

New Scholars Retreat: Welcome Junior Scholars

The new McNair scholars took part in the annual McNair Scholars Orientation on Saturday, September 20, at Wilderness Ridge, where they were formally initiated into the McNair community of scholars.

Dr. Laurie Bellows, director of the UNL McNair Scholars Program, officially welcomed the new scholars into the McNair community and noted that the orientation was essentially an initiation into the life of a scholar. The new scholars “stepped into” doctoral regalia at Dean Ellen Weissinger’s invitation. Imaging themselves down the road in 6-8 years, scholars donned academic robes, and Dr. Weissinger, dean of graduate studies, unofficially “hooded” each student. Drew Nelson, a junior geosciences scholar, assured all in attendance that he would “be back in 6 or 7 years” to pick up his Ph.D. and receive an official hood.

Scholars learned about the work that faculty “do” in a conversation with Dr. Cody Hollist. Dr. Hollist shared his journey from first-generation college student to graduate student to his current position as an assistant professor in child, youth and family studies. He told the students that he finds great joy in both his teaching and his research. He then showed pictures from his recent summer trip to Mexico with senior McNair scholar Chelsea Rivera.

At McNair, we operate from the stance that “we are what we think, so think big.” Dr. Richard Lombardo facilitated a “big thinking” exercise where scholars were encouraged to “imagine the possibilities” by charting where they want to go and identifying the steps they need to get there. Dr. Lombardo used a bridge analogy to help the students understand the process of individual development—especially the choices one makes in any life transition—and the importance of constructing one’s own future.



Maria Herrera, a doctoral student in clinical psychology and a former McNair scholar at the University of California, Berkeley; Tony Kelly, a physics doctoral student and former McNair scholar from the California State University; and Nathan Palmer, a masters student in sociology and former McNair scholar from UNL, talked with the new scholars about the benefits of being a McNair scholar and how the program prepared them for graduate school.

To close out the orientation, second-year and third-year scholars joined the group for lunch and later met with the new scholars to field questions about McNair and share tips for having a successful McNair experience.



Funded by the Department of Education and housed in UNL’s Office of Graduate Studies, the McNair Program prepares undergraduate students for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities. Participants are first generation college students who demonstrate strong academic potential and who meet maximum financial guidelines or are members of groups underrepresented in graduate education.

Meet the New McNair Scholars

We are pleased to introduce the 2008-09 Cohort:

Morgan Conley, from Omaha, is a junior majoring in psychology. Morgan's faculty mentor is Dr. Lisa Crockett, professor of psychology.

Andrea Gonzalez, is a junior from Scottsbluff, Nebraska, who is majoring in criminal justice. Andrea's research will focus on criminology and she's in the process of finding a mentor.

Mike Gubbels, is a computer engineering major from Coleridge, Nebraska. His mentor is Dr. Stephen Scott, associate professor of computer science and engineering.

Michael Harpster, of Ewing, Nebraska, is a junior majoring in English. Dr. Thomas Lynch, associate professor of English, will serve as Michael's faculty mentor.

Drew Nelson, of Pacific Beach, California, is a senior majoring in geology. He has been conducting research with Dr. Tracy Frank, associate professor of geosciences.

Beth Ridling of Beemer, Nebraska, is a sophomore majoring in psychology. Beth's faculty mentor is Dr. William Spaulding, professor of psychology.

Jeanette Samuels is a political science major from Bellevue, Nebraska. Dr. Michael Combs, professor of political science will serve as Jeanette's faculty mentor.

Brian Shreck, a graduate of Wahoo High School, is a junior majoring in political science. He has been conducting research with his mentor, Dr. Sarah Michaels, professor of political science and Faculty Fellow, University of Nebraska Public Policy Center.

Sherri Sklenar of McCool Junction, Nebraska, is a junior majoring in anthropology. Her faculty mentor is Dr. Paul Demers, assistant professor of anthropology.

Brittany Sznajder-Murray of Oakland, Nebraska, is a sophomore majoring in child, youth and family studies. Brittany's faculty mentor is Dr. Cody Hollist, assistant professor of child, youth, and family studies.



2008-09 McNair Junior Scholars

McNair - Facts & History

The McNair Scholars Program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln prepares income eligible, first generation college students and students from groups underrepresented in graduate education for doctoral study. It is a nationwide program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, created in memory of Ronald E. McNair, Ph.D., an African-American physicist whose career ended with the explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger mission in 1986.

