

Partnering and Building Opportunities Within North Carolina: A Qualitative Analysis of the Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center Clinical and Research Internship for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Undergraduate Students

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Background

- ~45% of the US population are racial and ethnic individuals, however, this percentage is not represented in the cancer clinical trial participant population
- How can we enhance diversity of the clinical trial workforce?
- To address this practice and research gap in clinical trial participation Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center (LCCC) partnered with North Carolina Central University (NCCU), a historically black college and university (HBCU), to foster oncology workforce interest among undergraduate BIPOC students.

Aims

1. Explore program expectations and perceptions of students and mentors through semi-structured pre and post internship interviews and focus groups.
2. Evaluate strengths and areas of improvement in program from qualitative data.

Solutions and Methods

- 10-week summer cancer clinical research internship
 - clinical trial training and professional development
 - discussion of communication styles, creation of a LinkedIn profile, cancer clinical career panels, revision of their curriculum vitae or resume, and financial literacy
- Descriptive, qualitative approach
- Students (n=5) and mentors (n=5) met bi-weekly to discuss roles of clinicians, scientists, and scholars in cancer and provided ongoing emotional and professional development support.
- Mentor interviews and intern focus groups explored expectations, impressions, experience, concerns, and feedback.
- Data was coded and analyzed for reoccurring topics and curriculum alterations.

- *“So for me the highlights were the more casual conversation, the more like unstructured time that we had together.”* - Mentor

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- *“...even though there were, you know, like little bumps in the road or some inconsistencies, I still gained an experience that I probably wouldn't have gained anywhere else. And just being at UNC as a Black girl, that means a lot period. So I feel like, yeah, I wouldn't regret it.”* -Intern
- *“...we got to meet a lot of people, make connections, and we were able to email and speak to other people. And the networking part, it's important which is really helpful.”* -Intern

Outcomes

- Qualitative analysis was integral to shaping the content, quality, and participant (mentor and intern) satisfaction, exemplified the essentiality to encourage and address continuous feedback to meet students' and mentors' needs.
- The overarching need for representation and equitable support
- Curriculum revision, on-campus housing, increased mentor involvement, and year-round career development and skill-building workshops.
- Differentiated summers: overview of cancer clinical trials and professional development (summer 1) and tailored curriculum and exposure (summer 2).

Implications

- Importance of programs exposing BIPOC individuals to various research and career options
- Expanding similar program collaborations in other communities

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