



NKU | Institute for
Health Innovation

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

BETTER HEALTH FOR KENTUCKY **TOGETHER**

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am proud to share our 2024-2025 Annual Report reflecting on our seventh year of the Institute for Health Innovation at Northern Kentucky University. Here are a few highlights:

We had over \$9 million in active grants and contracts, which we used to:

- complete the construction for the Grant County Rural Nurse Program,
- support health-related regional entrepreneurs in achieving their dreams,
- improve healthcare availability for underserved populations,
- increase the reach of our K-12 pipeline programs.

Our impact in the region and across the Commonwealth has been significant. Here are a few highlights.

Since starting the on-line certification program for Kentucky Adult Peer Support Specialists program in 2019, we have certified 1,149 students from around the Commonwealth to serve as peer supports for those struggling with substance misuse or mental health issues. This makes us the second largest provider of peer support certification in Kentucky!

We also offer free continuing education units (CEUs) for Kentucky Peer Supports through NKU's Community Connections program. Over 2,500 peer supports from around the Commonwealth have participated in this program.

In the past four years, over 250 NKU students in Human Resources and Addictions, Counseling, and Social Work who are committed to working with underserved populations after they graduate have received more than \$1.7 million through our federally funded scholarship and stipend programs.

We brought more than 2,500 students interesting the health-related majors to campus and supported NKU student groups in offering more than 25 health-related programs that reached more than 2,500 participants.

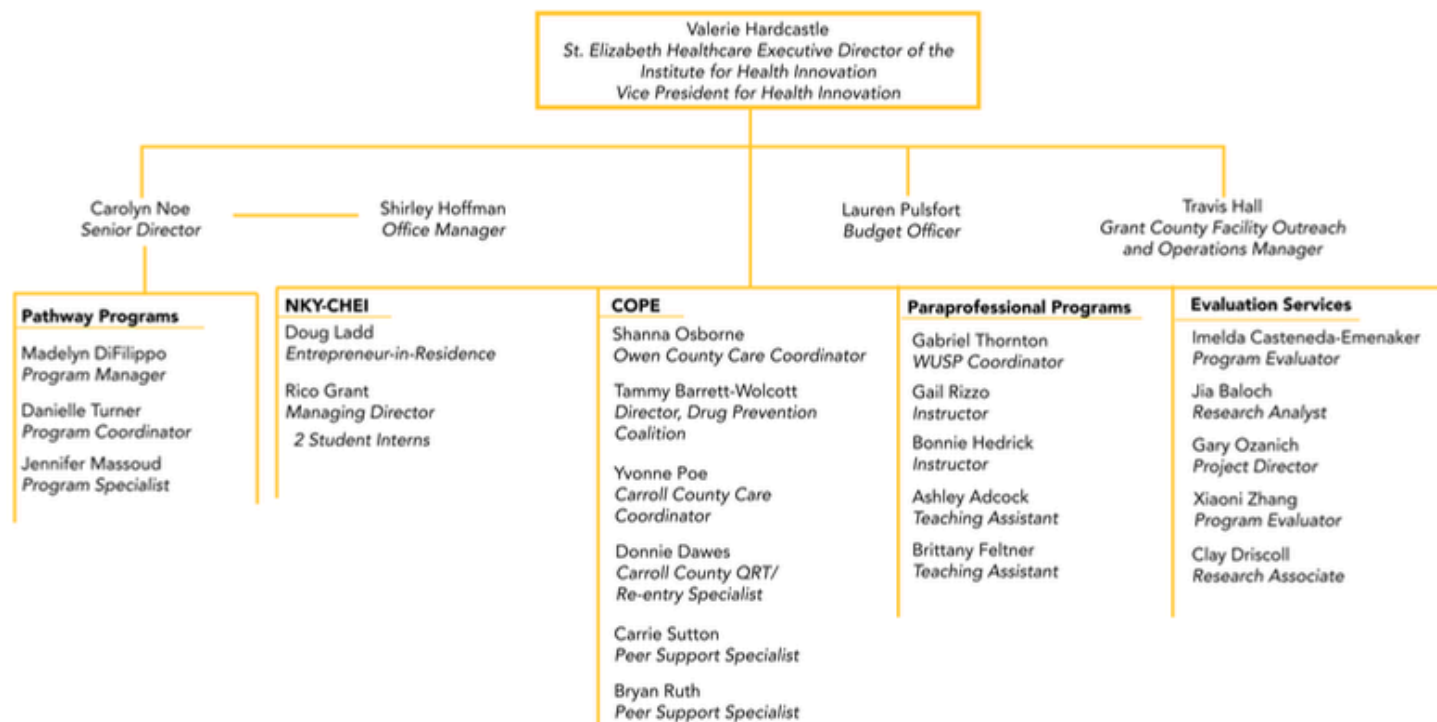
I wish to thank all our many community partners and supporters. I know I speak for all of us at the IHI when I say that the tremendous support we have received from everyone around us does more than make our work possible; it makes it uplifting, rewarding, exciting, and meaningful. The IHI team simply could not do what it does without the community coming together to collaborate with us. We thank you. And I look forward to everything we will be doing next year!