UNL's **McNair Scholars Program**, now in its 13th year, achieves this goal by providing 25 Scholars an opportunity to engage in research, present their findings at a research conference, and develop the skills critical to success at the doctoral level.

McNair Summer Research Experience

During the nine-week 2008 McNair Summer Research Experience (MSRE), scholars conducted research projects under the direction of their mentors. Through their summer research, scholars developed critical research skills, gathered and analyzed data, drew conclusions based on empirical evidence and prepared a scholarly research paper. In addition to conducting intensive research, scholars gathered twice each week for continued research training, conference and graduate school preparation, and GRE practice sessions.

Dr. Rick Lombardo, McNair Academic Consultant, presented several timely topics including the *Fundamentals of Research Writing*, which focused on developing an outline and the importance of readability; *How to Write an Abstract*, and *Writing a Unique Personal Statement*. Scholars drafted their personal statements and gave constructive feedback to each other on areas for improvement.

Weekly GRE sessions involved preparation for the verbal and quantitative sections of the GRE. Mike Gunderson, an advanced doctoral student from mathematics, presented three sessions on *Critical Thinking*; *Basic Algebra & Geometry*; and *Quantitative Quick Tips*. Practice GRE problems were presented at each session, and then answers and explanations followed. To help scholars prepare for the verbal reasoning section, Mike Kelly, a doctoral student in English, presented two sessions on *Analogies and Antonyms* and *Qualitative/Reading Comprehension Quick Tips*.



Effective Poster Presentation: Toni Hill Menson (right) answers questions for Mo Wax and Rebecca Beals following scholar session

Graduate students were also involved in helping scholars prepare for the UNL Research Colloquium and the California McNair Research Conference. Advanced doctoral students, Toni Hill-Menson (child, youth and family studies) and Jamie Wilkinson (psychology) discussed tips for effective poster presentations. They shared posters they had developed for professional conferences and, in a mock poster session, demonstrated to scholars how to deliver the “3-minute poster talk” and field questions.

Scholars learned to develop and deliver effective presentations, which included understanding audience needs and ways to anticipate and effectively field questions about their research. Work sessions were held to assist scholars develop a research presentation and construct a research poster.

McNair by the Numbers

Since the McNair Scholars Program began at UNL in 1995, it has served **186** students. Of those, **163** – or **87.6 percent** – have earned bachelor’s degrees. **Sixty-five** have gone on to earn master’s degrees; **10** have already achieved doctoral degrees and an additional **7** have earned professional and other degrees. Currently, **22** are enrolled in Ph.D. programs, **21** McNair Scholars are actively pursuing master’s degrees, and **3** are pursuing professional doctorates.

UNL McNair Research Colloquium

By the end of the Summer Research Experience, scholars were ready to present their research at the UNL McNair Summer Research Colloquium on July 31 in the City Campus Union.

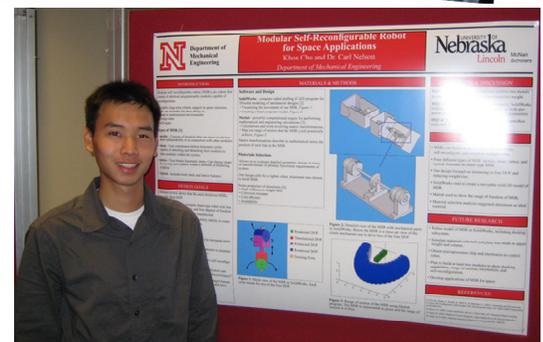
Participants presented the results of their summer research to their peers, UNL faculty, graduate mentors and advisers. The Colloquium opened with a poster session, which offered the students an opportunity to explain their research to interested individuals. The poster session was followed by oral presentation sessions, which took place in three separate rooms.

Moderators for the oral presentations were former McNair scholars Abby Visty, mechanical engineering (2006-2008); Emily Haferbier, sociology (2006-2008); and Maegan Stevens-Liska, history (2006-2009).

UNL graduate students provided feedback to the McNair Scholars on their posters and oral presentations, further preparing them for the California McNair Conference at Berkeley.



Senior Scholars presented their research at various colloquia and symposiums last summer. Pictured clockwise: Tara Cossel explained her research to Michelle Howell Smith, Office of Graduate Studies; Joshua Alvarez with Kay Yamamoto, TRIO Director; Khoa Chu; Chelsea Rivera; and Adrian Soltero.

