

Bridging the Gap: Academic-Industry Partnership for Clinical Research Training

J. Germain, K. Moffett, N. Naas, S. Ahmed, T. Wells

Moffitt Cancer Center

1. Background

In 2016, our Cancer Center recognized a critical need to fill vacancies in research positions. To address this challenge, we partnered with Hillsborough Community College to create a pipeline of trained job ready research professionals. A committee comprising of college faculty and research staff created a one-year certificate program and two-year Associate Science (AS) Degree that aimed to increase awareness and build research skills among health science students.

The vision behind this partnership was to establish a sustainable framework that would benefit all stakeholders involved. By introducing students to clinical research careers early in their education, we aimed to:

- Enhance Career Opportunities: Provide students a pathway to rewarding careers in research.
- Address Workforce Shortages: Develop a steady stream of qualified candidates for research positions.
- Promote Diversity: Encourage students from diverse backgrounds to pursue careers in research.
- Foster Community Engagement: Strengthen the relationship between the Cancer Center, the college, and the local community through collaborative efforts and shared goals.

Creating the Research Certificate program and the AS degree in Clinical Research has been pivotal in achieving this vision. These programs have:

- Aided the Overall Vision: By providing structured educational pathways, the programs have aligned with our goal of developing a skilled clinical research workforce.
- Offered Career Opportunities: Introduced research as a viable career option to students who might otherwise overlook it, broadening their career prospects and contributing to the field of clinical research.

2. Goals

- Increase Awareness: Introduce health science students to clinical research careers.
- Skill Development: Equip students with essential clinical research skills.
- Talent Pool: Create a scalable pool of talented students geared towards research-based career opportunities.
- Community Engagement: Strengthen relationships between Moffitt Cancer Center, Hillsborough Community college, and the local community.

3. Solutions and Methods

- Curriculum Development:
 - Program Design: Designed a comprehensive curriculum for a one-year certificate and a two-year AS degree in Clinical Research.
 - Subject Selection: Handpicked subjects to ensure a well-rounded education that covers both theoretical knowledge and practical skills.
 - Continuous Evaluation: Regularly reviewed and updated the curriculum to ensure it remains relevant and effective.
- Professional Development:

Category: Training, Career Development, and Staff Retention – Work in Progress

- Workshops: Conducted annual workshops focused on resume writing, interview skills, and professional etiquette.
- Community Engagement:
 - Research Spotlight Events: Organized events to raise awareness about clinical research careers. These events included presentations, panel discussions, and networking opportunities with professionals in the field.
- Hands-on Practicum:
 - Site Visits: Arranged for students to visit the Cancer Center, where they could observe and interact with various research roles.
 - Role Shadowing: Provided opportunities for students to shadow professionals in different research roles.
- Scholarship Opportunities:
 - Donor Funding: Secured donor funding to establish a scholarship program for economically disadvantaged students.

4. Outcomes

- Increased Enrollment: Rising enrollment numbers each year have been a testament to the program's success.
- Successful Hires: Several program graduates hired by the Cancer Center.
- Enhanced Skills: Students gained practical experience and improved job readiness.

5. Learned and Future Directions

- Continuous Improvement: Regularly refine the curriculum to meet industry needs.
- Sustained Engagement: Maintain strong partnerships with the college and community.
- Expansion: Explore opportunities to expand the program to other institutions.
- Long-term Impact: Monitor graduates' career trajectories to assess program effectiveness

Figure