Sincerely,
Valerie Gray Hardcastle

IHI IS DRIVING CHANGE

The Institute for Health Innovation (IHI) at NKU pioneers solutions to the health challenges facing Northern Kentucky. We drive change that directly addresses urgent unmet health needs.

WHO WE ARE



WHAT WE DO

GROWING THE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

- Advancing Entrepreneurship
- Expanding Faculty Innovation
- Advancing Biomedical Innovation

SUPPORTING FUTURE HEALTH LEADERS

- Adopt A Class Partnership & Award
- PK-12 Pathway Programs
- Norse Scrubs Camp
- Directing Camp Norse

IMPROVING HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

- Growing Behavioral Healthcare Capacity
- Grant County Nurse Program
- Medicaid Evaluation Team
- Improving NKU's Support Team
- NEW: Kentucky Department for Community-Based Services Training Program

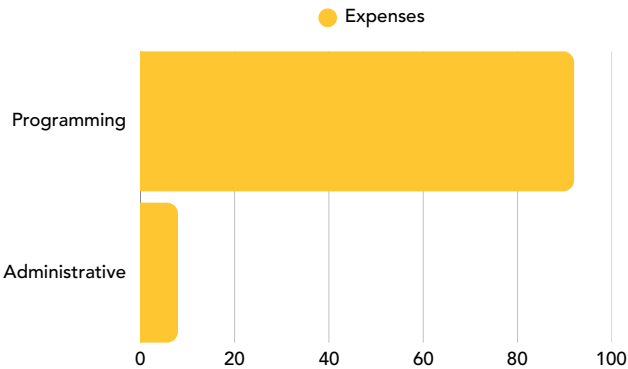
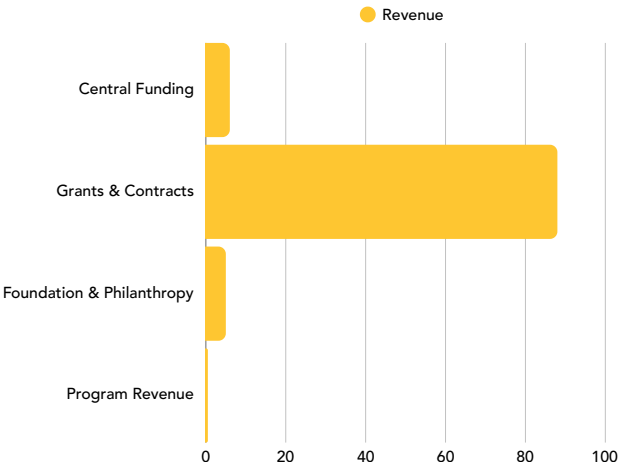
FINANCIALS

ACTIVE GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

Program	Grant Amount
EDA University Center grant	\$1,096,178
HRSA Community Health Worker Training Program	\$2,876,377
HRSA OIFSP	\$2,234,268
HRSA Rural Communities Opioid Response CC Implementation	\$1,000,000
Interact for Health	\$12,242
JCOIN	\$109,728
Kentucky 1115 Medicaid Waiver Demonstration Project Evaluation	\$797,752
Kentucky Council for Postsecondary Education Summer Bridge Program	\$56,000
Kentucky Health Worker Collaborative	\$599,999
Kentucky Historical Society	\$10,000
Kentucky SUP25	\$138,377
Learning Links (Greater Cincinnati Foundation)	\$2,500
RealWorks/Dynamicare	\$41,039
USDA Telehealth and Telemedicine	\$210,210

REVENUE AND EXPENSES FY 24

Revenue	
Foundation & Philanthropy	\$165,771
Grants & Contracts	\$3,145,309
Central Funding	\$234,536
Program Revenue	\$19,151
Total Revenue	\$3,564,767
Expenses	
Total Expenses	\$2,779,244
Net Income	\$785,523



DONORS

The Institute's programs are made possible by the generous support of these donors:

THE DURR FOUNDATION
EVA & OAKLEY FARRIS
THE GREATER CINCINNATI FOUNDATION
HERITAGE BANK
RAMI LEVENTHAL
ST. ELIZABETH HEALTHCARE

GROWING THE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

ADVANCING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Our initiatives in health care innovation aim to support and attract companies, jobs, and talent in the health innovation sector to Northern Kentucky. They stimulate and help commercialize health innovation by aligning our top economic development, healthcare, university, and startup assets. Over the past year, we have assisted over 42 regional startups in raising over \$30 million in capital investments. SoCap Accelerate, our pre-Series A accelerator for health-related companies, successfully graduated their ninth and tenth cohorts.