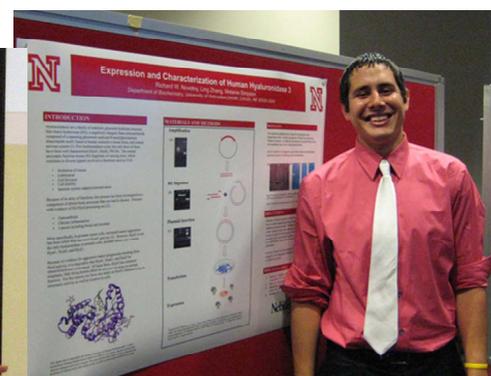


Thank you to the graduate students who provided feedback during the Colloquium poster session and oral presentations:

Brian Armenta, Psychology
Joseph Brewer, Chemistry
Neal Bryan, Agronomy
Amy Hillard, Psychology
Terry Haverkost, Biological Sciences
Amy Lehman, Mechanical Engineering
Michelle Maresh, Communication Studies
Leslie Martinez, Psychology Department
Corina McCormick, QQPM & Educational Psychology
Nathan Palmer, Sociology
Leslie Shaw, Educational Psychology
Mackenzie Waltke, Biological Sciences

Senior Scholar Research Projects

Scholar	Major	Research Mentor & Department	Presentation Title
Joshua Alvarez	Anthropology	Dr. Gus Carlo, Psychology	<i>Comparing White and Non-White Students' Academic Experiences: Impact on Academic Performance</i>
Rebecca Beals	Sociology	Dr. Miguel Carranza, Sociology & Ethnic Studies	<i>The Changing Dynamics of Academic Success for Latino College Students</i>
Jeffrey Belmont	Biological Sciences	Dr. Peter Angeletti, Biological Sciences	<i>Bioinformatic Analysis of Human Papillomavirus Proteins and Viral Packaging Proteins</i>
Khoa Chu	Mechanical Engineering	Dr. Carl Nelson, Mechanical Engineering	<i>Modular Self-Reconfigurable Robot for Space Applications</i>
Tara Cossel	Psychology	Dr. David Hansen, Psychology	<i>Child Sexual Abuse Victims and Their Families Receiving Services at a Child Advocacy Center: Mental Health and Support Needs</i>
Kyle Jackson	Environmental Studies	Professor Michael Jess, School of Natural Resources	<i>Evaluating the Niobrara Council as a Managing Stakeholder Partnership of the Niobrara River</i>
Willie Novotny	Biochemistry	Dr. Melanie Simpson, Biochemistry	<i>Expression and Characterization of Human Hyaluronidase 3</i>
Chelsea Rivera	Child, Youth and Family Studies	Dr. Cody Hollist; Child, Youth and Family Studies	<i>Engaging Latino Adolescents in Therapy: The Therapist's Perspective</i>
Adrian Soltero	Electrical Engineering	Wallace Turner, Texas Instruments Inc. – Dallas	<i>Validating a Switch-Mode Power Supply Macro Model</i>
Morrel Wax	Business	Dr. Timothy Alvarez, Student Affairs	<i>Minority Learning Communities: Impact on Achievement and Social Integration at a Predominantly White University</i>



Senior Scholars shared their research last summer. Top row: Kyle Jackson, Rebecca Beals, and Willie Novotny. Bottom Row: Jeff Belmont and Mo Wax.



California McNair Scholars Symposium

As part of the McNair Summer Research Experience capstone “adventure,” ten McNair Scholars traveled to Berkeley, California, to participate in the 16th Annual California McNair Scholars Symposium. Scholars shared the results of their summer research with McNair scholars and staff from over fifty universities.

For Khoa Chu, the opportunity to present at the Berkeley conference had a “tremendous impact” on the way he thinks about research. “Before being a McNair scholar,” he wrote, “I had doubts that held me back from entering graduate school. But because of this opportunity to present my research I am able to think more critically and in-depth about my research. I am just more confident.”



2008-09 McNair Senior Scholars

Keynote speaker, Don Asher, author of *Graduate Admission Essays*, advised scholars on the importance of finding the “right fit” in a graduate program and highlighted strategies for customizing personal statements. Asher noted that, “McNair scholars are elite students with elite skills, who are highly sought after by elite graduate programs across the country.” Tara Cossel said, “My plans for the graduate school admissions process became clearer at Berkeley. After Don Asher’s workshop, I stopped to ask him some questions about applying to doctoral programs in clinical psychology. He was very helpful, giving me his ‘formula’ for applying to top programs. The strategies he described made me less apprehensive about the application process. I also feel more prepared.”

