

McNair Welcomes Twelve New Scholars

On Saturday, August 29, members of the 2009-10 McNair Cohort were introduced to life as a Scholar at the annual orientation held at Wilderness Ridge in Lincoln. Dr. Laurie Bellows, director of the UNL McNair Program, officially welcomed the twelve new Scholars into the McNair community.

Dr. Ellen Weissinger, Dean of Graduate Studies; Dr. Richard Lombardo, McNair Academic Support Specialist; and Dr. Isabel Velázquez, Assistant Professor, Modern Languages and Literatures, were featured speakers. Dr. Velázquez spoke to the scholars about her path to graduate school and becoming a faculty member.

Members of the 2009-10 Cohort include:

Karise Carrillo from Plano, Texas, is a junior majoring in psychology. Karise's faculty mentor is Dr. Susan Jacobs, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice.

Justin Escamilla, is a junior from Scottsbluff, Nebraska, who is majoring in psychology. Justin has been conducting research with Dr. Sarah Gervais in the Psychology Department.

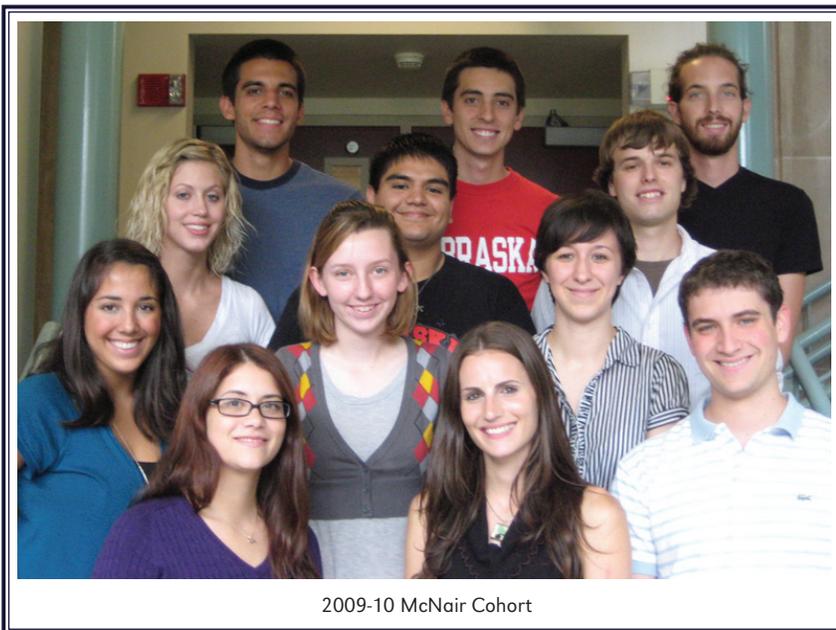
Melissa Garfield, a graduate of Lincoln Southeast High School, is an anthropology and psychology major. Her mentor is Dr. Raymond Hames, professor of anthropology.

Zach Garfield, of Lincoln, Nebraska, is a junior majoring in anthropology & psychology. He is working with his mentor, Dr. Raymond Hames, from the Anthropology Department.

Alex Goldstein of Richardson, Texas, is a junior majoring in nutritional science. He will be conducting research with Dr. Concetta DiRusso, professor of nutrition and health sciences, and biochemistry.

Alan Goyzueta, of Norman, Oklahoma, is a junior majoring in mechanical engineering. Alan's faculty mentor is Dr. Carl Nelson, mechanical engineering.

Katie Haferbier is a biological science major from Treynor, Iowa. Dr. Melanie Simpson, biochemistry, will serve as her faculty mentor.



2009-10 McNair Cohort

Michelle Haikalis, from San Diego, California, is a sophomore majoring in psychology. She will be conducting research with Dr. David Hansen, chair of the Psychology Department.

Arianne Holland of Lincoln, Nebraska, is a junior majoring in psychology. Her faculty mentors are Dr. Mike Dodd and Dr. Sarah Gervais from the Department of Psychology.

