Welcome, 2018 McNair Cohort!

Nestor Hernandez is a sociology major from Lincoln, Nebraska. He is working with Dr. Lisa Kort-Butler from the Department of Sociology.

Juliana Rodriguez is a biological systems engineering major from Omaha, Nebraska. She will be working with Dr. Greg Bashford from Biological Systems Engineering.

Aleece Barnard is a civil engineering major from Colorado Springs, Colorado. Aleece will be conducting research with Dr. Christine Wittich from Civil Engineering.

Logan Miller is a psychology major from Palos Park, Illinois. Logan is conducting research with Dr. Mike Dodd from the Department of Psychology.

My-Linh Luc is a microbiology major from Papillion, Nebraska. She is working with Dr. Angela Palmer-Wackerly from the Department of Communication Studies.

Baudello Abrica is a psychology major from Riverside, California. He will be conducting research with Dr. Lorey Wheeler from the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families, and Schools.

Nancy Nguyen is a biochemistry major from Lincoln, Nebraska. Nancy is conducting research with Dr. Wayne Riekhof from the Department of Biochemistry.

Juliana Rodriguez is a biological systems engineering major from Omaha, Nebraska. She will be working with Dr. Greg Bashford from Biological Systems Engineering.

"True courage comes in enduring, persevering, and believing in oneself."

– Ronald E. McNair, Ph.D.
McNair Scholars Tackle Graduate-Level Challenges

During the McNair Summer Research Experience (MSRE), Scholars have the opportunity to explore their research topic under the guidance of a faculty mentor and to develop skills critical for success in graduate school. After successfully completing their projects during the 2018 MSRE, ten UNL Scholars presented their results at the 2018 National McNair Scholars Conference at UCLA. At the end of MSRE, we ask the Scholars to reflect on what it means to be a McNair Scholar, as well as on their summer research experience and presenting at a national McNair conference. We've included some of their remarks on the following pages.

“During the past year in the McNair program I have grown as an individual and as a scholar. I have learned that academia is more than just showing up to your classes and giving your best effort. Being a scholar is about investigating important questions through research.” – Trevor Fellbaum

“Looking back at the things I’ve learned through the McNair program and MRSE has lead me to believe that I am a better scholar and I’m more prepared to handle graduate school and in turn my own life and future.” – Taylor Billington

“McNair has been and most likely will continue to be the greatest aid I have for achieving my goal of earning a Ph.D. Being a part of this community and knowing I will always have a place with UNL McNair is truly amazing.” – Ashleigh Herrera

“The MSRE experience has reaffirmed that I am on the right path. I enjoy what I do, and want to continue the research I’m doing. I had respect for academia before, but now, I have a better idea of what they go through all the time. My career aspirations of becoming a professor and researcher at an R1 institution have remained the same.” – Kiley Gilbert

“During the McNair research experience, I have been able to identify what I want to do with my life after I graduate. I want to continue researching nutrition in graduate school. I’ve learned much more about my field throughout the journey. For example, I have learned where some of the best obesity research centers are in the U.S., which is where I want to work and attend graduate school.” – Darius Fox

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Thank you to all of the faculty, postdoctoral, and graduate student mentors who contributed their time and expertise to work with McNair Scholars during the 2018 McNair Summer Research Experience and who continue to support the Scholars’ research and graduate application efforts. Your support is invaluable to the success of our program!
Congratulations to December 2018 McNair Grad!

Carolyn Herrera, Raymore, Missouri, earned her bachelor’s degree in psychology in December 2018. She conducted her McNair research project with Dr. Kathryn Holland from the Department of Psychology on sexual assault, PTSD, and reporting attitudes in the U.S. Department of Defense. Carolyn is looking forward to entering graduate school in Fall 2019.

The McNair Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Mentoring Program offers our UNL McNair Scholars a supportive community, as well as advice, insight, and encouragement as they conduct research and prepare to enter graduate school. In turn, it offers our mentors a chance to gain experience mentoring a rising scholar associated with one of the nationally-recognized Department of Education TRIO programs.

We’d like to welcome the 2018-19 McNair postdoctoral and graduate student mentors! They include: Safiya Beckford, nutrition & health sciences; Shaina Kumar, psychology; Marc Lussier, computer science & engineering; Alexandra Martin, nutrition & health sciences; Behrooz Motealleh, chemical & biomolecular engineering; Chaise Murphy, nutrition & health sciences; Aldo Raelarijaona, physics; and Casey Tisdale, psychology.

They join continuing graduate mentors: Jenn Andersen, sociology; Michelle Howell, Ph.D., biological sciences; Aditya Immaneni, computer science & engineering; Vincent Perez, biochemistry; Trace Vardsveen, psychology; and Mohsen Zahiri, Ph.D., mechanical & materials engineering.

