

Fall 2014

McNair Messenger- Fall 2014

McNair Staff

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Scholars Present Research in Buffalo New York

In July, eight scholars traveled to New York to attend the McNair Research Conference, hosted by the University at Buffalo. **Eddie Barraza (9)**, **Trista Bonds (10)**, and cohort 12 scholars **Charla Earls**, **Juan Gonzalez**, **Luz Hueramo**, **Ayuk Nfundoak**, **Franklin Ortega**, and **Universal Prayther** presented their research proposals, learned from other scholars' presentations and attended **Donald Asher's** talk on writing convincing graduate school admissions essays.



Juan Gonzalez, Philosophy



Universal Prayther, Health and



Ayuk Nfundoak, Political Science

Scholars present at SACNAS

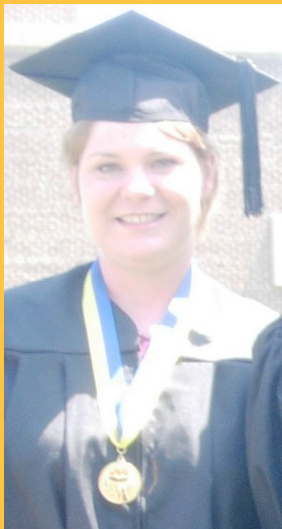
This October, Scholars **Christopher Castro**, **Alejandro Sanchez**, and **Mayra Saucedo** presented their summer research projects in Los Angeles, at the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS). This is one of the largest and most prominent science conferences for minority scientists, hosting over 3,700 attendees.



Alejandro Sanchez at SACNAS

First STEM Doctoral Degree

Last May, McNair scholar **Melissa Anderson** received her doctoral degree from the Department of Microbiology, Immunology, and Cancer Biology at the University of Virginia. She is the fourth NEIU scholar to receive a doctoral degree, and the first scholar to receive her degree in a Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics field. The Northeastern Illinois University McNair Program congratulates Melissa and wishes her the best in her professional career and future endeavors!



Scholars presence at NEIU Research Symposiums

The McNair program has a strong presence in university research symposiums every year, and this year was no exception. In April, nine scholars presented at the NEIU Twenty-Second Annual Student Research Symposium. From the Psychology department, **Nathaniel Firestone** presented *The effects of personality traits and listener visibility on rates of gesture production* while **Mayra Saucedo** presented *The effect of muscle activation while observing gestures on learning*. Scholar **Rocio Garcia** presented *Deferred action for childhood arrivals: perceptions and experiences of DACA applicants* and **Franklin Ortega** presented *The Ecuadorian experience in Chicago*. Both are Latino and Latin American Studies majors.

Scholar **Christopher Castillo**, English major, presented *A discourse analysis of Blackstar's Thieves in the Night*. Teacher Education scholar **Samuel Aguirre** presented *Transitional bilingual education and two way immersion: a comparative study of student participation*. Math and Computer Science students also participated. **Alejandro Sanchez** talked about *Underrepresented STEM majors' perspectives of experiences supporting their mathematical success*, **Christopher Castro** addressed *The dynamics of alcohol and tobacco use in the NEIU community* and **Charla Earls** presented her research titled *Trend or trajectory? An investigation on the internet topology*.

Recently, these science scholars also showcased different research projects at the 6th Annual Student Research Symposium organized by the Student Center for Science Engagement. **Charla Earls** presented the preliminary results of her team project titled *Evaluating whether the internet typology is flattening*, **Christopher Castro** presented *Computational and probabilistic prediction of enhancer-gene interactions*, and **Alejandro Sanchez** presented *Mathematically Modeling the Inner Membrane of a Mitochondria*.

University of Wisconsin McNair Conference

Social Work major **Zitlalli Roman** presented her research at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee National McNair Conference. Her project, *Examining mental health trends among refugee populations living in Chicago*, was mentored by **Dr. Aimee Hilado Villalpando** and **Dr. Jim Kim**. Zitlalli's attendance at this event was sponsored by a donor who understood the obstacles our students face to participate in these opportunities. The McNair staff thanks this donor immensely for the generous support of our students.