Kaitlin Leslie, of Malcolm, Nebraska, is a sophomore majoring in forensic science. Kaitlin's faculty mentor is Dr. David Carter, from the Department of Entomology.

Jeff Lopez, of North Platte, Nebraska, is a sophomore majoring in chemical engineering. He will be conducting his summer research with Dr. Ravi Saraf from the Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering Department.

Tyler Scherr, of Aberdeen, South Dakota, is a junior majoring in biological systems engineering. He will be conducting research with his mentor, Dr. Mark Griep of the Chemistry Department.

The next step for the new Scholars will be working with their faculty mentors to choose a research topic and develop a summer research proposal. Welcome to the McNair Community!

McNair Summer Research Experience

This summer, McNair Scholars completed original research projects with the help of faculty research mentors during the annual 10-week McNair Summer Research Experience (MSRE). Scholars also attended seminars on topics such as GRE preparation, the fundamentals of academic research writing, compiling literature reviews, and preparing successful graduate application materials.

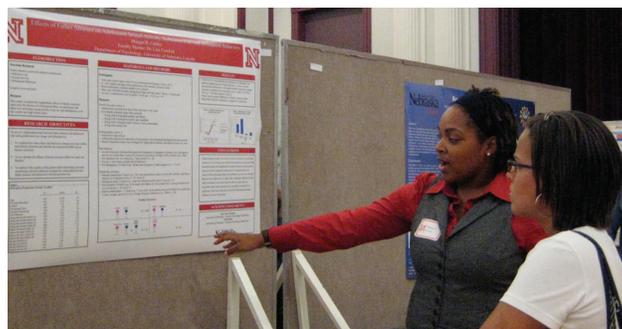
During MSRE, students explore what it's like to conduct independent research in an academic setting, similar to the experiences they'll encounter as a graduate student. For many Scholars, MSRE is the defining moment when they realize that the process of research itself can be rewarding on multiple levels. As Beth Ridling noted, "... the McNair experience is not about perfection. It is about growth as a scholar, as a researcher, and as a person."

McNair Scholars who participated in the 2009 McNair Summer Research Experience were: Morgan Conley, psychology; Mike Gubbels, computer science; Michael Harpster, English; Drew Nelson, geosciences; Bethany Ridling, psychology; Andrea Rieger, criminal justice; Sherri Sklenar, anthropology; Jeanette Samuels, political science; Brian Shreck, political science; and Brittany Sznajder-Murray, child, youth & family studies.

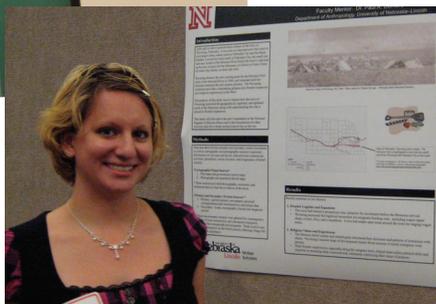
To showcase the hard work and finished student projects, the McNair Scholars Program hosted a research colloquium on July 30 in which scholars presented their work to an audience of faculty members, graduate students, and others from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds.

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

In addition to the McNair Research Colloquium, Scholars, also participated in the Nebraska Summer Research Symposium, where they were able to present their work in poster format to a diverse group of fellow student researchers from around the nation.



Scholars presented their research at various colloquia and symposiums last summer. Pictured clockwise from top right: Morgan Conley, Brittany Sznajder-Murray, Sherri Sklenar, Mike Gubbels, and Brian Shreck.

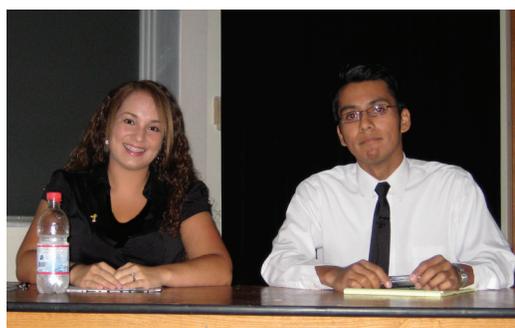
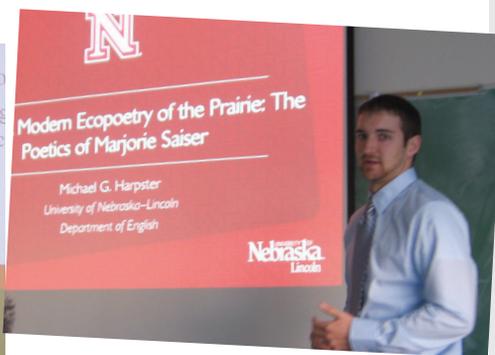