The January Demo Day featured:

- Trestle: Trestle uses AI-automation to help you accurately qualify trade-partners and vendors in seconds, not weeks.
- Our Harvest: Our Harvest Co-op is a worker-and community-owned farm and food-hub co-op that creates access to healthy, local food in a way that honors land and labor.
- Cheekos: Giving caregivers the power to increase mobility for patients, decreasing the possibilities of injuries to caregivers by combining a power chair and lifting device.

EXPANDING FACULTY INNOVATION

Each year we provide grant funding to NKU Faculty Fellows projects.

Projects:

- Lauren Williamson, The Effects of Early-life Acetaminophen on Neuroinflammation and Cognitive Function
- Doug Krull & Ty Brumback, Psychological, Behavioral, and Physical Health Correlates of Religious Doubt

MEDIA COVERAGE

Startup accelerator SoCap readies to showcase eighth cohort

<https://www.bizjournals.com/cincinnati/inno/stories/news/2024/05/08/kentucky-healthcare-new-company-socap-innovation.html>

Covington Life Sciences Partners innovates research and development

<https://linknky.com/business/sponsored/2025/01/14/covington-life-sciences-partners-innovation/>



Ribbon cutting at LifeSciKY

ADVANCING BIOMEDICAL INNOVATION

LifeSciKY is a lab incubator accelerating science, entrepreneurship, education and economic development. From affordable lab space and state-of-the-art equipment to collaborative partnerships and networking opportunities, LifeSciKY empowers innovators with the critical resources and connections they need to bring their work to life.

Valerie Hardcastle has been part of the development team for this incubator and now serves on its board.

IMPROVING HEALTH

GROWING BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE CAPACITY

With NIH funding, and in partnership with Gateway Community and Technical College, students majoring or minoring in Human Services and Addictions, Social Work, or Counseling, receive scholarships, stipends for field placement, and apprenticeship sponsorship. Through this initiative, we supported 346 students and dispensed over \$1.7 million in funding.

In 2024-2025, we certified 260 trainees as Kentucky Adult Peer Support Specialists from around the Commonwealth to serve as peer supports for those struggling with substance misuse.

We also have expanded our continuing education units (CEUs) for Kentucky Certified Peer Support Specialists through NKU's Community Connections program. New modules include

- Substance Use and Family Impacts
- Prevention Approaches for Substance Use in Families
- Opioid Use, Stigma, and Social Connection
- Harm Reduction
- Cultural Competence

This year, we provided additional training to over 2,000 current healthcare paraprofessionals in the Commonwealth.

Publication: Zhang, X., Hardcastle, V.G., Ozanich, G., and Ho, T. (forthcoming) "Potential Impact of Peer Support Service on SUD Treatment Engagement Following ED Visits Among Kentucky Medicaid Enrollees," *Journal of Substance Use and Addiction Treatment*.



GRANT COUNTY NURSE PROGRAM

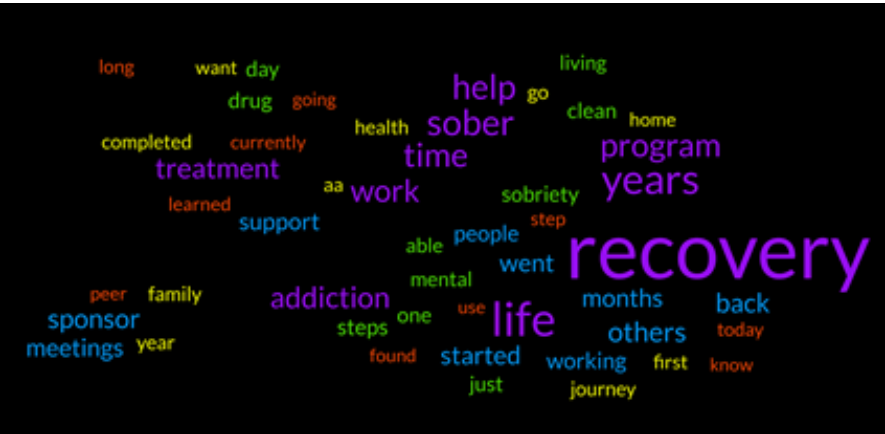
Construction for the skills lab and health assessment lab is now completed for the NKU Grant County Rural Nurse Program, focused on expanding the healthcare workforce in the region's rural counties! The NKU Grant County facility hosted an Open House on April 29th for the new program. Students, university partners, and community partners toured our newly renovated spaces.



