

Fall 2011

McNair Messenger- Fall 2011

McNair Staff

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McNair Scholar Lynda Gibson Delivers Commencement Address

At the May 7th 2011 graduation ceremony held at Northeastern Illinois University, McNair Scholar **Lynda Gibson** delivered the commencement speech to NEIU graduates, family members, faculty, staff and friends. Lynda, who that



day received her B.A. in Psychology with summa cum laude honors, described how she was inspired at a young age by Robert Frost's poem *A Road Not Taken*, she mapped out her own path, one that had not been taken by any

of her family members before her.

This path led her to the Psychology Department at NEIU, where she met her mentor: **Dr. Saba Ayman-Nolley** and **Dr. David Farmer**.

McNair Scholars Meet with State Representative

On September 27, 2011, Scholars **Resney Gugwor** and **Latrese Monden** attended a meeting with 17th District Ill. State Representative, **Daniel Biss**. The event began with personal introductions, and expanded into a full group discussion in which the Scholars expounded on the role of the McNair Program in helping with their future career and research aspirations.

Latrese describes the experience as, "A great opportunity to engage with a state legislator as well as our NEIU academic leadership. It was an exciting and overall personally rewarding experience that I will always cherish."



From left: **Resney Gugwor**, State Rep. **Daniel Biss**, **Latrese Monden** and **Dr. Sharon Hass**, President of NEIU.

Lynda spoke of the impact of having an African-American role model and mentor in Dr. Farmer, someone who had already traveled the path she planned to take. She described how her mentors, the McNair Program, and the support of her friends and family helped her overcome the many obstacles she faced as an African-American single parent. She recalled the many late nights during her college years when she balanced both her laptop and her infant daughter on her knees as she completed assignments.

Lynda concluded her commencement address with: "Years ago, standing at a crossroads, a decision had to be made on the path that I would take. In choosing to travel this road I accepted that there would be challenges, I acknowledged that there would be good times and bad—but most importantly, I promised myself that if indeed this was the road that I wanted to travel, then I would finish the course."

This fall, Lynda began her studies in the Ph.D. Program in Clinical Psychology at the Illinois Institute of Technology.

McNair Scholars Awarded

As part of Latino Heritage Month, *Noche de la familia* was held Thursday, October 27. During this evening event, four McNair Scholars were recognized by the Latino Heritage Committee with the Student Recognition Award for Academic Achievement and Leadership.

Diana Hernandez, **Daniel Olavarria**, **Ana Karen Gaytan** and **Pearl Martinez** were awarded in the student category that recognized their academic excellence in their respective majors as well as their service to the NEIU community and communities beyond NEIU. Other categories for awards of excellence were business, community leadership, education and fine arts.

Noche de la familia featured dance performance and live music. This ceremony takes place every year to honor those who made significant contributions to Northeastern Illinois University and to celebrate Latino students, faculty and staff.



Diana Hernandez with her award at *Noche de la familia*

New Staff Members in McNair Office

Carlos Ospina is the new McNair Academic Skills Specialist. Carlos holds a BA in Communication and Journalism from Universidad de La Sabana and an MA in Marketing Management from Universidad Javeriana. Last August he received a second MA from NEIU in Latin-American Literature. Carlos has worked as a graduate assistant at El Centro-Campus and in the MSTQE program.

Delilah McDonald serves as McNair Program Graduate Assistant. Delilah holds a bachelor's of History from Northeastern Illinois University, and is pursuing a master's degree in Inner City Studies. A graduate of the NEIU McNair Scholars Program, Delilah understands the important role that TRIO programs play in the academic success of low-income and first generation college students.

Graduate School Visits

During the month of July, McNair Scholars visited graduate programs at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Loyola University, and DePaul University. The purpose of the visits was to introduce Scholars to faculty and provide insight regarding the application process at each institution. At UIC, the Scholars met with **Dr. Aixa Alfonso**, Associate Professor of Biological Sciences and Visiting Associate Dean of the Graduate College. Recruitment Coordinator **Francisco Piña** organized the visit which included conversations with **Edward Potts**, Director of Admissions and Financial Aid in the UIC Jane Addams School of Social Work, and NEIU McNair alumnus **Keith Atterberry**, Ph.D. student in Criminal Justice, along with other UIC Ph.D. students.

