on title link to view abstract):

- Shogher Ohannessian, [*The Effect of the Student Earned Income Exclusion on Labor Market and Educational Choices of SSI Recipients*](#)
- Marissa Eckrote-Nordland, [*Income Volatility and Social Security: Understanding Farm Losses and their Implications*](#)
- Megan Henly, [*SSI Policy and Homeownership: Patterns Across Categories of Disability & Race*](#)
- Bahar Eftekhari, [*The Impact of Medicaid Enrollment Expansion on the Health Well-being of SSI and SSDI Beneficiaries*](#)
- Kendall Moody, [*Medicaid Receipt and Health Outcomes in Youth with Sickle Cell Disease Living in Poverty*](#)

These five projects will culminate in a full research report, and posted to the CFS website. [*Read full JSIT article with 2021 JSIT Scholars experiences quoted, HERE.*](#)

Spotlight on Research:

The Effects of Expanding Access to Mental Health Treatment on SS(D)I Applications and Awards

The growing number of individuals suffering from a serious mental illness underscores the important role of interventions such as treatments, policies, and



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[Link to Brief](#)

[Link to Paper](#)

programs to support those in need. Such support efforts often interact in unanticipated ways. This paper considers the degree to which access to mental health treatment services affects participation in federal disability programs including the Supplemental Security Income and the Social Security Disability Insurance (SS(D)I) programs. The study uses county-level variation in the number of mental health treatment establishments to estimate changes in access to mental health treatment on SS(D)I program participation. The analysis also includes a series of event studies and heterogeneity in effects. The results show that an increase in mental health facilities in a county increases participation in SS(D)I programs. A 10 percent increase in a county's number of office-based mental health establishments increases the SSI application rate by 1.2 percent and the SSDI application rate by 0.7 percent. Overall this does not translate to an increase in SS(D)I awards, but the study finds increases in awards in counties that have lower household incomes, lower education levels, and a higher proportion of residents below the poverty line. The results suggest that increasing access to mental health resources is one pathway through which people with severe mental illnesses can be diagnosed and then access social safety nets.

Stay Tuned: Inaugural SURF Program Coming this Spring



In collaboration with the Economics Department at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), the Social Insurance Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program will offer a cohort of up to ten undergraduate students from underrepresented populations the opportunity to learn at a four-week workshop at UIC and then work as interns with RDRC faculty members studying topics related to social insurance, economics, and economically vulnerable populations.

Recognized as an (MSI) and as an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander–Serving institution (AANAPISI), UIC is one of the most diverse research-intensive universities in the country. UIC is nationally recognized for its ongoing leadership in diversity, having recently been ranked as the 15th most diverse

university in the United States by US News & World Report.

The SURF program has two primary goals: 1) to raise awareness among promising students about the potential for careers related to social insurance programs and research related to SSA programs and 2) Provide an opportunity for RDRC research projects to engage with these junior scholars and benefit from their perspectives.

Please look for release of [call and more program information](#) soon.

New Publications & Opportunities

Newly Released Publications:

- 2021 Retirement and Disability Research Consortium Annual Meeting Videos with Closed Captioning Posted [HERE](#).
- New CFS RDRC Working Papers Posted [HERE](#).
- New CFS RDRC Research Briefs Posted [HERE](#).

CFS RDRC Training Program Announcements:

- Junior Scholar Intensive Training (JSIT) Summer Research Workshop - [2022 Call for Applications](#)
- Retirement and Disability Social Policy in Residence Postdoctoral Fellowship Program - [2022-23 Call for Applications](#)
- Retirement and Disability Social Policy Extramural Mentored Fellowship Program - [2022-23 Call for Applications](#)
- IRP Extramural Small Grant on Poverty, Retirement, and Disability Research - [2022-23 Call for Applications](#)

RDRC Center Opportunities:

- Michigan Retirement and Disability Research Center (MRDRC): [Junior Faculty Research Mentoring and Funding](#)
- Center for Retirement Research at Boston College (CRR): [Undergraduate Fellowship](#), [Dissertation Fellowship](#), & [Sandell Grant](#)
- NBER: [Post Doctoral Fellowship](#) & [Pre-Doctoral Fellowship](#)

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