Thank you to the graduate students, Master Scholars, and McNair alumni who served as moderators and provided feedback for the McNair Research Colloquium:

- Paul Breitreutz**, Sociology
- Neal Bryan**, Agronomy
- Tara Cossel**, Master Scholar, Psychology
- James Engelhardt**, English
- Emily Haferbier Trotter**, Sociology
- Amy Hillard**, Psychology
- Kristin Javorsky**, TLTE
- Jesse Koch**, Geosciences Department
- Amy Lehman**, Mechanical Engineering
- HarmoniJoie Noel**, Sociology
- Melissa Tarasenko**, Psychology
- Tareq Tawaiha**, TLTE
- Mackenzie Waltke**, Biological Sciences

Senior Scholar Research Projects

Scholar	Major	Presentation Title	Research Mentor(s) & Department
Morgan Conley	Psychology	<i>Effects of Father Absence on Adolescent Sexual Activity, Substance Use, and Delinquent Behaviors</i>	Dr. Lisa Crockett and Sarah Beal, Psychology
Michael Gubbels	Computer Science	<i>Budgeted Machine Learning of Bayesian Networks</i>	Dr. Stephen Scott, Computer Science & Engineering; and Amy Lehman, Mechanical Engineering
Michael Harpster	English	<i>Toward a Modern Eco-poetry of the Prairie: The Poetics of Marjorie Saiser and Di Brandt</i>	Dr. Thomas Lynch and James Engelhardt, English
Drew Nelson	Geology	<i>Petrography and Sedimentology of the Pennsylvanian Holder Formation in South Central New Mexico and the Orogrande Basin</i>	Dr. Tracy Frank and Jesse Koch, Geosciences
Andrea Rieger	Criminal Justice	<i>Interactions Between the German Cockroach (<i>Blattella Germanica</i>) and Pooled Bloodstain Patterns</i>	Dr. Dave Carter and Amanda Fujikawa, Entomology
Bethany Ridling	Psychology	<i>Insight and Locus of Control as Related to Aggression in Individuals with Severe Mental Illness (SMI)</i>	Dr. William Spaulding and Melissa Tarasenko, Psychology
Jeanette Samuels	Political Science	<i>I Think I Can: African-American Students, Busing, and Self-Efficacy</i>	Dr. Helen Moore and HarmoniJoie Noel, Sociology
Brian Shreck	Political Science	<i>Re-Exploring the Old "New Dark Continent of American Politics": Examining Entities for Natural Resource Management as Special District Governments</i>	Dr. Sarah Michaels and Mike Gruszczynski, Political Science
Sherri Sklenar	Anthropology	<i>Paths to Zion: The Mormon Settlement at Wyoming, NE</i>	Dr. Paul Demers and Robert Kilts, Anthropology
Brittany Sznajder-Murray	Child, Youth & Family Studies	<i>Impact of Deportation Policies on Midwestern Latino Children</i>	Dr. Cody Hollist and Aaron Anderson, Child, Youth & Family Studies



Senior Scholars shared their research at the 2009 California McNair Scholars Conference. Pictured are: (top row, l to r) Drew Nelson, Beth Ridling, and Michael Harpster, (bottom row) Andrea Rieger (with Isai Orozco from Cal Poly Pnomia), and Jeanette Samuels.



Reflections on the 2009 California McNair Symposium

Perhaps Michael Harpster summed it up best when he wrote, “The University of California-Berkeley McNair Scholars Symposium was the perfect culmination to a stressful, yet rewarding summer of academic research.” After months of focused work with faculty research mentors, graduate student mentors, and McNair staff, ten UNL McNair Scholars traveled to the University of California at Berkeley to present their independent research projects to fellow scholars from around the nation. The 17th Annual California McNair Scholars Symposium, which was aptly titled, “Building the New Academy,” served as the capstone event to the 2009 McNair Summer Research Experience.