When the Scholars visited Loyola University's Graduate School, they met with **Marcela Gallegos**, Events and Outreach Coordinator, followed by individual meetings with faculty from academic departments of the Scholars' interests. At the conclusion of the visit, McNair Program Director **Dr. Kim Sanborn** provided a tour of the Ralph Arnold Art Annex, which houses sculpture, ceramics and dance studios. Dr. Sanborn, an instructor in the Loyola University Fine Arts Department, showed Scholars Loyola's state of the art kiln room and gave a brief overview of ceramics technology.

At DePaul University, Scholars toured the campus, attended presentations about the application process, and had individual meetings with faculty and graduate students in their disciplines.

On the Ph.D. Track

Eighteen McNair Scholars are currently enrolled in Ph.D. programs in several institutions across the nation and in Canada:

Lynda Gibson ('10) Clinical Psychology at the Illinois Institute of Technology

Jeremy Dolan ('09) Philosophy at New York University

Keith Atterberry ('09) Criminal Justice at the University of Illinois at Chicago

Nereida Salas ('09) Political Science at the University of Illinois Chicago

Brett Coleman ('09) Community Psychology at the University of Illinois Chicago

Melissa Anderson ('07) Microbiology, Immunology and Infectious Disease at the University of Virginia

Loren Henderson ('06) Sociology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Max Marin ('04) MD/Ph.D. At the University of Iowa

Elizabeth Rodriguez ('09) English at Northwestern University

Abel Arango ('05) Spanish Literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Michael Magee ('04) Higher Education at the University of South Florida

Christine Leone ('05) Social Work at the University of Chicago

Lina Sweiss ('05) Human Development, Learning, and Culture at the University of British Columbia

Eileen Rollerson ('04) Sociology at Loyola University

Kemyta Terry ('05) Political Science, at Howard University,

Jorge Ortiz ('10) Sociology at University of Illinois at Chicago

Maria Chavez ('09) Philosophy at the State University of New York, Binghamton

Nicholas Owen ('07) Philosophy at University of Madison, Wisconsin

Recent Master's Degree Recipients

Four McNair scholars have recently earned their master's degrees in a variety of disciplines. **Emilio Caban** finished his master's degree in Sociology at Ball State University in May of 2011. **Tracy Navarro** completed dual master's degrees in Latin American Studies and Cultural Studies in Education, both obtained from Ohio University in June of 2011. **Gwendolyn Austin** earned her Master's of Science in Criminal Justice from Lewis University this year as well. **Diane Madison** graduated from Northeastern Illinois University with a Master's in Communication, Media, and Theatre in December of 2010, and hopes to begin a Ph.D. program soon.

December 2010 and May 2011 Grads in Graduate Programs

McNair Scholar	University
Adelf Alvarado	NEIU, Chemistry, M.A.
Angela Howard	Elmhurst College, Psychology, M.A.
Brandi Williams	Syracuse University, Pan African Studies, M.A.
Crispien Van Aelst	NEIU, History, M.A.
Julia Gutierrez	University of Wisconsin-Madison, Gender and Women's Studies, M.A.
Lakeesha Harris	NEIU, Political Science, M.A.
Lynda Gibson	IIT, Clinical Psychology, Ph.D.
Pearl Martinez	NEIU, Reading, M.A.
Ramon Viera	University of Chicago, MAPPS, M.A.
Sheenita Robinson	NEIU, Inner City Studies, M.A.

Summer Research Projects

Seven McNair Scholars conducted research projects during the annual McNair Summer Research Program at NEIU. Paired with faculty mentors of their choice, these Scholars developed original research relative to their academic disciplines. In support of their diligence and commitment to excellence in research, all Scholars received a stipend of approximately twenty-eight hundred dollars. Listed below are the Scholars, the titles of their research projects and their faculty mentors:

Shawnice Reid

Title: *An Assessment of Self Esteem and Self Identity among African American College Students: Implications for Academic Success*
Mentor: Job Ngwe, Ph.D.

Janean Watkins

Title: *The Historical and Modern Impact of Racism in News Media and How it Perpetuates Oppression against People of Color*
Mentor: Olivia Perlow, Ph.D.

Eddie Barraza

Title: *Voice and Facial Attractiveness in Sexual Encounters*
Mentor: Maureen Erber, Ph.D.

Daniel Olavarria

Title: *Mexican and Latino Immigrant College Student Survey*
Mentor: Francisco Gaytan, Ph.D.

Ana Karen Gaytan

Title: *Men and Masculinities: Attitudes toward Machismo Held by Latino and Caucasian Ethnicities*
Mentor: Amanda Dykema-Engblade, Ph.D.

Perla Lopez

Title: *Exploring the Relationship between Stress in Immigrant Latino Parents and their use of Different Parenting Strategies*
Mentor: Francisco Gaytan, Ph.D.