In addition to their research presentations, scholars attended other concurrent sessions where they learned a great deal about how research is done in different fields. Jeff Belmont noted, “Although I know that research occurs all across the UNL campus, the opportunity to listen to and ask questions about the research and scholarly work of those in other fields is not always available for undergraduate students. At Berkeley, I was able to listen to a number of different talks in a wide range of fields, such as history, environmental studies, biology, engineering, sociology, psychology, and others. Additionally, I asked questions of the presenters and learned more about their methods, results, and additional implications for their work. Just being able to meet and talk with students, faculty, and staff from other institutions made the trip a completely worthwhile and valuable experience.”

Scholars also attended a graduate school fair, meeting with recruitment and admissions officials from participating universities. For most of the students, this graduate school fair was their first experience in promoting themselves and their research to recruiters from across the country.

Perhaps the highlight of the conference, however, was the dinner cruise—and dance—around San Francisco Bay on the Cabernet Sauvignon Commodore with other conference attendees. Scholars were finally able to “relax” and reap the benefits of the McNair Summer Research Experience.

Reflections on the California McNair Symposium

by Kyle Jackson, senior, environmental studies

I would like to tell you a little bit about my experience at the UC Berkeley McNair Symposium. I should first start out with something of a disclosure; I felt like the loner being a natural resources student in the UNL McNair program. From my perspective, it seemed that the other scholars knew exactly what they were doing: they had found the right mentors, had the perfect graduate student mentor, and were much more familiar with their research projects than I was.



Kyle Jackson presenting at UC Berkeley

Now, I didn't find this notion of mine to be a detriment to myself, but more of a test. I was determined to work with my mentor and turn my research project into something that was uniquely mine. All the while, I was hoping that when the opportunity arrived to present my research at Berkeley, I would find that a group of McNair scholars from around the country who were studying the same topics as I was. But, as I started to go through the roster of the students and the title of their research presentations, I soon found out that my prospect of finding those individuals was fleeting.



At the end of their concurrent session, Annette Hernandez (Cal Poly-Ponoma), Meleiza Figueroa (UCLA) and Kyle Jackson (UNL) fielded questions about their research.

I then charged myself with a new obligation: to find those presentations that I knew nothing about and to attend them. In keeping with the "scholarly" perspective, I decided that I would submerge myself into everything that my fellow scholars had to share with me. It was obvious to me that every scholar there had something interesting to share.

I found this task of attending the highly technical presentations to be both a challenge and a reward. Some of the presentations seemed completely "over my head." However, I sat through those presentations with the frame of mind that I could connect what they were presenting with things that I already knew. I at least made an attempt to make a connection between what their project covered and how it affected me personally. In the end, I really enjoyed this challenge of being exposed to other fields of knowledge that I otherwise wouldn't have. I appreciated the fact that, if I attended only the presentations that I was familiar with, then I would never have learned about the characteristics of lipids at high temperatures!

The UC Berkeley McNair Symposium was the perfect capstone experience. In many ways, it was analogous to my whole McNair summer research experience. I went from having a preconceived notion, to it being proven wrong, then adapting to the situation, and finally being completely grateful that I was challenged to become a true scholar. The McNair experience thus far, for that matter, was the challenge that I needed to open my mind to a whole new academic world. When I think back to the McNair application process, one of the essays I wrote was about a professor who defined what a liberal education truly meant: to cultivate a mind that is free from original constraint. Now, I can

honestly say that the McNair program has done just that for me. The McNair program challenged my perceptions about the world of academia. As a result, I am more prepared than ever to enter this world of scholarship.

Mentor Spotlight – Miguel Carranza



Dr. Miguel Carranza, professor of sociology and ethnic studies (Latino and Latin American studies), serves as a McNair faculty mentor for Rebecca Beals, a senior sociology major. Recently, he was asked to share his McNair mentoring experience:

“Last spring, Rebecca approached me about the possibility of being her faculty mentor. She had been referred to me because of my research interests in Latino issues. We talked for a while about my research on the integration of Latino immigrants into Nebraska communities. Rebecca indicated she was interested in the impact of education on Latino students, especially in the K-12 experience. I suggested she think about the educational pipeline and the importance of each segment of the pipeline for the overall success of Latino/a students.

She is a very motivated and talented student. Rebecca takes direction well, yet she’s also very self-directed. I gave her a number of references to read, but she also collected more through her own library research.

Eventually, she decided to conduct research on the assets and challenges placed before Latino/a college students. She then worked on a survey instrument, collected data and then created a poster and paper based on her work. We met on a regular basis and I gave her input as needed.