While attending the conference, Michael discovered a wide range of research topics. He especially enjoyed “the degree to which each student’s research was related to or a complement of another student’s work. As I saw more and more presentations and heard a greater number of student questions, I began to realize that the conference represented the final step of the scientific research process. . . . Ultimately, the University of California-Berkeley McNair Scholars Symposium reinforced my enthusiasm and dedication toward being admitted into a graduate program of study.”

Throughout the four-day conference, UNL Scholars presented their research, typically in a presentation that included two or three other McNair Scholars from around the country whose research was related thematically or generally within the discipline. Andrea Rieger shared her research during one of the six plenary sessions featured throughout the conference. Much like her fellow McNair Scholars, Andrea represented the University of Nebraska–Lincoln well as she presented her work in front of 200 audience members!

Brian Shreck described the experience as a confidence builder. Although he had the difficult task of presenting his work in a concurrent session where his topic was very different from his fellow presenters, Brian received “compliments both verbally from scholars from other schools, and in writing on the feedback forms.” Brian said, “overall, presenting my research to such a diverse audience increased my level of confidence, and I feel that having this presentation behind me will make me more confident the next time I give a presentation.”

Jeanette Samuels simply “enjoyed the opportunity to share my work with others.” She noted, “It (research) is something that I take seriously and am anxious to continue, so I wanted to be able to portray that at the conference. But I also found myself seriously intrigued by others’ research. Listening to others made me consider my research in a new light, both what I was examining and its implications. And hearing some of the questions and suggestions people had for me let me know that others thought it was worthwhile as well.”

One of the trademarks of the Berkeley conference is how McNair Scholars repeatedly return with a sense of accomplishment and confidence—always well deserved, and this year was no exception! As Jeanette reflected, “I met people at the conference that I know are bound to do great things with their research, and now, a growing part of me is convinced I will join them.”

The trip wasn’t all work and no play, however. Arguably, the highlight of the trip was the evening cruise on San Francisco Bay. Scholars had dinner, enjoyed the sunset and Golden Gate Bridge on the top deck, sang karaoke and danced. After three months of hard work, UNL Scholars were well rewarded and able to celebrate with others who could appreciate all the hard work that everyone had contributed. As Morgan Conley concluded, “Despite the stress and sleepless nights of the summer, I would do it again—in a heartbeat—to experience this capstone event.”



2008-09 McNair Cohort

Alumnus Spotlight – Martin Diaz

by Maegan Stevens-Liska



Martin Diaz, University of Nebraska-Lincoln McNair Scholar and bachelor's degree recipient in May 2009, began a doctoral program in electrical engineering at the University of Delaware in Fall 2009. Like many of his undergraduate peers, Martin thought "graduate school was only for future professors," but his acceptance into the UNL McNair Scholars Program dramatically changed that view.

The Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program, supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, prepares selected UNL undergraduates for graduate study at the doctoral level. It targets first generation college students, as well as those who are underrepresented in their respective disciplines, giving them the tools they need to successfully enter and thrive in graduate study. Two central aspects of the program are the opportunity for Scholars to participate in research and an outstanding support system to help students realize their educational goals.

Martin believes this support, and ultimately the confidence boost it provided, led him to "think big." After his first semester in the McNair Program, learning the ins and outs of graduate education, Martin began to think seriously

about graduate school as an option. Working with his UNL faculty mentor, electrical engineering professor Rodney Soukup, Martin developed a passion for solar energy research.

Such support and encouragement from mentors is a key feature of the McNair Scholars Program. A one-on-one relationship with a faculty member helps Scholars understand the particulars of graduate student life, learn about the work professors do, and experience personal success in the sometimes unfamiliar world of university academics.

