



INTRODUCTION:

Clinical research is essential to advancing cancer care, but the workforce behind these studies often lacks diversity and formal exposure pathways, especially in roles that are centered on clinical research coordination. Increasing access to training programs for underrepresented students is critical to building a more equitable, effective, and inclusive research infrastructure. To address this need, the University of Kansas Cancer Center launched the **Careers in Clinical Research (C-CLEAR)** Summer Experience. This paid, immersive internship introduces college students from underrepresented communities to the field of clinical oncology research.

BACKGROUND:

The clinical research workforce is the driving force behind every therapeutic breakthrough; however, despite their vital role in advancing cancer care, clinical research professionals—especially Clinical Research Coordinators (CRCs), seldom receive early exposure or structured career guidance. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed critical gaps in our research infrastructure, including a shortage of trained personnel and the underrepresentation of communities most affected by the disease. While many universities offer summer enrichment programs in basic sciences or pre-med tracks, few provide structured training in clinical research coordination. Recognizing this unmet need, the University of Kansas Cancer Center's Clinical Trials Office (KUCC-CTO) created the Careers in Clinical Research (C-CLEAR) Summer Experience—an innovative internship designed to increase access and equity in the clinical research workforce by training and mentoring college students from historically underrepresented communities.

PROGRAM GOALS:

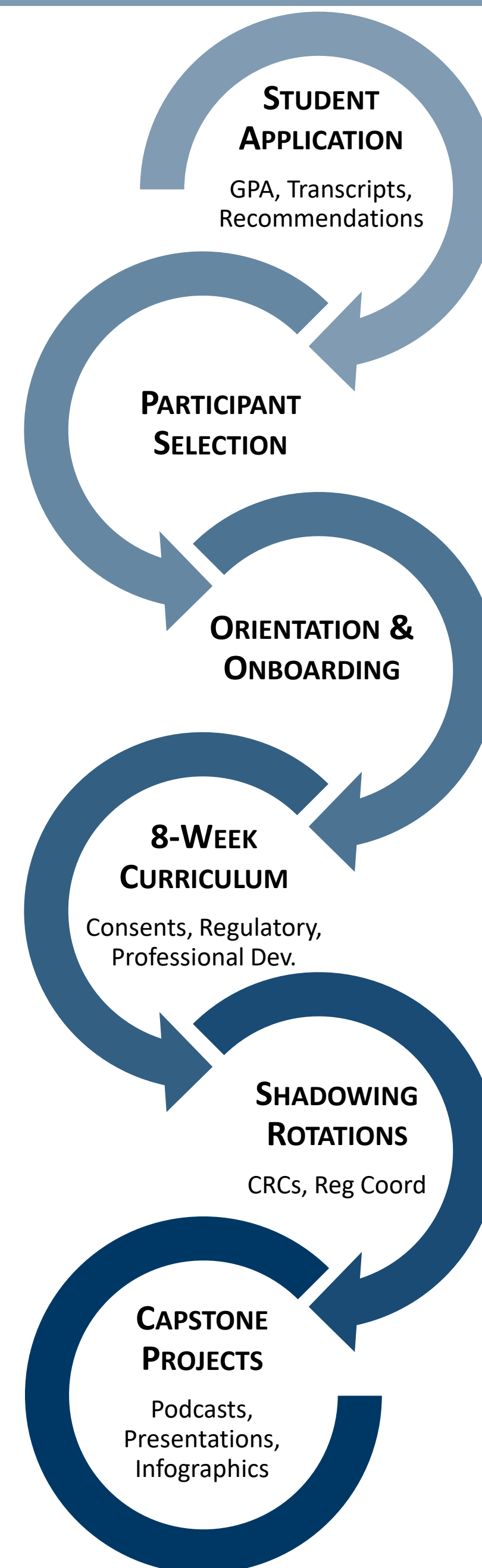
Primary Goal:

Introduce college students in KUCC's catchment area to oncology clinical research careers.

Secondary Goal:

Develop a diverse and qualified pipeline for entry-level clinical trial positions at KUCC-CTO.

C-CLEAR STUDENT PIPELINE: Empowering Future Research Professionals



Methods:

Curriculum Design:

The KUCC-CTO Training and Education Department created experiential learning modules covering:

- Informed Consent (drafting to delivery)
- Patient eligibility assessments
- Document processing & IRB submission
- Professional development

Recruitment Strategy:

In partnership with KUCC Communications and a local ad agency:

- Developed geofenced social media campaigns
- Ran ads in local publications
- Hosted info sessions for regional colleges

Applicant Requirements:

- Completed at least two years of college
- Minimum 3.0 GPA
- Application with transcript and recommendations

OUTCOMES:

The inaugural 2024 C-CLEAR cohort included three students selected from ten eligible applicants.

Accomplishments included:

- Completion of GCP Certification through CITI
- Development of three educational infographics
- Production of a podcast with the KUCC Phase 1 Medical Director
- Capstone presentations on program learnings

LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

Future efforts seek to collaborate with more faculty members to showcase innovative technology in oncology, enhance community engagement, and strengthen ties with sponsor partners.

This initiative will provide students with the chance to expand their knowledge of the site-sponsor dynamic. Subsequent versions will focus on increasing participation and better-aligning student training with workforce preparedness in cancer research.