



RMRDC News

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Yes, the pandemic has dominated our lives and work, along with budget cuts, furloughs, and shutdowns. However, at the same time, there have been some significant developments regarding the RMRDC and the FSRDC program, which we would like to share with you.

Open for Research

Following the FSRDC system-wide shutdown in March, the RMRDC was one of the earliest to reopen in mid-July. We are now running at 50% capacity, with 6 socially-distanced workstations available to researchers. Lab use is scheduled in 5-hour slots with a break in between so people do not meet each other in passing. High-risk persons are able to reserve the entire lab. Researchers are required to wear masks, work at assigned cubicles, and disinfect their stations before and after use. Alcohol wipes and hand sanitizer are provided.

The RMRDC will remain open through the holidays and the IBS building will work with card access as usual. Contact RMRDC Administrator Phil Pendergast for access if users do not have a building access card.

Utah FSRDC Opens

The Wasatch Front Research Data Center is now open at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. It becomes the 31st FSRDC in the network. Its partner institutions are Utah State University, Brigham Young University, and Utah Department of Health.

New Consortium Member

In July 2020, the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Safety department within Denver Health and Hospital Authority finalized a 3-year membership commitment. They have multiple active projects investigating opioid and other drug-involved deaths. Joshua Black is their representative to the Consortium.

Cuts in CU Boulder Funding

The generous support provided by the CU Boulder administration for the RMRDC's first five years has been cut back 50%. This is substantial and impactful, but it is manageable. We had built up a surplus that we will be spending down over the next few years AND we will need to become increasingly more reliant on the commitments from our institutional partners and funded research projects, so please have your researchers keep us in mind as they pursue external funding for their research.

NCHS Rule Change

Historically, NCHS has required researchers to have the RDC administrator present whenever they are working in the lab. After the FSRDC shutdown in March, NCHS reconsidered this rule, and currently all researchers on NCHS projects have the same access to the labs as other researchers.

Health Data Course

Formally titled "Federal Statistical Data for Health and Policy Research", this semester-long graduate course is taught by the RMRDC staff. It is a focused outreach strategy that teaches graduate students about the availability and merits of restricted-access health data collected by a variety of federal and state agencies. Students also learn about the FSRDC program by progressively developing a project that is designed to be submittable to the appropriate federal agency by the end of the term. The course also includes an optional SAS lab that duplicates and extends some of the unrestricted data papers covered in class. The [Spring 2020 syllabus](#) is available for those interested.

We are excited to announce that the course will be offered for the second time for Spring 2021. It is cross-listed by CU Denver's Economics, Geography, Health and Behavioral Science, and

Sociology Departments, as well as by the Colorado School of Public Health, Health Systems, and Management and Policy at CU Denver, Anschutz. CU Boulder students are encouraged to enroll through concurrent enrollment. Students and researchers affiliated with any other member institution are encouraged to attend lectures via Zoom.



Research Assistance Available

Kassandra (Kas) McLean, Ph.D. economics student at CU Boulder, is serving as the RMRDC research assistant through the spring and summer of 2021. Kas is an applied microeconomist with a focus on externalities of establishment closures and openings with over a decade of industry experience in software development prior to grad school. She can assist with exploring restricted data sources for new projects in development and consult on coding strategies for researchers working in the RMRDC.

Introduction to SAS Workshop

Thursday, January 7, 2021 from 2:00-4:00 on Zoom.

Registration required.

Government agencies are currently offering more job opportunities for recent graduates, and many of those opportunities require some knowledge of SAS. Get familiar with SAS in our 2-hour interactive workshop. We will be reproducing COVID-19 excess death estimates using publicly available National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) data to walk through the layout of SAS Studio, explore the structure of the SAS scripting language, and cover some common commands. Data, scripts, and results will be provided to all class members. Course materials (including the class link for SAS OnDemand) will be emailed to class participants one day before the class.

E-Mail kas.mclean@colorado.edu to register.

Remote Access Expansion

To allow research to continue after the FSRDCs were shut down in March, the U.S. Census Bureau expanded the virtual access pilot program to include researchers who had previously approved projects using only Title 13 data. This includes the Decennial Censuses, ACS, CPS, and other non-Census data such as the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). Projects that use business data, protected by Title 26, such as Economic Censuses, LBD, and LEHD data are not eligible for remote access. Researchers approved for this access are set up to use the restricted data from their home offices. They undergo additional training and are subject to random audits. So far eight RMRDC researchers have been granted virtual access.

Recently, the Census Bureau announced they are developing protocols that will allow first-time researchers using only Title 13 data, to qualify for remote access. Projects that use data from NCHS, AHQR, BLS, BEA, and IRS are not eligible for remote access at this time.

New Application Portal

The FSRDC program, in partnership with the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), has launched [ResearchDataGov](#), a new portal to help researchers begin an application for restricted data. This portal provides a single point of entry for new researchers wishing to use restricted-use microdata provided by a number of participating federal statistical agencies. Users are able to search for available microdata by dataset title, sponsoring agency, or by research topic. Each dataset description includes downloadable metadata about the survey sponsor, survey universe, years of data collection, and other survey information.

New Approved Projects

The RMRDC has had a very productive year for new proposal development, resulting in eight new projects that were approved in 2020. The projects are as follows with consortium researchers and their affiliations included in bold.

Stephen Yeaple & **Wolfgang Keller**. “Multinationals and the Geography of Global Competition.” **CU Boulder - Economics**.

Joe Chestnut & Eric Boschmann. “Estimating Commuting Accessibility by Income and Departure Time.” **University of Denver - Geography**.

Myron Gutmann, Lori Hunter, Cyrus Hester, Taylor Jaworski, Stefan Leyk, Catherine Talbot, Jeremiah Nieves, & Dylan Connor. “Trends, Transitions, and Well-Being in Small-Town America.” **CU Boulder - Economics, History, and Sociology**.

Chloe East, Andrea Velasquez, & Michelle Marcus. “Immigration Policy and Health.” **CU Denver - Economics**.

Justin Vinneau & Richard Rogers. “Black Immigrant Health in the United States.” **CU Boulder - Sociology.**

Joshua Black & Gabrielle Bau. “Analysis of Drug Induced Mortality Data for Opioid Analgesics.” **Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Safety - Epidemiology.**

Joshua Black, Gabrielle Bau, Kevin May, & Karilynn Rockhill. “Analysis of Buprenorphine Mortality.” **Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Safety - Epidemiology.**

Peter Maniloff & William Allshouse. “Oil and Gas Siting, Housing Choices, and Environmental Justice.” **Colorado School of Mines - Economics; CU Anschutz - Colorado School of Public Health.**