



Building the Field of Retirement and Disability Research for the Future: Mentored Training Programs of the CFS RDRC



2020 JSIT Scholars

The Center for Financial Security Retirement and Disability Research Center ([CFS RDRC](#)) at UW-Madison offers a set of mentored research programs, funded by the Social Security Administration's Retirement and Disability Research Consortium (RDRC). The CFS RDRC training programs are distinctive in that they are mentored; they promote and recruit a diversity of researchers; and they are aimed at expanding the pipeline of research focused on economically vulnerable populations.

These programs are working to develop future RDRC researchers and to produce a cohesive set of mentored research, often connecting established RDRC researchers with emerging scholars and fellows. Between Fall 2018 and Fall 2020, the CFS RDRC received funding for 35 unique projects and nearly \$4.5 million in research funding. Additionally, our scholars and fellows have authored 20 different working papers funded through the Mentored Training Programs. One of our junior scholar's paper was cited by the Chair of the House Ways & Means Committee as a novel approach to examining Social Security's role in reducing inequality.

Led by CFS Faculty Director, [J. Michael Collins](#), along with exceptional mentors from American University, Duke University, Howard University, University of Chicago, University of Wisconsin and Yale University, the RDRC training programs offer a unique one-on-one mentored experience. A glimpse at the four competitive programs under the CFS RDRC training umbrella:

- **Junior Scholar Intensive Training (JSIT):** Along with [Howard University's Center on Race and Wealth](#), CFS hosts JSIT— an annual mentored training cohort. JSIT brings together a dozen scholars from a variety of disciplines and institutions across the US, including junior faculty, newly graduated PhD researchers, and dissertators, who are interested in topics related to disability and retirement research. The goal of JSIT is to provide emerging scholars with the training and mentoring needed to develop and write an initial research proposal of relevance to the Social Security Administration, their programs, policies, and/or beneficiaries. Scholars attend a week-long intensive in June, and work on their proposals throughout the summer, after which they can enter their proposal into the JSIT Research Competition, which awards five scholars \$5,000 to complete their JSIT research.
- **In-Residence Fellowships:** These fellowships provide both mentoring and funding (UW employee salary and benefits) for early career researchers with an interest in applied research that is of relevance to Social Security programs and/or beneficiaries. Fellows conduct research on topics related to Social Security, retirement, and disability policy, especially focused on economically vulnerable populations. Fellows also assist current RDRC principal investigators who in turn help the fellows connect to the retirement and disability research field, and ultimately, to become future principal investigators.
- **Extramural Fellowships:** The fellowships provide both mentoring and funding (cash award) for early career researchers – such as junior faculty – with an interest in applied research that is of relevance to Social Security programs and/or beneficiaries. Selected fellows conduct research on topics related to Social Security, retirement, and disability policy, especially focused on economically vulnerable populations.
- **IRP Extramural Small Grant:** In collaboration with [The Institute for Research on Poverty \(IRP\)](#), this competitive small grant supports the study of economically vulnerable populations related to poverty, retirement, and disability policy and is designed to expand the reach of poverty research into issues related to retirement and disability policies and programs.