

2012 Coalition for National Science Funding

The Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) held its 17th Annual Exhibition and Reception on May 11, 2012, in the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill. The purpose of the Exhibition is to inform members of Congress, congressional staff, and federal employees about the breadth and significance of scientific research supported by the National Science Foundation. The Exhibition included more than 30 displays featuring posters, computer demonstrations, videos, and educational materials about NSF-supported research and education projects.

Dr. Matthew Shapiro and Margaret C. Levenstein from the University of Michigan represented the AEA at the Exhibition. Their exhibit focused on the Michigan Census Research Data Center (MCRDC), a joint project of the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the University of Michigan to enable qualified researchers with approved projects to access unpublished Census data in order to conduct research that benefits Census Bureau programs.



Established in 2001 with support from the National Science Foundation, researchers at the MCRDC have conducted research on topics such as

- how firms overcome impediments to export, documenting the growth in exports across regions and industries
- the importance of efficient utilization of capital for productivity growth
- the impact of Empowerment Zones on firm and job creation
- the causes of the shift from defined benefit to defined contribution retirement plans
- the location of New Orleans residents one year after Katrina
- migration patterns of new and old immigrant groups

- new techniques for creating small area estimates
- impact of using phone and in-person follow-ups to mail surveys on Census estimates of populations

The MCRDC also contributes to the training of the next generation of social scientists, especially those who will help to rejuvenate an aging staff in the national statistical agencies. Over fifty doctoral dissertations have or are in the process of being completed in the MCRDC. Half a dozen students have participated in Census mentoring programs.

The exhibit also described the new Michigan NSF-Census Research Network (NCRN). The Michigan NCRN is undertaking a series of projects that build on work in the MCRDC as well as the survey research conducted at the University of Michigan to re-engineer national statistics by making better use of digital information produced in the course of daily life. The information analyzed, for example for studying unemployment, ranges from Tweets about job loss to administrative records on benefit receipts linked to survey data. By developing appropriate statistical methods for turning such information into analytical datasets, the Michigan NCRN will create the basis for national statistics for the twenty-first century, in which data collection costs and respondent burden are lower, data quality is higher, and privacy is enhanced.