The most valuable experience for me was to see Rebecca’s growth as an undergraduate researcher and scholar. It’s very rewarding to see someone develop and mature while conducting research. From Rebecca’s perspective, it is not just a research project but rather an important research project relevant to the educational experiences of Latino/a students. Her hope is that her work will also prove valuable as ideas for benefiting future Latino/a students who desire to go to college.

Rebecca is a delight to work with and she has tremendous potential for graduate school. I am pleased that she is going to apply to graduate school for next year.

Based on my experience with Rebecca, I would certainly consider being a McNair mentor in the future. Research through the McNair Scholars Program provides our talented students with a hands-on opportunity to ‘experience sociology’ rather than just ‘study sociology.’”



McNair Recommendations

Do you know an undergraduate who might be a good candidate for the McNair Scholars Program?
We appreciate and welcome recommendations from faculty and advisers.

To recommend a student, email or call Carol Boehler, cboehler2@unl.edu, 402-472-5062.

Working Effectively with Your Research Mentor

by Rebecca Beals

One of the most important relationships you will have as an undergraduate student is the relationship with your faculty mentor. I am confident that a positive relationship with your mentors will be a key factor in whether you consider your experience to be extremely positive or somewhat more challenging. Your mentor will be with you for at least the next two years helping you reach your undergraduate research goals as well as giving you advice on graduate schools, the application process, and anything else you might have questions about. Here are some tips on making a good connection, forming a positive relationship, and maintaining an effective relationship.

First things first: Make sure you choose someone that is a good match for you. There are a lot of professors out there doing great work. Do some homework, see who is out there doing what you're interested in, and allow yourself a little bit of choice. Don't forget to look for professors in disciplines related to, yet outside your major, who are doing work you're interested in. It never hurts to ask other people or professors who they might suggest for you.

Take the time to meet with these people. Before you do, you may consider writing up a short, brief resume highlighting your research interests, what skills you are developing or wish to develop, and relevant courses you've taken. (I was actually asked to do this post-meeting, so beat them to it! It will show them your great McNair organization skills.) Let them know more about you, your interests, and goals. Find out more about what they are doing and where you might fit in. This will assure an informed decision for both you and your potential mentor. Take notes so you don't forget or mix people up!

Finally, decide! Review what you're interested in and compare it with notes you've taken on potential mentors. Was there one who was easier to talk to? That you seemed to relate to more? Was there a research project coming up that you really want to be a part of? All are important things consider. Don't forget to thank everyone for their help and time!

After choosing a mentor, make sure to meet with your mentor regularly (once a month/every couple of weeks) in the spring semester before your summer research. It is VERY important to establish a comfortable and open line of communication with this person.

You want to be somewhat conversational before your summer research starts. The only way to do this is by practicing, so the sooner you start the better!

Be VERY honest about what you want out of this experience and pay attention to the expectations your mentor has for you. Do you want this to be a project where you are going to be working very independently, or do you want a little more guidance? In what areas do you think you will need more guidance? Would you rather help design a small independent project, or be a part of a larger project your mentor is already working on? It is important to figure these things out and communicate them to your mentor. Key concept: OPEN and HONEST COMMUNICATION!

Pay close attention to this next one! This is by far one of the most important things to remember this year as you prepare for the MSRE as well as while doing your research next summer. Yes, your mentor is here to help you. (And if you follow the previous advice, they will be prepared to help you.) But it is not their only job. They are busy people doing great things in your field of interest. It is important to remember this and respect their time! That doesn't mean you will be bugging them by contacting them. Not at all. It means that if they ask you to do something or prepare something for a meeting or for the following week, DO IT! Live up to what you say you will do. Take notes during meetings with them so you don't forget little tasks. Set up a time every month (or week, once summer starts) when you will meet instead of putting things off until the last minute. SHOW this person you are organized and reliable. If they know they can count on you and don't have to remind you and hold your hand the whole way, they will be more likely to write you a stunning letter of recommendation when you apply for graduate school.

By following these simple steps, you will be sure to create and maintain a positive mentor/scholar relationship and gain everything that you want from your experience.



Scholar Spotlight – Mo Wax



Morrel Wax, senior McNair Scholar, grew up in north Omaha where he went to Omaha Northwest High School. He decided to attend UNL because “it was far enough, but not too close, to home;” plus, he explains he “received several scholarships that persuaded me to come here.” Since enrolling at UNL, Mo has been awarded additional honors. As a freshman, Mo was a member of the Melvin Jones Scholars Learning Community, and named a Susan Buffet Scholar and an Education Quest Scholar. Last year, he was selected to be a McNair Scholar. Currently, Mo is stretching himself, taking 18 hours this semester with plans to graduate in May 2009.