Since the UNL McNair Scholars Program began in 1995, we’ve served 295 undergraduates. Excluding the continuing Scholars, 97.8 percent have earned their bachelor’s degree. Forty-two UNL McNair Program alumni have achieved Ph.D.s, 135 have earned master’s degrees, and 19 have earned professional degrees. Currently, 24 UNL McNair alumni are enrolled in Ph.D. programs, 6 are pursuing master’s degrees, and 3 are pursuing professional degrees.
The McNair Program is a focused, comprehensive program that provides much more than advice on how to prepare for entrance to a graduate program. Participating Scholars become an integral part of a learning community, receiving support from each other, McNair Program staff, UNL faculty, and other resources as they develop the research skills they need to prepare for the next stage in their educational careers.

For the 2018-19 Academic Year, 11 UNL McNair Scholars received research funding from the Undergraduate Creative Activities and Research Experiences (UCARE) Program, as well as from the National Strategic Research Institute, the IANR ARD Undergraduate Student Research Program, and departmental funding.

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<th>Scholar</th>
<th>Project Title and Faculty Research Advisor</th>
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| Cole Dempsey          | UCARE Project: *Analysis of a Mobile Support System for Gait Rehabilitation*  
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Carl Nelson, Department of Mechanical and Materials Engineering                                      |
| Darius Fox            | UCARE Project: *The Effect of Caloric Restriction on Resting Metabolic Rate*  
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Karsten Koehler, Nutrition & Health Sciences                                                   |
| Kiley Gilbert         | UCARE Project: *The Effects of Patriotism and Immigration on Cultural Intertia*  
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Cynthia Willis-Esqueda, Department of Psychology                                               |
| Daisy Guiza Beltran   | IANR ARD Project: *Structural and Mechanical Analysis of Mycobacterium Tuberculosis WhiB7 in Stress Response and Antibiotic Resistance.*  
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Limei Zhang, Department of Biochemistry                                                       |
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Massimiliano Pierobon, Computer Science & Engineering                                          |
| Maham Javaid          | UCARE Project: *The Effects of Chromatin on Suppression of X-linked Gene in Drosophila testes.*  
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Colin Meiklejohn, School of Biological Sciences                                              |
| Sonoor Majid          | UCARE Project: *Assessing the impact of DHA on fatty acid profiles and circulating serum biomarkers, lipocalin-2/NGAL, insulin, and leptin, of food insecure pregnant women in Zambia*  
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Concetta DiRusso, Department of Biochemistry                                                   |
| Mark Nail             | National Strategic Research Institute Project: *Unmanned Aerial System for Underground Sensor Installation.*  
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Carrick Detweiler, Department of Computer Science & Engineering                               |
| Nancy Nguyen          | Departmental Funded Project: *Defining the Mechanism of Action of Plant Derived Polymethylene Antifungal Compounds.*  
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Wayne Riekhof, Department of Biochemistry                                                      |
| Elizabeth Otto        | UCARE Project: *Hip-hop Music and the Sexualization of African American Women*  
Faculty Advisor: Dr. David DiLillo, Department of Psychology                                                        |
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Rajib Saha, Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering                                |
McNair Scholars disseminated their research findings at local, regional, and national conferences during Summer and Fall 2018:


**Darius Fox – Fox, D., Martin, A., Murphy, C., Koehler, K., (2018, October).** *Contribution of Body Composition and Metabolic Adaptations to the Decline in Resting Metabolic Rate During Prolonged Calorie-restricted Weight Loss.* Poster presented at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Nebraska Physiological Society, Omaha, Nebraska.

**Fox, D., Koehler, K. (2018, August).** *Body Composition and Metabolic Adaptations Contribute to the Decline in Weight Loss.* Poster presentation at the 2018 Summer Research Program Symposium, Lincoln, Nebraska.


**Fox, D., Koehler, K. (2018, July).** *Contribution of Body Composition and Metabolic Adaptations to the Decline in Resting Metabolic Rate during Prolonged Calorie-Restricted Weight Loss.* Oral presentation at the 2018 McNair Summer Research Colloquium, Lincoln, Nebraska.


More Regional and National Conference Presentations


Doctoral and Master’s degrees earned in December 2018

Karise (Carillo) Curtis, Ph.D. (McNair Scholar 2009-11) earned a master’s degree in criminal justice in December 2012 from University at Albany–SUNY and earned a Ph.D. in criminal justice, with a focus on comparative criminology of violence, from SUNY-Albany in December 2018.

Bryan Hermosillo (McNair Scholar 2013-2015) earned a master’s degree in geology in December 2018 from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Career Updates

Nathan Palmer, Ph.D. (McNair Scholar 2004–2006) has been promoted to assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at Georgia Southern University.

Alumni Publications


McNair Alumni – keep us informed as you advance through your career, including progress in graduate school, publications, and other milestones. You may update your information at anytime: http://www.unl.edu/mcnair/scholarupdate.shtml