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## HEALTH

# FSU joins online program that matches volunteers with health research

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Published 11:15 a.m. ET Sept. 20, 2022

Florida State University invites the community to engage in the research process as its scientists look to better understand complicated diseases and other medical conditions.

The institution has just joined ResearchMatch ([researchmatch.org](https://researchmatch.org)), a nonprofit program funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) where people – healthy or not – can sign up to participate in health-related research.

“Our university is invested in this community in so many ways, so joining ResearchMatch to expand our outreach through research makes sense,” said Mark Riley, FSU’s interim vice president for research. “This is taking FSU research to the next level of community-based involvement by giving people greater opportunities to contribute to biomedical discoveries and health care innovation.”

Originally launched in 2009 by Vanderbilt University, the ResearchMatch database has more than 168,000 volunteers who represent various demographic, geographic and health backgrounds. To date, nearly 12,000 researchers have used the site to conduct almost 1,200 studies and publish more than 600 research findings across the country.

FSU joins five other Florida universities, plus the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa and UF-Scripps Biomedical Research Institute in Jupiter, using ResearchMatch.

Interested volunteers register for free on the secure website, providing contact information and their preferences on types of research. Once registered, volunteers can choose whether to participate when the system emails them information about a specific research project. The volunteer’s information is kept confidential until the volunteer agrees to participate in the study. At that time, the researcher will be provided the volunteer’s contact information.

The types of studies available on ResearchMatch include surveys that a volunteer can complete at home or remotely as well as studies that involve in-person participation with the

researcher at the study location, usually on campus or at a nearby health care facility. Studies can cover any range of health conditions, medications or diseases, but all types of volunteers — including healthy participants — are needed.

ResearchMatch allows only studies that have been reviewed and approved by a university or health care facility's regulatory board, designated to protect the rights and welfare of people participating in research. FSU's regulatory officials review every study and must approve before FSU researchers can post to ResearchMatch.

For study volunteers, ResearchMatch offers a more streamlined way to find research projects of interest, whether they are at FSU or at a research institution across the state or country. For FSU researchers, the program expands access to volunteers in the community and miles away.

“This is a free resource to connect citizens with scientists in the ongoing quest to advance research discoveries that will improve public health and health care,” Riley said. “You never know what kind of a difference your participation in research could make in someone's life, whether it's a complete stranger or someone you love.”

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