

Fall 2012

McNair Messenger- Fall 2012

McNair Staff

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Words from the Director...



Eileen Rollerson, Ph.D.

Few will argue that the economy has put most of us in some type of precarious situation. Many of us are watching our spending, have had to apply for loans to continue our education because financial aid was cut, or we have had to go on job searches due to losing our jobs. Some have experienced adjustments or loss due to local, state, or federal cutbacks. Education has not been exempt from such difficulties. The federal government cut the McNair Scholars Programs budget by \$10 million dollars, which resulted in about a third of the McNair Programs around the country not receiving funding. That means that hundreds of students will not have the opportunity to participate in this great program that prepares under-represented students for graduate study. As a former NEIU McNair Scholar (2004), and current acting director of NEIU's

McNair Scholars Program, I am committed to our local program and students as well as other programs. On a personal note, I had not entertained the thought of attending graduate school before becoming a McNair Scholar. This was partly because I never knew that graduate school was an option for me. Seven years and a B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. later, I am an example that the McNair Scholars Programs are indeed worthwhile investments for this country.

We are excited that NEIU's McNair Scholars Program has received funding for the next five years, which ensures that qualifying NEIU students will be able to take advantage of the services, benefits, and staff that the program offers.

While we rejoice in our success, we are also mindful of the programs that did not receive funding and the hundreds of students who will not have access to graduate school because of budget cuts. My appeal to everyone who reads this newsletter, especially students who have benefitted from McNair Scholars Programs or any of the TRiO Programs is to get involved so that these vital programs will remain in place to assist underrepresented students in their educational endeavors. Sometimes all it takes is a call or letter to your state representatives or legislators. A few minutes of your time well spent.

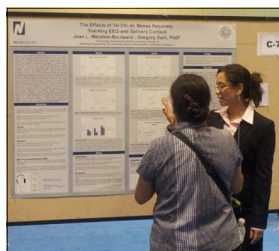
Caravan for Peace

On August 12, a group of activists led by Poet and Peace Leader Javier Sicilia from Mexico entered the United States with hopes of bringing recognition to the War on Drugs and how both the United States and Mexico are affected by government corruption, death, and disappearances. The growing violence that is transpiring in Mexico has left a trail of pain and tears to the family members who have been directly affected by this series of terror.

The grassroots organization, Autonomous University of Social Movements, Sociology Club, and Foreign Language and Literature Departments of NEIU sponsored the event. The activists made an appearance at NEIU, where they were able to talk about the actions they are taking in their own communities to promote peace, justice and dignity. McNair Scholars, Jorge Montiel, student of Foreign Languages and Literatures Department, Alexis Dennis, co-chair of Sociology Club, and Peggy Valdes, member of Autonomous University of Social Movements showed their support for the Caravan for Peace.



Scholars (left to right) Jorge Montiel, Peggy Valdes and Alexis Dennis.



Scholar Jean Matelski at APA Annual Convention in Florida.

"I recently had the honor of presenting a poster on my research looking at the effects of Tai Chi on stress recovery at the American Psychological Association's 120th annual convention. I am truly grateful for the support I had from a wide range of people at Northeastern. The McNair program really helped to motivate me in getting this poster submitted

for presentation. I remember clearly one day when Dr. Rollerson came to class and told us that after doing all the research that McNair requires us to do, we would not only be experts in the specific research, but we would also be excellent in research skills and techniques. She was so right! One of the strongest influences was McNair's belief in my ability to be able to get out there and do it (and do it well). Not only did I get support leading up to the conference from the McNair staff, but my fellow McNair scholars helped me all the way through the cumbersome process of creating and printing a poster. Scholars from my cohort helped me to edit the text and scholars from previous cohorts helped me to make the poster look professional and concise.

This convention was in Florida which meant I had a ways to travel so I spent flight time working on the McNair summer research project and on GRE math preparations. I thought I was doing ok with the thought of presenting in front of established professionals, until I walked up to the convention center. The nerves got a hold of me and I had to take a few minutes to think about Dr. Rollerson's words of confidence in all the McNair scholars before I could go in.