In his second year as a McNair Scholar, Martin earned a prestigious Science Undergraduate Laboratory Internship from the Department of Energy to participate in a summer research experience at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center on Stanford University's campus. This program targets the nation's best and brightest science and engineering students who want the opportunity to work and gain research experience at national laboratories. Although this honor came along with responsibilities that may have been overwhelming to some undergraduates, Martin says he felt well prepared. He noted, "because of my previous experience in the McNair Summer Research Experience and the confidence I gained during the program, I felt that I was able to be more productive and focus on research and not worry about making mistakes."

This experience shed light on the non-teaching opportunities and needs for researchers with advanced degrees. "I'm very interested in research," Martin added, "We need a solution to our current energy problems to get away from overseas oil dependency, and solar energy is the answer." He plans to focus his research on semiconductors for thin film solar cells, in hopes of discovering ways to produce more cost-effective solar cells.

By and large, McNair Scholars around the country are well known for being among the most dedicated and ambitious students on university campuses, a reputation that will follow them for a lifetime. Martin discovered this when he started his graduate program at the University of Delaware. The McNair program director, eager to meet a "Nebraskan extension" of the McNair family, welcomed Martin to Newark.

Martin says he plans to get involved with the University of Delaware McNair program and continue the chain of encouraging promising new Scholars to "think big."

Note to McNair Alumni

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 Gives Back to Lincoln Community

While some UNL students spent fall break resting or catching up on school work, McNair Scholars volunteered their time and energy on two local community service projects: the *Matt Talbot Kitchen & Outreach (MTKO)* and *Habitat for Humanity*.

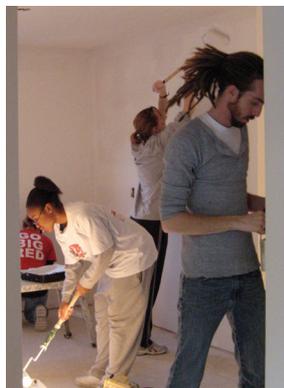
Matt Talbot Kitchen & Outreach (MTKO) provides lunch and dinner for Lincoln's working poor and homeless, seven days a week. The meals are prepared and served by volunteer teams from Lincoln and the surrounding area. Arrangements were made with Sydne Werrick-Knox, the MTKO volunteer coordinator, for McNair Scholars and staff to assist other groups with serving meals and cleanup. On October 19, Scholars served dinner with members of St. David's Episcopal Church from Lincoln. On October 20, they assisted *A Place at the Table*, a group from south central Nebraska. Over 100 meals were prepared and served each night. Scholars and staff participating in the MTKO project were: Melissa Garfield, Jeff Lopez, Brittany Sznajder-Murray, Leslie Martinez and Carol Boehler.

Habitat for Humanity was founded on the conviction that every man, woman and child should have a safe and affordable place to live. The Lincoln / Lancaster County chapter of Habitat for Humanity was formed in 1988; since that time, 99 homes have been built in the Lincoln area, providing housing for 467

people, including 150 adults and 317 children. (<http://www.lincolnhabitat.com/historymission.htm>)



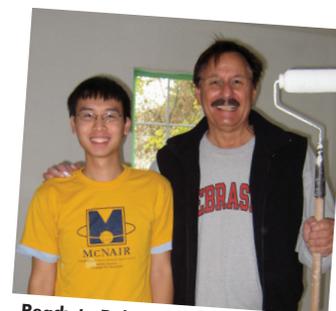
Feeding the Hungry - McNair Scholars and staff joined with two area groups to serve meals at MTKO. Melissa Garfield and Leslie Martinez are pictured above with members from St. David's Episcopal Church. Jeff Lopez, Brittany Sznajder-Murray and Leslie Martinez are pictured below with the group, *A Place at the Table*.



Focused - Sherri Sklenar, Jeanette Samuels, Kaitlin Leslie and Zach Garfield are focused on their work.

Michelle Williamson, volunteer coordinator for the Lincoln / Lancaster County Habitat for Humanity, scheduled October 20 for the UNL McNair group to prime and paint the interior of a home for a single father with four children.

