

Honorary Health Professions Alumna

Kealia (Kay) Folck, MHA, RHIA

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For more than 40 years, Kealia Folck has been at the forefront of the field of health information management (HIM).

After graduating from Texas Woman's University in 1975, Folck became the director of the HIM department at a Fort Worth hospital where she implemented the first word processing system in the United States. While a far cry from today's technology, it beat typewriters in speed and accuracy while shifting the transcription of medical records to an electronic platform.

Folck then worked for a physicians' group, where she helped install software and caught the technology bug. As the HIM director at a pediatric hospital, she helped implement a hospital-wide computer system and initiate the prospective payment system for Medicaid claims—no small feat. In 1990, she became president of the Texas Health Information Management Association.

Folck came to Kansas City in 1995 to take a job at Cerner Corporation; while there she convinced management of the value of providing electronic health record (EHR) technology to HIM academic programs across the country. The resulting collaboration was the genesis of the American Health Information Management Association's (AHIMA's) Virtual Lab. Folck then created one of the first EHR learning labs. "It was a wonderful opportunity to be on the front lines of helping prepare the next generation of HIM professionals," she remembered.

Also in Kansas City, life happened: Folck married and had a little girl. Wanting more family time, she decided to teach, first at Metropolitan Community College's Penn Valley campus and then at Missouri Western State University. In 2012, she was named Outstanding Educator of the Year by the Missouri Health Information Management Association.

In 2014, she began teaching at the University of Kansas Medical Center, where she is a beloved professor. "Kay Folck is incredibly deserving of this award as her mentorship cannot be matched," wrote former student Kaitlyn Brown, one of her nominators. "She gives her heart and soul to her students, her peers and the HIM community."

Along the way, she earned a master's degree in healthcare administration from Park University. She credits her husband and daughter: "The time commitment was horrific, yet they remained patient and supportive throughout."

Folck's passion for mentorship received national recognition in 2018 when she was selected for AHIMA's Triumph Mentor Award.

For advancing the field of health information management and nurturing learners to be thinkers, the KU Health Professions Alumni Association is proud to present the Honorary Health Professions Alumna Award to Kealia (Kay) Folck, MHA, RHIA.