Students Participating as Ambassadors for Research in Kentucky (SPARK)

Overview

SPARK is a dynamic collaboration between the Center for Health Equity Transformation (CHET) and the Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS). Participants are introduced to community-engaged research focused on health disparities/health equity and receive extensive mentorship from faculty.

Students identify a research topic, program leaders assist in identifying mentors, and students work with their mentors to develop a project. Students conduct projects in their home communities over the summer, receiving funds to support this research. After implementing the project, participants meet with their mentors, undertake data analysis and write-up, and present and publish their research in professional settings.

Activities

Classes
Health Equity 101, Research Ethics 101, & Data Analysis 101

Workshops/Enrichment
Literature Review, Project Planning and Management, Quantitative Data Analysis, Book Club, Special lectures

Group & Individual Research Project Sessions
Designing good research questions & methods, Writing a grant application, Developing IRB applications, Creating a budget, Collecting and analyzing data, etc.

What motivated students to apply to SPARK?

Top 4 Motivators

#1 Opportunity to gain research skills and experiences.

#2 An interest in learning health equity research.

#3 Opportunity to contribute to inclusive excellence in research environments.

#3 Opportunity to broaden UK research networks. Tied for #3

Outcomes and Accomplishments

Benefits of Working with Community Mentors Reported by SPARK Participants

Individual recognition, encouragement, and support

Experience in networking

Development of strategies to meet research goals

Greater understanding of the community

Confidence to challenge oneself to achieve new goals and explore alternatives

Increased access to research populations

Training & Development

Improvements in Abilities and Skills Reported by SPARK Participants

Skill	Percentage
Networking skills	67%
Presentation skills	67%
Data analysis	67%
Research data collection	67%
Developing a budget and budget justification	67%
Developing and carrying out a research plan	67%
Better understanding of health equity issues	67%
Other (Professionalism, Time management)	33%