From back left: Scholars Juan Gonzalez, Natalie Roman, Manny Frencha and Franklin Ortega. Front l to r: Universal Prayer, Zitlalli Roman, Jennifer Bergeisten and Ayuk Nfundoak at Northwestern University.

a panel of doctoral students who spoke with them about their experience in graduate school. During these visits, the scholars learned the do's and don'ts of the application process, and got general advice on how to balance personal and daily life while meeting graduate school demands. The McNair Scholars who participated in these visits are applying this fall to one or more of these research universities.

As part of their summer internship, NEIU McNair Scholars visited several graduate schools in Illinois and other states. First, they attended *University of Chicago*, *Northwestern University*, and *University of Illinois at Chicago*. A series of campus events were organized by the Chicago Metropolitan Exchange Program (CMEP), which promotes collaboration among these three institutions. Then, the scholars visited *Marquette University* in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Finally, they visited *Michigan State University* in East Lansing, Michigan. During these visits, McNair Scholars had the chance to tour the universities' campuses, meet with faculty in their graduate programs of interest, and most importantly, be exposed to

"These visits are really useful, you get very valuable first-hand information."

McNair Welcomes New Clerical Assistant

We want to welcome our new Clerical Assistant, **Cathie Anderson**, to the McNair office. After a 25+ year career as an Executive Assistant at companies including BP, Bell Telephone, and Ace Hardware, Cathie returned to school to pursue her undergraduate degree in interdisciplinary studies. She graduated with honors from NEIU in May 2014, and now she is a Masters student in the Elementary Education program at National-Louis University. At the McNair office, she assists with the administration and finances of our program. Cathie is a great addition to our team, and brings a wealth of administrative talent as well as the unique perspective of the undergraduate student, graduate student, and university employee.



11th Annual McNair Dinner



Graduating and Inducted McNair Scholars at the 11th NEIU McNair Annual Dinners

Last semester, scholars, mentors, family, and friends gathered for the 11th Annual McNair Dinner. **Dr. Michael Stern**, Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research, welcomed scholars and guests by talking about the importance of undergraduate research experiences that allow students to explore their future interests in graduate school. After this welcoming, **Angela Vidal-Rodriguez**, Director of the McNair Program, along with Dr. Stern, introduced and inducted the new scholars with the presentation of a program pin. **Emina Stojkovic**, Associate Professor in the Department of Biology, spoke about the importance of mentoring students and how mentoring impacted her academic trajectory. Graduating scholar **Samuel Aguirre** shared his McNair experience and gave advice to incoming Scholars.

Robert Motley, former McNair scholar and current Ph.D. student at Washington University in St. Louis, addressed graduating students with useful insights about graduate school and the commitment that scholars should have regarding social justice issues. **Angela Vidal-Rodriguez** and **Dr. Stern** hooded the graduating class with the McNair stole. The festive evening ended with dinner and musical entertainment. The event was funded by the US Department of Education and the NEIU College of Graduate Studies and Research.

Seven scholars started their graduate studies journey this year. **Samuel Aguirre** was accepted into the Second Language Studies masters program at the program at *University of Hawai'i*. **Tiketa Briscoe** is a masters student in the Conflict Resolution program at *Dominican University*. **Sean Dotson** was accepted and completely funded in the English Ph.D. program at *University of Chicago*. **Ruben Echevarria** is in the Master of Arts in Learning Sciences at *Northwestern University* and also fully funded. **Yesenia Herrera** is a masters student and a teacher assistant in the Geology department at *University of Puerto Rico*. **Ashor Jajou** is doing a Master of Social Work at the James Adams School of Social Work financed by the University of Illinois at Chicago. Finally, **Ebony Kennebrew** is attending the Public Health masters program at *Oklahoma State University* sponsored by an OSU McNair Fellowship.