Mo is majoring in international business with a sociology minor. He says his interest in his major began when he was a freshman at Northwest High where he was involved in the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA). Through this program, he polished his leadership skills and developed a strong commitment to community. He also says it helped him develop self-confidence.

The summer of 2008 was a busy time for Mo. He traveled to China for three weeks with his BSAD 491 Business and Culture class. “The different cultural perspectives, the people, the landmarks, the history, and the food” were highlights of the trip. Also, he was grateful that he could take a trip with some of his closest friends. During the summer, Mo also successfully completed a research project during the McNair Summer Research Experience, “Minority Learning Communities: Impact on Achievement and Social Integration at a Predominately White University.” Reflecting on the McNair Scholars Program, Mo said he has learned “discipline, confidence, and tenacity.”

Recently, Mo was elected as a senator in the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska (ASUN) representing the College of Business (2008-2009), where he is the communication liaison between the students, his college advisory board, and the student government. Mo takes his responsibility as an ASUN senator very seriously. “I represent the College of Business students, so I want to make sure I represent my college and the students well,” Mo added.

Mo has 11 brothers and sisters—he’s “in the middle”—and a large extended family with several nieces, nephews, and many cousins. “It’s a big family,” Mo says. When asked about who inspires him, Mo took a minute to think and then said, with a smile, “My grandpa inspired me before he passed away, but I still look up to him for inspiration, as well as my peers. They force me to be better.”

Mo hopes to continue his development as a leader in graduate school, where he plans to pursue a master’s degree and Ph.D. in student affairs and higher education.

UNL McNair on Facebook

The UNL McNair program created a Facebook presence to facilitate communication between current McNair scholars and alumni. We hope that our current scholars will use Facebook to connect with one another and develop a stronger sense of community. Along the same line, we hope that our alumni can provide valuable wisdom for our current scholars and keep us up to date on all of their successes.

Look for UNL McNair next time you log into Facebook.

McNair Graduate Student Mentors

During the Fall 2007 semester, the McNair Scholars Program initiated a graduate student mentoring component. Modeled after the mentor matches made by Preparing Future Faculty programs, senior McNair scholars are matched with graduate student mentors or postdocs as an additional resource to help them prepare for graduate school.

The mentoring program proved invaluable to both scholars and their graduate mentors, so it will be continued for the 2008-09 school year. Among other activities, the graduate mentor may provide feedback on the scholar's personal statement and curriculum vita, or invite the scholar to a meeting in the graduate student's lab. Scholars can elect to sit in mentors' graduate-level courses, observe their mentors' teaching, or participate in social or service activities. Through their graduate student mentors, scholars learn first-hand what life in graduate school is like at a major research institution. Scholars also can draw on the recent experience of their mentors as they apply to graduate school.

Thank you to the 2008-09 graduate mentors! They include: Seth Gubler, student affairs; Devan Crawford, sociology; Joseph Brewer, chemistry; Ziaoli Zhang, mechanical engineering; Maria Herrera, psychology; Ryan Bjerke, natural resources; TJ Bliss, biochemistry; Melissa Zephier, marriage and family therapy; Jessica Colton, electrical engineering; and Molly Handke, student affairs.

Dr. Terri Norton "Joins" McNair Community of Scholars

Dr. Terri Norton, a new faculty member at UNL and former McNair scholar, recently joined the UNL McNair Community of Scholars when she offered to share her experiences as an undergraduate, graduate, and now new faculty member during the annual spring McNair Reception.

Dr. Norton is an assistant professor in the Department of Construction Engineering and Management at the Peter Kiewit Institute in Omaha. She earned a bachelors degree in civil engineering from Florida State University, and received a master's and Ph.D. in civil engineering from Florida A&M University. Prior to accepting her current position at UNL, Dr. Norton served as a member of the technical staff at the Aerospace Corporation, Structural Dynamics Department. She also has served as a Field Mission Investigator evaluating the 2002 Mo-Lee-Zay Earthquake in Italy, as a Research Ambassador at the University of Tokyo, and as a Research Assistant at Florida A&M-Florida State University, in the Wind Hazard and Earthquake Engineering Lab.

Dr. Norton credits her success as a faculty member and researcher to the McNair programs she participated in during her undergraduate collegiate career. As a sophomore, she participated in the McNair Program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, assisting with research in the department of Physics. Her experiences there later led to participation in the USIT Program at the University of Texas at Austin and the McNair Program at Florida A&M University.