INFRASTRUCTURE

MEDICAID EVALUATION TEAM

The Medicaid evaluation team completed the nation’s first statewide analysis of peer support contributions to recovery from Substance Use Disorder. This comprehensive evaluation provided compelling evidence that Kentucky’s peer support services significantly improve treatment outcomes for individuals with substance use disorders and is a cost-effective intervention.



IMPROVING NKU’S SUPPORT SYSTEM

In its second year of funding from Interact for Health’s Amplifying Youth Voice in Mental Health grant, NKU student organizations for planned their own mental health programming. Groups hosted 10 events ranging from a mocktail party to a 900+ attendee entrepreneurship showcase.



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES TRAINING PROGRAM **NEW**

The IHI was selected as one of three university partners in delivering workforce and professional training for the Kentucky Department for Community-Based Services, an agency in the Cabinet that provides family support and child and adult protection services. Together with other institutions in the Community Learning Network we provide workforce training system for DCBS employees and foster parents, kinship caregivers and community partners. We will receive \$2 million annually to implement training for the front-line workers in Family Support Services and in Protection and Permanency across seventeen counties in the northern Kentucky region.



SUPPORTING FUTURE

ADOPT A CLASS PARTNERSHIP & AWARD

This year began a partnership program with Adopt A Class to introduce 8th grade students to opportunities at NKU. Students participated in breakout sessions with NKU faculty and ate lunch in our dining hall for an authentic college experience. We were honored to be named Best Program Partner at the 2025 Adopt A Class Celebration Breakfast. We're proud to support the AAC mission and celebrate the power of mentorship alongside so many incredible partners and volunteers.



PK-12 PATHWAY PROGRAMS

The IHI's P-12 Pathway Programs Hub introduces P-12 students the Greater Cincinnati region to opportunities in higher education (especially at NKU) through a variety of programs at every age level.

We also help NKU faculty connect with the community by participating in existing activities or assisting them in developing new programs.

**390
students**

Middle School Field Trips **NEW**

A series of free, fun events for high school students to talk with local scientists and NKU Faculty about current cutting-edge ideas in health, science, and technology over refreshments.

**823
students**

Cadaver Lab Experience Field Trips

High school students visit the prosectorium and gain hands-on experience with human anatomy and physiology.

5% increase

**25
students**

Norse Scrubs Camp **NEW**

High school students from rural areas who participated in a week of overnight camp to learn about health careers.

8th grade students explore filmmaking career paths.



**447
students**

Discovery Kits

Provides elementary school teachers with interactive and fun lesson plans, corresponding activities and materials for students to learn about in-demand careers.

**90
Girl Scouts**

Girl Scouts Doctor for a Day

The Girls Scouts of Kentucky's Wilderness Road visit medical labs and take a look at healthcare and medical professions.

**773
students**

Northern Kentucky Health Career Showcase

Our second year of hosting the Northern KY Health Career Showcase in partnership with the North Central Area Health Education Center.

68% increase

**18
students**

Family Flex Sessions **NEW**

Family Flex Sessions were one-day programs offered in the summer of 2024 to allow middle and high school students to explore careers while their parents could work in a co-working space.

LEADERS

NORSE SCRUBS CAMP

We offered a one-week overnight summer camp to students interested in healthcare careers. Coming primarily from rural Northern Kentucky, attendees participated in on-campus sessions on nursing, social work, human services, occupational therapy, respiratory therapy, neuroscience, and medicine.

Healthcare partners from the community both visited the students on campus and invited them into the field for tours and shadowing opportunities. All students became CPR & AED certified as part of this program as well.



Media Coverage

CPE awards over \$500k for healthcare summer bridge programs
<https://cpe.ky.gov/news/stories/cpe-awards-healthcare-summer-bridge-grants.html>

CAMP NORSE

We introduced Camp Norse, a summer day camp for 115 students in grades 2-6. Camp Norse introduced in-demand careers and gave campers a taste of college life.

Media Coverage

Find an NKY summer camp before it's too late
<https://linknky.com/culture/2025/03/26/nky-summer-camps-fun-for-every-kid/>



Students met a real Viking during Vikings & Valkyries camp.*

**This real Viking is a reenactor whose ancestral roots lie in historically Viking countries.*



Institute for Health Innovation

nku.edu/ihi

Stay Connected



@nkuihi

**TOGETHER, WE CAN ACHIEVE BETTER HEALTH FOR KENTUCKY. TO
GET INVOLVED OR MAKE A CONTRIBUTION, CALL 859-572-5980.**