Amazingly, the presentation went rather smoothly. I had practiced some responses to some of the more predictable questions just as McNair taught us to do so the whole thing felt fairly simple. It was truly an amazing experience and I cannot thank you enough!

I hope this encourages others to really take some initiative and seize the opportunity to present at professional conference while they are still undergrads."

"One of the strongest influences was McNair's belief in my ability to be able to get out there and do it!"

Graduate School Visits

During the month of July, McNair Scholars visited graduate programs at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Loyola University, and Northwestern University. The purpose of the visits was to introduce Scholars to faculty and provide insight regarding the application process at each institution.



Scholars visiting U. of Loyola at Chicago.

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.

The Scholars also visited Loyola University's Graduate School, where they met with **Marcela Gallegos**, Events and Outreach Coordinator, followed by individual meetings with faculty from academic departments of the Scholars' interests. At Northwestern University, Scholars were received by **Mario Craigen**, coordinator of Multicultural Affairs. The Scholars toured the campus, attended presentations about application process, and had individual meetings with faculty and graduate students in their disciplines.

Scholars Activities

McNair Scholar, **Theodora Koumoutsakis** was among 500 students from across the country who presented the results of their year-long research studies during the University at Buffalo's 18th annual McNair Research Conference held July 19-21 in Niagara Falls, New York. Theodora presented her research *The Effects of Retrieval Practice on Memorizing Object-Location Associations One Week Later*. The venue is for undergraduate students to participate in various professional development experiences as they prepare to attend graduate school to earn a doctoral degree. Last year they hosted approximately 425 participants. This event offers a unique opportunity to promote your institution and recruit talented prospective graduate students for your programs.

NEIU's McNair Scholars Program Produces its first PhD

Dr. Eileen Rollerson is the first of NEIU's McNair Scholars to obtain a PhD. She is a mother, mentor, chaperone, teacher, support staff for at-risk youth since 1986, and Interim Project Director for Northeastern Illinois University's McNair Scholars Program. Since NEIU received the McNair grant more than 9 years ago, Dr. Rollerson has completed her Bachelor's degree from NEIU (2004), and her Master's degree (2007), and PhD (2012) from Loyola University Chicago in Sociology. Her research interests include urban policy, community based organizations, race and social justice studies, and community development. Her dedication to research and contributions to community organizations is apparent in her participation as volunteer with community organizations, coordinator and Planner for Youth Alive!, a program of Chicagoland Christian Women's Conference, since 1997, and workshop leader/conference speaker for many youth organizations. While at Loyola University, Dr. Rollerson was a research fellow and volunteer for the Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL). Her dissertation is entitled *Serving through Adversity: Community-Based Nonprofits Negotiating Race, Place, and a State Budget Crisis 2007-2011*. She is the first physical manifestation of success for NEIU's McNair family, and in honor of her success and ability to rise she will be held as a role model for all other McNair scholars who acquire a PhD thereafter.

Seventeen McNair Scholars are currently pursuing doctoral degree programs in several institutions across the nation.

Bilal Hussein (12')
Sociology at University of Loyola.

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

Jeremy Dolan (09')
Philosophy at New York University.

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

Keith Atterberry (08')
Criminal Justice at the University of

Illinois at Chicago.

Nereida Salas (08')
Political Science at the University of Illinois Chicago.

Brett Coleman (08')
Community Psychology at the University of Illinois Chicago.

Melissa Anderson (06')
Microbiology, Immunology and Infectious Disease at the University of Virginia.

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

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

Elizabeth Rodriguez (07')
English at Northwestern University.
Christine Leone (05')
Social Work at the University of Chicago.

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

Abel Arango (04')
Spanish Literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Maximo Marin (04')
MD/Ph.D. at the University of Iowa.

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

Lina Sweiss (04')
Human Development, Learning, and Culture at the University of British Columbia.

