



**SPARK**  
STUDENTS PARTICIPATING AS AMBASSADORS  
FOR RESEARCH IN KENTUCKY



**Martin-Gatton**  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment

## **Apply for the Students Participating as Ambassadors for Research in Kentucky (SPARK) CAFÉ Fellowship**

**WHO:** Any undergraduate students in the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment at the University of Kentucky with at least two academic years left until graduation and a GPA of 2.8 or higher are invited to apply for SPARK. We seek talented students interested in developing research expertise and projects in health disparities/health equity. Students from underrepresented groups or disadvantaged backgrounds, as defined by the National Institutes of Health (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-20-031.html>) are especially encouraged to apply.

**WHAT:** SPARK is a dynamic collaboration between the Center for Health Equity Transformation (CHET) the Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS), the Neuroscience, UNITE, and Diabetes & Obesity Research Priority Areas, and Aetna Better Health of Kentucky. You can read more about the program here: <https://medicine.uky.edu/centers/chet/spark-program>. 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.

Participants will also be introduced to community- engaged research focused on health disparities/health equity and receive extensive mentorship. The selected student will continue refining the focus of their Cooperative Extension related project, and students will work with their mentorship team to further develop and implement the project. Students will conduct this project in their home communities over the summer, receiving funds to support this research. After implementing the project, participants will meet with their mentors, undertake data analysis and write-up, and present and publish their research in professional settings. 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.

**WHEN:** The Gatton Challenge grant research training will begin in August 2024, with the selected student working with the team through June 2025. Beginning in January 2025, the student will join the 6<sup>th</sup> cohort of SPARK students in a didactic health equity research training

course to prepare for their independent research project. Data collection for the independent project will take place May through August of 2025. Research activities will continue throughout academic year 2025-2026. All students will present their projects at the annual CCTS conference in April 2026.

**WHERE:** The SPARK program will take place primarily in person. Meetings and training sessions are both anticipated to occur at the Health Kentucky Research Building at the University of Kentucky. When necessary, remote options will be made available.

**RESOURCES AND BENEFITS:** Students will receive excellent research training, faculty and community mentorship, a \$5,000 stipend, ample resources for their research project, and professional development opportunities.

**APPLICATION INFORMATION:** The application deadline is **July 15, 2024**. Please submit your application online at the following link: <https://medicine.uky.edu/centers/chet/spark-applications>. The required application components include:

1. Cover letter (limited to one page) describing your interest in health equity research
2. Resume, including GPA and major
3. A list of three professional references with contact information.
4. Unofficial transcript (Freshmen applicants may include their most recent unofficial high school transcript.)

For more information about SPARK and eligibility, please visit:

<https://medicine.uky.edu/centers/chet/spark-program> and/or contact Dr. Nicole Breazeale at [NBreazeale@uky.edu](mailto:NBreazeale@uky.edu)

Resume and cover letter resources: <https://www.uky.edu/careercenter/preparation>