Bilal Hussein

Title: *Unveiling "The Veil": Identification among American Muslim Women in the U.S.*
Mentor: Barbara Sherry, J.D.

As part of the eight week summer research session, Scholars also began the process of researching graduate programs and developing their statements of purpose.

UIC SRP

During the past summer, four McNair Scholars were selected among hundreds of applicants to participate in the University of Illinois Chicago Summer Research Opportunity Program known as SRP. **Jeremy Carter, Resney Gugwor, Eugene Slaughter, and Diana Hernandez** all benefited from the guidance of UIC faculty mentors, GRE preparation and workshops, as well as the opportunity to attend research conferences in July.

Eugene Slaughter

Title: *Race as a Risk Factor for Homelessness among Female Veterans*
Mentor: Susan Phillips, Ph.D.

Resney Gugwor

Title: *Assessing the Evaluation Capacity of a Community Based Organization*
Mentor: Yolanda Suarez-Balcázar, Ph.D.

Jeremy Carter

Title: *The Impact of Absentee African American Fathers on the Academic Achievement of their Children*
Mentor: Susan Phillips, Ph.D.

Diana Hernandez

Title: *Differences in Processing Content and Function Words in Spanish: A Focus on Adjectives*
Mentors: Kara-Morgan Short, Ph.D. and Laura Bartlett, Teaching Assistant.

Northwestern SRP

Theodora Koumoutsakis participated in Northwestern University's Summer Research Opportunity Program. The title of Theodora's research is *The Effects of Retrieval Practice on Memorizing Object-Location Associations One Week Later*. She was mentored by **Ken Taller, Ph.D.** As part of her summer experience she also served as a research assistant on a related study. "I get to see what a good student is like, and now I feel more prepared for Graduate School."

Summer Research Conferences

McNair Scholars **Lynda Gibson, Ramon Viera, and Resney Gugwor** all attended out-of-state research conferences this past summer. Lynda Gibson presented her research *Family Functioning and Behavior Problems* with her mentor, **Dr. David Farmer**, at the Association for Psychological Science Conference in Washington, D.C. The project identified correlations between poor family functioning and behavioral issues in children. Resney and Ramon presented their research *Autistic Children's Graphic Portrayal of Friendship* with their mentor, **Dr. Saba Ayman-Nolley** at the annual meeting of the Jean Piaget Society held in Berkeley, California.

Annual Dinner

On May 5, 2011, Scholars, family, and friends gathered for the 8th Annual McNair Dinner. **Dr. Janet Fredericks**, Dean of the Graduate College and Director of International Programs, welcomed Scholars and guests.



Dr. Kim Sanborn, Program Director, delivered a report on the program and **Dr. David Farmer**, Associate Professor of Psychology, and **Dr. Gabriel Cortez**, Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership, each provided Mentor's comments. Guests were treated to Scholar **Lakeesha Harris'** reading of the poem *To Be of Use*, and NEIU McNair alumnus Gerald Chaney sang *Believe in Yourself*.

After dinner, new Scholars were formally welcomed to the program by Dr. Sanborn and **Alejandra Prieto-Mendoza**, McNair Academic Skills Specialist.

Scholars **Latrese Monden, Brandi Williams, Resney Gugwor, Pearl Martinez**, and Julia Gutierrez each provided advice and insights for the new Scholars. **Ms. Janet Sandoval**, Director of Non-Traditional Degree Programs, and McNair Graduate Assistant **Cornelius Williams** presented McNair stoles to graduating Scholars.

TRIO NEWS

Congress introduced its final agreement for the FY 2012 appropriations, which includes a \$13.4 million increase for TRIO over last year's appropriation (\$826.5 million), for a total funding level of \$839.9 million. Congress did not fully embrace the \$920.1 million (8%) increase recommended by President Obama. However, this bill will provide funding for approximately 40 Upward Bound and McNair programs that otherwise would have been lost next year. President Obama made TRIO a priority in his fiscal 2012 budget request, and recently both Republicans and Democrats recognized this fact. Their actions also suggest that federal policymakers---as a consequence of increasing numbers of low-income and first generation students enrolling in college--- are beginning to appreciate the importance and necessity of "supportive services in postsecondary education. There is, for example, mounting evidence, especially from work being completed by the Pell Institute, that supportive services are essential if our colleges and universities are to improve the graduation rates of low-income students, particularly those from minority backgrounds. The Council for Opportunity in Education acknowledged the strong support of allies in the House of Representatives, who fought hard to achieve increased funding.

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