Summer Research Projects

Twelve scholars conducted research projects during the annual McNair Summer Research Program at NEIU. Paired with faculty mentors of their choice, these scholars developed original pieces of 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. Following are the scholars' research topics :

Kelly Webb: *Discrimination of Same-Sex couples in the adoption process.* **Mentor:** Milka Ramirez, Ph.D.

Peggy Valdes: *First Generation College Students: Mapping out the Road to Success.* **Mentor:** Brett Stockdill, Ph.D.

Robert Motley: *The Silent Statistics: A Study of African-American Males Who Decided to Return to College.* **Mentor:** Job Ngwe, Ph.D.

Jacqueline Meraz: *Structure-based engineering of novel infrared fluorescent proteins.* **Mentor:** Emina Stojkovic Ph.D.

Jorge Montiel: (UIC SROP) Berkeley's Criticism of Abstraction and Materialism: A Comparative Essay on Kenneth Winkle's and George Pappa's Interpretations. **Mentor at NEIU:** John Casey Ph.D.

Ruben Echevarria: *Using YouTube to Aid Latino College Students in Learning Developmental Math* **Mentor:** Dr. Sara Cordell Ph.D.

Trista Bonds: *Urban Terminal; Portal Which Improves Mathematics Skills Through Robotics Curriculum* **Mentor:** Dr. Lidia Fillus, Ph.D.

Rosanelly Lopez: *The Plight of Today's Latino* **Mentor:** Dr. Jade Stanley Ph.D.

Rodney Allen: *Youth Centers/After School Programming: Erasing Apathy in the African American Male High School Experience.* **Mentor:** Dr. Jade Stanley Ph.D.

Anca Barson-Bayro: *Happiness as an Input versus Outcome.* **Mentor:** Maureen Erber, Ph.D.

Lerone Ellison: *The Performance of Masculinity within African Americans Attending College.* **Mentor:** Durene Wheeler, Ph.D.

Denis Alexis: *The Negotiation of Race and Gender in a Post-Racial, Post-Feminist Society.* **Mentor:** Michael Armato, Ph.D.

Jean Matelski: *The effects of Specific Complimentary Alternative Medicine Care Regimens on Stress and Immune Function of HIV + Youth* **Mentor:** Linda Rueckert, Ph.D.

Master's Degree Recipients

Four NEIU McNair scholars recently earned their master's. **Delilah McDonald** (Cohort 7) finished her master's degree in Inner City Studies at Northeastern Illinois University in May 2012. **Jose Fulgencio** (Cohort 7) completed his master's degrees in Political Sciences at Oklahoma State University this past Spring. **Maria-Lourdes Gomez** (Cohort 6) earned her masters in Latin American Studies from Ohio State University in May 2012. Lastly, **Fernando Gonzalez** (Cohort 6) graduated from his Master's in Sociology from DePaul University, in Chicago and is planning to apply to a PhD program next Fall.

Are you interested on going to graduate school and do you comply with the following requirements?

- Completed at least 60 hours (junior or senior standing)
- US citizenship or residency
- 2.8 or above GPA
- Status as a first generation
- College student with income eligibility and/or a member of a group underrepresented in graduate education

If you do, contact our office. The McNair Scholars Program can be for you. We are located in **Building B, Office 141.** Phone: **1 773 442 4254**

Ronald McNair program to see \$10M fund cut

Ben Jones of *USA Today* reported that a Marquette University student, Tommy Walls, a former troubled child from inner city Detroit is interested in working in child welfare and becoming a professor teaching social justice. TRiO programs such as McNair, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math and Science and Talent Search helps underrepresented students overcome class, social and cultural barriers to higher education throughout the United States and are funded by the US Department of Education. The competition this year for TRiO funding was more competitive as the McNair Program faced a \$10 million cut due to those funds being earmarked for Upward Bound Math and Science. The cuts drew criticism from affected students and college administrators who argued that these type programs are being pitted against each other for funding. The reality is that students all over the nation are feeling the backlash of TRiO cuts. Cheryl McNair, widow of the late Ronald E. McNair after whom the program is named, said news of the pending cuts is a shock. She also stated that she couldn't imagine taking money from a group of people who are leaders.

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