Kudos to McNair Scholars

McNair scholars continue to shine! Congratulations to these former and current UNL McNair scholars on their accomplishments:

Joshua Alvarez spent the Spring 2008 semester studying abroad in Spain.

Rebecca Beals was awarded first place in the empirical/quantitative section of the Nebraska Undergraduate Sociology Symposium (NUSS), held November 6-7, 2008 at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Rebecca was also awarded the 2008 Alice Frost Howard Memorial Scholarship for outstanding undergraduate sociology students. She was on the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's List for both semesters during 2007-08.

Jeff Belmont was selected as a CASNR (College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources) Student Ambassador for the 2008-2009 school year.

Juan Cargas was recognized last spring as the outstanding student member by MASA, the Mexican American Student Association.

Tara Cossel, majoring in psychology and Spanish, was on the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's List for both semesters during 2007-08.

Martin Diaz was elected President of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) and invited to join the UNL (Beta Psi) chapter of Eta Kappa Nu (HKN) the international Electrical and Computer Engineering Honor Society.

Emily Haferbier received the Alan P. Bates Outstanding Undergraduate Award from the Department of Sociology last spring. Emily graduated with honors in May 2008.

Sahar Hasim, her mentor Dr. Mark Wilson, and a collection of co-authors from UNL's Redox Biology Center and the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, have published their research entitled "Cysteine pKa Depression by a Protonated Glutamic Acid in Human DJ-1." Their article was published in the *Journal of Biochemistry*.

Masoud Mahjouri Samani and **Sahar Hasim** became American citizens last April.

Chelsea Rivera, a child, youth and family studies major, was on the College of Education Dean's List for the 2007 and Spring 2008 semesters.

Megan Stevens-Liska placed first in the theoretical/literature review portion of the Department of Sociology's undergraduate student paper competition last spring.

Mo Wax was elected as a 2008-2009 ASUN senator, representing the College of Business Administration. He also traveled to China on a study tour with Dr. Weixing Li's Business and Culture class for three weeks in May.

Conference Presentations

Khoa Chu presented his research poster, *Modular Self-Reconfigurable Robot for Space Applications*, at the Nebraska Research and Innovation Conference on October 28, 2008.

Kyle Jackson presented his research, *Evaluating the Niobrara Council as a Managing Stakeholder Partnership of the Niobrara River*, at the 2008 Water Colloquium held at Hardin Hall on UNL East Campus.

Andrea Lowe attended the Association for Psychological Science Conference in Chicago from May 22 – May 25, 2008, where she presented her poster, *Baddest of the Bad: The Effects of Race & Prior Bad Act Information on Culpability Decision*.

2008 Summer Internships

Juan Cangas received a prestigious summer internship with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, an educational and youth leadership development organization in Washington, D.C.

Acacia Carballo was accepted as an Engineering Summer Intern for Weyerhaeuser at their Springfield, Oregon, containerboard site.

Martin Diaz received a prestigious internship at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, a research laboratory operated for the Department of Energy (DOE) by Stanford University from June 23 to August 15, 2008.

Adrian Soltero conducted his summer research with Texas Instruments in Dallas, where he explored the switch-mode power supply macro model.

Alumni News: Degree Watch

At UNL, we believe “once a McNair scholar, always a McNair scholar,” and remain involved in the academic success of our scholars as they journey beyond their undergraduate years. We receive frequent notes from our scholars, who keep us posted about their academic progress toward their terminal degrees.

Congratulations to UNL McNair scholars who earned advanced degrees during 2007-08:

Jennifer Bear Eagle, Juris Doctorate, University of Nebraska College of Law, May 2008

Jennifer Clark, M.S., Communication Disorders, University of Louisiana–Monroe, December 2007

Danielle (Deschene) Leeper, M.S., Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, August 2008

Toni Leija-Wilson, Juris Doctorate, University of Nebraska College of Law, May 2008

Natasha Luepke, M.A., English, Oregon State University, June 2008

Anitra Mallory, M.A., Educational Psychology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, December 2007

Sandra Plata-Potter, M.A., Educational Psychology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, August 2008

Camilo Ramirez, M.A., Political Science, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, December 2007

Hope (Van Houten) Bleckwehl, M.A., School Counseling, University of Northern Iowa, May 2008

Note to McNair Alumni

Please keep us informed about your progress in graduate school.

If you haven't done so already, please go to <http://www.unl.edu/mcnair/scholarupdate.shtml>

It's time for the McNair Annual Performance Report, so don't delay; go online today!

