

AMPLIFIED: Enhancing Workforce Readiness in Research through Professional Development

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1. Background

Underrepresentation in clinical research has long been a barrier to both robust and competent workforce and improved health outcomes for all. Researchers face limited access to mentorship, professional development, and networking opportunities. Additionally, mistrust and misinformation surrounding research contributes to limited participation. To address these challenges, A.U.R.A. was established at the University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC) as an affinity group dedicated to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment for ALL researchers. A.U.R.A. rebranded to focus on professional development and was renamed to AMPLIFIED in January of 2025 following an administration change and its requirements for research staff.

2. Goals

The goal of AMPLIFIED is to amplify research for all by focusing on the professional development of our researchers and staff by providing meaningful leadership training, professional development, support and mentorship. AMPLIFIED offers a welcoming space to support and uplift one another by advocating for university training and education programs to engage and support all staff that will directly affect the patient populations in more areas. The work we do will also address fears, mistrust, and misinformation about research participation to open the door for more patient participation.

3. Solutions and Methods

AMPLIFIED implemented a multi-faceted approach that includes educational events in both virtual and in-person forums featuring expert panels, skills workshops, networking and career development resources, and quarterly in-person events.

We hosted sessions on knowing your Clifton Strengths to foster better teamwork, navigating cultural differences in the workplace, inclusive language in research, building a representative workforce, continuing education offerings on campus, educating high school and college students about careers in research, leveraging the power of allies, and we heard personal stories from patients that have participated in research studies.

4. Outcomes

Based on member feedback, AMPLIFIED has helped staff feel more connected through collaborations, networking and combined efforts to better reach our patient population. Staff feel like they have a place to voice their needs and feel supported. Enhancing professional development opportunities leads to career progression for members, so our ultimate outcome would be more mentorship and leadership support, which will strengthen institutional efforts to improve research training programs, and create more targeted community engagement efforts, and improved awareness and understanding of research participation in all communities.

5. Learned and Future Directions

Key takeaways from AMPLIFIED's initiatives include the importance of sustained institutional support, the effectiveness of intentional mentorship, and the value of creating dedicated spaces for all researchers and staff. AMPLIFIED plans to expand by developing structured mentorship pipelines,

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increasing advocacy efforts for development, and strengthening community partnerships to improve research engagement and health outcomes.

A mentorship program, addressing affordability of continuing education and attending conferences, and providing more outreach efforts to increase research literacy and trust among all patient populations. These ongoing efforts of AMPLIFIED serves as a model for fostering an empowering research environment.