McNair Scholars and staff who volunteered for the Habitat for Humanity project were: Khoa Chu, Zach Garfield, Michael Harpster, Kaitlin Leslie, Jeanette Samuels, Tyler Scherr, Brian Shreck, Sherri Sklenar, Dr. Laurie Bellows, Dr. Richard Lombardo, Carol Boehler, Neal Bryan, and Maegan Stevens-Liska.



Ready to Roll - Khoa Chu and Dr. Rick Lombardo prepare to paint.



Tight squeeze - Neal Bryan, Michael Harpster, and Brian Shreck work to finish the final room of the day.



Habitat for Humanity - McNair Scholars and staff paused for the camera at the end of a long day. Pictured from left to right are: Dr. Laurie Bellows, Carol Boehler, Maegan Stevens-Liska, Tyler Scherr, Brian Shreck, and Michael Harpster.



Prime Time - Jeanette Samuels, Sherri Sklenar, and Zach Garfield work on priming the hall.

McNair Graduate Student Mentors

The McNair Graduate Student Mentoring Program has proven to be an invaluable component for both Scholars and mentors. Modeled after UNL's Preparing Future Faculty Program, Senior Scholars are matched with graduate student mentors or postdocs as an additional resource to help them prepare for graduate school. 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 2009-10 graduate mentors! They include: Aaron Anderson, child, youth, and family studies; Sarah Beal, psychology; James Engelhardt, English; Amanda Fujikawa, entomology; Mike Gruszczynski, political science; Maria Herrera, psychology; Robert Kilts, anthropology; Jesse Koch, geosciences; Amy Lehman, mechanical engineering; HarmoniJoie Noel, sociology; Melissa Tarasenko, psychology; and Xiaoli Zhang, mechanical engineering.

Alumni News: Degree Watch

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

Congratulations to these UNL McNair Alumni who earned advanced degrees during 2008-09:

Tessa Durham Brooks, Ph.D., Cellular and Molecular Biology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, August 2009

Tricia Echtenkamp, Ph.D., Chemical Engineering, Cornell University, May 2009

Erica (Ginn) Holley, M.S., Business Administration, University of Washington, June 2009

Marlene Grayer, M.A., Mathematics, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, August 2009

Eric Henning, Ph.D., Clinical Psychology, Temple University, August 2009

Malay Khammal, Master of Professional Accountancy, Georgia State University, December 2008

Danielle (Luther) Luebke, M.A., English, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, May 2009

Le Nguyen, Master of Architecture, Illinois Institute of Technology, December 2008

Nathan Palmer, M.A., Sociology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, December 2008

Jessica Wall, M.A., History, Indiana University, May 2009

McNair by the Numbers

Since the McNair Scholars Program began at UNL in 1995, it has served **196** students. Of those, **174** – or **88.7 percent** – have earned bachelor's degrees. **Seventy-three** have gone on to earn master's degrees; **13** have achieved doctoral degrees, and **8** have earned professional and other degrees. Currently, **22** UNL McNair alumni are enrolled in Ph.D. programs, **24** are actively pursuing master's degrees, and **3** are pursuing professional doctorates.

It's the Little Things That Make the Big Difference

As you prepare for graduate school, keep this important piece of advice in mind: It's the little things that happen along the way that make the difference in your path to becoming an academic. Yes, it's true, those seemingly little things you do in your interactions with people often make a big difference down the road. Tina Seelig, the Chong Moon Lee Executive Director of the Stanford Technology Ventures Program, offers this advice in the book *What I Wish I Knew When I Was 20: A Crash Course on Making Your Place in the World*.

Seelig argues that showing appreciation for the things others do for you has a profound effect on how you're perceived. Keep in mind that everything someone does for you has an opportunity cost. If someone takes time out of his or her day to attend to you, there's something they haven't done for themselves or for someone else. It's easy to fool yourself into thinking your request is small. But when someone is busy there are no small requests. Always assume a thank-you note is in order and look at situations when you don't send one as the exception to the rule. Because so few people actually do this (unfortunately), you will certainly stand out from the crowd.