McNair Scholars: Now Graduate Students at UNL

Olabode Alabi, master's student, Industrial & Management Systems Engineering (B.S. 2007; University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

Brian Armenta, doctoral student, Social Psychology (B.A. 2002; California State Polytechnic University, Pomona)

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Erica Rogers, doctoral student, English (B.A. 2006; University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

MinJeong Schneider, master's student, Chemical Engineering (B.S. 2008; University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

UNL Scholars: Now Grad Students Across the Country

Olamide Alabi, MD student, University of Nebraska Medical Center

Myesha (Albert) Applewhite, doctoral student, Criminology, University of Texas at Dallas

Tia Cole, master's student, English, University of Nebraska-Omaha

Tuan Dao, master's student, Computer Science, Bellevue University

Tessa Durham Brooks, doctoral student, Cellular and Molecular Biology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Tricia Echtenkamp, doctoral student, Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, Cornell University

Heather Flores, doctoral student, Genetics, Cornell University

Deonna Foster Wilemme, doctoral student, Instruction and Curriculum Leadership, University of Memphis

Erica (Ginn) Holley, doctoral student, Management, University of Washington

Eric Henning, doctoral student, Clinical Psychology, Temple University

Arlo McKee, master's student, Anthropology, University of Kansas-Lawrence

Dzuan Nguyen, Doctor of Pharmacy student, University of Nebraska Medical Center

Hung Nguyen, doctoral student, Biomechanics, University of Texas-Austin

Le Thi Hong Nguyen, master's student, Architecture, Illinois Institute of Technology

Olatoyosi Olude, doctoral student, Industrial Engineering, SUNY Binghamton

Marco Ramirez, master's student, Counseling Psychology, California State Fullerton

Kacie (Rehder) Schrader, master's student, Marriage & Family Therapy, University of Phoenix

Sheriece Sadberry, doctoral student, Counseling Psychology, University of Missouri

Melissa Tehee, Ph.D. / JD student, University of Arizona

Darryl Todd, doctoral student, Higher Education Leadership, University of Nevada-Las Vegas

Jenna Valadez, doctoral student, History, Southern Methodist University

Jessica Wall, doctoral student, Gender Studies & History, Indiana University

Build Your Writing Skills

Of all the skills you'll need in graduate school, strong writing skills will help you "hit the ground running." You'll need strong writing skills to author abstracts, posters, papers, and grants. You even may be asked to review a peer's writing. And, if you become a teaching assistant, you'll need to evaluate—and teach—writing to your students. Here are some ways you can strengthen your writing skills:

Read as much as you can. Read everything you can. Why? You'll learn how great writers construct their writing. You'll begin to get a feel for sentence construction, paragraph development, style, diction, and organization. You'll also develop your vocabulary (especially if you look up the words you don't know). Finally, reading expands the world you know about; the more you know, the more fodder you have for writing of any kind. If you want to be a good writer, be a good reader.

Write something every day. Start a writing journal, respond to something you read in the newspaper, email yourself a recap of your Geography 101 lecture, volunteer to write for the *Daily Nebraskan* or join a creative writing club where you'll find additional opportunities to express ideas in writing. Writing is a skill that can be learned and developed. Practice might not make you a perfect writer, but it will make you a better one.

Commit certain rules to memory. And, force yourself to use them. One way to develop writing skills is to learn the basics and make sure you use them all the time. What should every writer know? Good writers should know how to write a short, concise, complete sentence. They should know how to write actively (versus passively). They should know when to use commas to separate ideas in a sentence—and when not to do so. They should know how to get a subject and verb to agree. They should know how to use pronouns clearly. And they should know the difference between jargon and real words. You can learn these rules by buying a writing guide like the classic *Elements of Style* (Strunk & White, 4th edition, 1999 sells for \$9.95 on Amazon.com).

Get feedback. Feedback helps you anticipate how readers might interpret your writing and what types of questions they might have. This can help you anticipate what a reader might want to know. The Writing Center is a good place to go for expert feedback on your writing.

Learn to see writing as a process—brainstorming, outlining, organizing, writing and then editing and rewriting. There's no way around it. Almost no writing of high quality is a first draft.

Finally, pay attention to the advice your teachers give you about your writing.

Remember that everyone can improve his or her writing skills. You might think others are more talented, but you know more than you think. Confidence and skill will grow with the more writing you do. Practice and work lead to achievement.

Source: The ACT (2008) web site at <http://www.actstudent.org/writing/prepare/build.html>

McNair Blog

Can't wait for the next newsletter to find out what UNL McNair Scholars are doing?

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