On the Ph.D. Track

Nineteen McNair Scholars are currently pursuing doctoral degrees in programs across the nation:

Peggy Valdes (10) Sociology at University of Iowa	Keith Atterberry (6) Criminal Justice at the University of Illinois, Chicago
Alexis Dennis (10) Sociology at University of Wisconsin, Madison	Brett Coleman (6) Community Psychology at the University of Illinois, Chicago
Julia Gutierrez (8) Women Studies at University of Arizona	Elizabeth Rodriguez (5) English at Northwestern University
Jorge Montiel (10) Philosophy at Marquette University	Abel Arango (2) Spanish Literature at the University of Wisconsin, Madison
Robert Motley (10) Social Work at Saint Louis University	Michael Magee (1) Higher Education at the University of South Florida
Imani Beard (6) Pan African Studies at University of Louisville	Christine Leone (2) Social Work at the University of Chicago
Bilal Hussain (9) Sociology at Loyola University, Chicago	Kemyta Terry (2) Political Science at Howard University
Lynda Gibson (8) Clinical Child Psychology at the Illinois Institute of Technology	Jorge Ortiz (7) Sociology at University of Illinois. Chicago
Jeremy Dolan (6) Philosophy at New York University	Maria Chavez (5) English at State University of New York, Burlington
	Nicholas Owen (3) Philosophy at University of Wisconsin, Madison

New Master's Degrees Conferred

Imani Beard	Inner City Studies	Northeastern Illinois University
Wanda Dukes	Inner City Studies	Northeastern Illinois University
Stephanie Gomez	Latin American Studies	University of Florida
Angela Howard	Industrial Psychology	Elmhurst College
Bilal Hussein	Sociology	University of Loyola at Chicago
Pearl Martinez	Bilingual-Bicultural Education	Northeastern Illinois University
Salvador Montes	Urban and Regional Planning	University of California
Daniel Olavarria	Social Work	University of Pennsylvania
Eugene Slaughter	Social Work	University of Central Florida
Kelly Webb	Social Work	University of Southern California
Brandi Williams	Pan-African Studies	Syracuse University

Are you interested in going to graduate school and do you meet the following requirements?

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

If so...

We are located in Building B, Office 141 and are seeking applicants now.

McNair Private Fund

Last semester, the McNair Program worked closely with the NEIU foundation to launch a campaign to collect private funds for our program. This fund will finance activities found to be beneficial for the academic progress of our students, but not covered under our grant. This year, the donations helped send a student to a national conference to present her research, and made it possible for us to assist another student during a serious illness. The McNair Program would like to thank **Dr. Aimee Hilado-Villalpando**, **Dr. Kim Sanborn**, alums **Maximo Marin**, **Jose Fulgencio**, and **Carlos Ospina** for their generous donations and their continuous support to our program. **THANKS!!!**

TRIO Programs Anniversary

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of federal TRIO programs designed specifically to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to assure their academic success. In its 50 years of service, TRIO has spawned eight programs, including the TRIO Upward Bound Math and Science Program, TRIO Student Support Services, and the McNair Scholars Program – all housed at Northeastern Illinois University today.

The Northeastern Illinois University Upward Bound Math and Science Program was funded in September of 2003. Housed at the Center for College Access and Success of Northeastern Illinois University, the program serves seventy five eligible High School students from six Chicago-area high schools in suburban Cicero and Berwyn.

In addition, Northeastern Illinois received three TRIO SSS awards in 2010. Those awards were: TRIO Access, which serves students with disabilities; TRIO Achieve, which serves first-generation, low-income students in all academic majors; and TRIO Teacher Preparation, which serves underrepresented students who plan to become teachers. Since their inception, NEIU's TRIO programs have grown to capacity, currently serving 380 students.

Finally, the McNair Scholars Program was funded at Northeastern Illinois University in 2003. The U.S. Department of Education has re-awarded NEIU with three consecutive McNair grants, enabling us to serve 135 students to date. All of these programs are funded by the U.S Department of Education.



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