Seelig offers a few additional "little things" that can make a big difference:

Remember that there are only fifty people in the world. Of course, this isn't true literally, but it often feels that way; the person sitting next to you might become your boss, your employee, your customer, or your sister-in-law. Over the course of your life, the same people will quite likely play many different roles. I've had many occasions where individuals who were once my superiors later came to me for help, and I've found myself going to people who were once my subordinates for guidance. The roles we play continue to change in surprising ways over time, and you will be amazed by the people who keep showing up in your life.

Don't burn bridges, no matter how tempted you might be. You aren't going to like everyone and everyone isn't going to like you, but there's no need to make enemies. Your reputation precedes you everywhere you go. Imagine you're interviewing for a job that has dozens of candidates. The interview goes well and you appear to be a great match for the position. During the meeting, the interviewer looks at your résumé and realizes that you used to work with an old friend of hers. After the interview, she makes a quick call to her friend to ask about you. A casual comment about your past performance can seal the deal or cut you off at the knees.

Your reputation is your most valuable asset--so guard it well. Every experience we have with others is important, whether they are friends, family, co-workers, or service providers. In fact, some organizations actually capture information about how you treat them, and that influences how they treat you. For example, at some well-known business schools, every interaction a candidate has with the school or its personnel is noted. If a candidate is rude to the receptionist, this is recorded in his or her file and comes into play when admissions decisions are made. This also happens at major companies such as JetBlue. If you're consistently rude to JetBlue's staff, you will get blacklisted and find it strangely impossible to get a seat on their planes.

The point is this: you can't make everyone happy all the time, but consider how you want to handle difficult situations and how possible outcomes might affect you in the future. Seelig suggests that you "imagine how you will describe events later, when the dust has cleared." She notes, "How you want to tell the story in the future is a great way to assess your response to dilemmas in general. Craft the story now so you'll be proud to tell it later." The road to graduate school may be a long one, but in the end, your reputation and relationships with others follow you wherever you go—make sure the impression you leave is a good one!

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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.

Planning Your Graduate Career: Trajectory for Success

The “Next Stage Approach” (Reis, 1997) to professional preparation requires you to “think ahead, look ahead, and . . . act ahead” of the stage you currently occupy. By asking questions (thinking ahead), observing others (looking ahead), and acquiring experiences (acting ahead), you’ll be better prepared to assume that “next position” in your graduate career.

Begin by assessing your current skills and abilities. Categorize your accomplishments (awards) and experiences (research, publications, presentations), and look at the gaps. In which areas do you need to strengthen your skills? Think about the graduate students and professors you know and ask yourself this question: What did these individuals do to get where they are? One way to gain insight is by conducting an informational interview to find out how individuals arrived at their current positions. Some questions to keep in mind:

- How did they gain entry into graduate school/faculty position?
- What was the timeframe of their advancement through graduate school?
- What education (advanced degrees) or training did they need to advance?
- To what do they attribute their success (e.g., mentorship programs, networking, or something else)?
- What patterns and similarities do you notice in the backgrounds of successful graduate students and faculty in the field?

After you’ve gained a sense of how people generally arrive in graduate programs, start translating that information into goals you have for yourself. Break your prospective career path down into a stack of building blocks, and think about what short-term goals you associate with each block. Dissecting the process of career ascension will force you to create smaller, less overwhelming goals, while keeping your vision in mind.

- Where do I want to be in three years? In six years? In ten years?
- What skills will I eventually need to acquire to be successful?
- How can I acquire those skills? Through an advanced degree? Through a specific job I’ll have in the future?
- What experiences do I want to have on my way up?

Reis notes you should ask yourself the following question at each stage of your graduate career: Am I likely to encounter this situation as a professor or scientist and, if so, what can I learn from it that will help to better prepare me for such a role?

Graduate school is just around the corner, so start planning now for your graduate career. As David Payne, Associate Vice President for Educational Testing Service, notes, “To succeed in your next position, determine the skills needed in that position and then minimize any difference between your skills and the needed skills. Start to behave as if you are in the next position.”

Reis, R. (1997). *Tomorrow’s Professor: Preparing for Academic Careers in Science and Engineering*. New York: Wiley, John & Sons, Inc.

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.



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