



SPARK
STUDENTS PARTICIPATING AS AMBASSADORS
FOR RESEARCH IN KENTUCKY



Martin-Gatton
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment

2024 Students Participating as Ambassadors for Research in Kentucky (SPARK) CAFÉ Fellowship

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

For additional questions please contact Dr. Nicole Breazeale at NBreazeale@uky.edu

1. **Q: What is the purpose of the SPARK CAFÉ Fellowship?**

A: The purpose of SPARK is to recruit and train a diverse cohort of undergraduate students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds and communities at the University of Kentucky and Kentucky State University to conduct impactful research to improve health disparities, led by UK's Center for Health Equity Transformation (CHET) and the Center for Clinical & Translational Sciences (CCTS) with support from other units.

This call for applications is specifically for undergraduate students in the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment to engage in an exciting project within the CAFÉ Department of Community and Leadership Development funded by a Gatton Challenge Grant. For this special SPARK fellowship, students will work with faculty, graduate students, and staff to do qualitative/archival research learning about how Cooperative Extension has worked to support individual, family, community, and environmental health thus far. The selected student will also have an opportunity to conduct their own independent research project connected to the larger Cooperative Extension project. The independent research project may include topics such as: the role of horses in One Health Extension and community engagement approaches, etc.

2. **Q: What is the Center for Health Equity Transformation (CHET)?**

A: Join the CHET Student and Trainee Listserv:
https://uky.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_06gEWVvnH6JU6PQ
You can find information about CHET here: <https://www.chet.med.uky.edu/>.

3. **Q: What is the Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences (CCTS)?**

A: You can find information about CCTS here: <https://www.ccts.uky.edu/>. The CCTS also organizes an annual conference in the spring. You will be expected to present your research at the conference.

4. **Q: What is the department of Community and Leadership Development (CLD)?**

A: You can find information about CLD here: <https://cld.ca.uky.edu/> Formed in the College of Agriculture in 2002, the Department of Community & Leadership Development brought faculty from rural sociology, agricultural education, agricultural communication, and program-and-staff development together in one unit. The department features strong disciplinary training in communication, education, and rural sociology and is focused on the processes of functioning effectively in community and fostering ethical leadership.



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5. **Q: What is the definition of “underrepresented” and “disadvantaged background”?**
A: The SPARK Program uses definitions from the National Institutes of Health, which can be found here:
<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-20-031.html>
6. **Q: Do I have to be from Kentucky in order to participate in SPARK?**
A: No.
7. **Q: Do I have to live in Lexington to participate?**
A: No, but this position requires travel within Kentucky to research sites throughout the state. You must be able to travel to in-person meetings and trainings in Lexington and the surrounding area. You must also actively participate in, and contribute to, all of the training workshops and weekly research meetings. You must respond to all email communication promptly, preferably within the day messages are received.
8. **Q: What is the stipend and when would I receive it?**
A: You will receive a stipend of \$5,000 during the summer of 2025, paid as a stipend over the 12 working summer weeks of the program, conditional on your fulfilling the requirements of the SPARK Program (attending workshops and professional development session, meeting research milestones, maintaining regular communication, etc.). If you are not meeting the expectations or milestones of the SPARK program, your appointment may be terminated. The stipend will be provided May-August 2025.
9. **Q: Given the continued flexibility of modality resulting from COVID-19, should I plan for this program be in person or virtual?**
A: The program will primarily take place in person at the University of Kentucky. As needed, meetings and training sessions will also be scheduled virtually.
10. **Q: What is the time commitment? Can I participate if I have a job during the semesters, intersession, or summer?**
A: Learning how to do impactful research to improve health disparities requires developing a variety of new skills as well as a deep understanding of previous research. For these reasons, the selected student should expect to devote 5 hours per week to the Gatton Challenge grant research project from August 2024 – May 2025. During the summer of 2025, students are required to dedicate 25 hours per week to their research project. Given the demands of our program, it may be difficult to maintain another job along with the SPARK program. However, if you are able to do both of your jobs, you may participate in the SPARK Program.

It is expected that students will respond to any and all communication (email, calls, etc.), complete all assignments, and provide information promptly and professionally for the duration of the program.



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11. Q: I plan to be on vacation during Thanksgiving, Intersession and/ or for part of the Summer. Can I still participate?

A: As long as you are able to attend all workshops and meet all of the other expectations of the program (communication, meetings and completing your research project), you may participate in SPARK if selected. It is critical that you accurately describe your schedule/availability. It is also essential that you discuss changes to your schedule with SPARK leadership as soon as changes arise.

12. Q: How long is the SPARK Program?

A: The duration of the SPARK CAFÉ fellowship program is August 2024 – May 2026.

The Gatton Challenge grant research training will begin in August 2024, with the selected student working with the team through June 2025. In late August 2024, the student will be required to attend a 1-2 day research bootcamp. From August 2024 – May 2025, the student will dedicate 5 hours per week to the Gatton Challenge grant research project. From May – June 2025 the student will dedicate 20 hours per week to the Gatton Challenge grant research project. For the SPARK program, the student will dedicate approximately 1 hour per month to professional development activities from August – December 2024. Beginning in January 2025, the student will join the 6th cohort of SPARK students in a didactic health equity research training course to prepare for their independent research project, and will attend regular check-in sessions with our staff and your mentorship team.

The Summer Research Intensive for the independent project will take place May - August of 2025, and during this timeframe we expect students to commit 25 hours per week for 12 weeks. Research activities will continue throughout the academic year 2025-2026. During the Summer of 2025 you will receive a \$5,000 stipend to implement your research project.

During the Fall 2025 semester, you will work on data analysis and developing presentations and articles for publications. During the Spring 2026 semester, you will prepare to present your independent project findings. Finally, you are expected to participate in all SPARK promotional events. Previous students have devoted several hours of work per week during the academic year to SPARK. The program culminates with participants presenting at the UK Center for Clinical Translational Sciences Annual Spring Conference and officially ends May 1st, 2026.

13. Q: Is U.S. citizenship required for participation?

A: No