Welcome 2013 McNair Scholars

Congratulations McNair Graduates 2012–2013

December 2012
Erica Carrillo
Alden Loredo

May 2013
Jessica Cottrell
Wendy Flores
Genesis Granados
Shanae Jefferies
Jessica Le
Katherine Najera
Elizabeth Pelser
Judith Velazquez

August 2013
Nicholas Tafacory
Karina Robledo

McNair Program Receives Continued Funding

In September, the U.S. Department of Education awarded St. Edward’s University a Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program annual TRIO grant of $231,000 for five years. The program is designed to encourage first-generation and low-income and undergraduates from underrepresented groups to prepare for doctoral study. The program provides funding for faculty-directed research that includes a stipend for scholars. In addition, McNair scholars benefit from visits to graduate schools, academic counseling, course tutoring, professional conferences, preparation for GRE exams, and advice and assistance with the graduate school selection and application process.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of McNair Scholar Vanessa Bailey Adams (left) who died on May 22, 2012, of a pulmonary embolism. She graduated magna cum laude from St. Edward’s University with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. She is greatly missed by the St. Edward’s community.
From the Director’s Desk

Our tenth year as a McNair Program has been a special and eventful one. We have been funded for another five years, and we have our very first McNair scholar to receive a PhD. A doctorate in Chemistry was conferred on Dahlia Campbell ’06, a member of our second cohort, by Purdue University in December 2013. You can read more about Dahlia in this newsletter. We anticipate four more doctoral degrees to be conferred over the next year and at least four master’s degrees conferred in 2013.

Some changes to the program have been made for the 2012–2017 funding cycle. We have raised the number of scholars served annually to 28, with 15–20% from Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) fields. Increasing the number of graduate students in STEM fields was a competitive priority for the grant proposal. Consequently, we have added two STEM faculty advisors, Dr. Lisa Goering and Dr. Jason Callahan, who will provide additional support to our STEM scholars.

We continue to have success with our scholars’ submissions to the National Conference for Undergraduate Research, a highly competitive conference. Four scholars will be presenting this year in the fields of biology, biochemistry, political science and global studies. Their names and presentation titles are listed in this newsletter.

Although the sequester is reducing our funding by at least 5%, I believe we can continue to provide the same quality of preparation, support and service to our scholars and prepare them for success in their graduate studies. We have been fortunate over the past 10 years to have support from faculty, staff and administration from across the university. With such support, we are confident that we will continue to have outstanding scholars who will achieve great things while at St. Edward’s and in their graduate studies.

Molly Minus, PhD
Director, McNair Scholars Program
Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs
Professor of Education

Thank you to the following St. Edward’s faculty members who support the program by mentoring, directing research or serving on the advisory board. McNair would not be a successful program without their dedication.

2012–2013 MCNAIR FACULTY MENTORS

School of Behavioral and Social Sciences
Peter Beck, PhD
John Cotter, PhD
Michael Disch, PhD
Anna Escamilla, PhD
Kelly Green, PhD
Mity Myhr, PhD
Rodrigo Nunes, PhD
Patricia Romano, PhD
Jeanetta Williams, PhD

School of Natural Sciences
Henry Altmiller, PhD
Jason Callahan, PhD
Paula Raelynn Deaton, PhD
Fidelma O’Leary, PhD
Mary Kopecki-Fjetland, PhD

School of Humanities
Lori Peterson, PhD
Mary Rist, PhD
Jack Green Musselman, PhD

Faculty Advisory Board
Sarah Henseler, PhD – New College
Richard Kopec, PhD – School of Natural Sciences
Stephanie Martinez, PhD – School of Humanities
Frank Smith, PhD – School of Education
Kathleen Wilburn, PhD – School of Management and Business
Jeannetta Williams, PhD – School of Behavioral and Social Sciences

STEM Faculty Advisors
Jason Callahan, PhD – School of Natural Sciences
Lisa Goering, PhD – School of Natural Sciences

McNair Scholars Program at St. Edward’s University

The Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program is dedicated to providing research-related experiences and academic support to talented undergraduates who are interested in pursuing a PhD degree. This federally funded TRIO program targets first-generation college students from low-income families and students from populations underrepresented in graduate education.

Program benefits include:
- Academic, career and personal counseling
- Research mentoring by a faculty mentor
- Preparation for GRE
- Assistance in applying to graduate school
- Professional development seminars
- Paid travel to professional and research conferences
- Training in research methodology
- Summer research internship with research stipend of up to $2,800
- Graduate school application waivers from more than 200 universities

Eligibility requirements include:
- GPA of 2.7 or better
- Undergraduate status with 45 or more credit hours
- U.S. citizen or permanent resident
- Low-income and first generation college student, or member of a group underrepresented in graduate study (i.e., Hispanic, African-American, Native American, or Pacific Islander [Guamanian, Native Hawaiian or Samoan])

For more information, visit think.stedwards.edu/mcnair or call 512-428-1268.
McNair Scholars Present Their Research at University of North Texas (UNT) Conference

Sociology major Shanae Jefferies ’13 travelled with Political Science major Dellea Copeland ’14 and Psychology major Jessica Le ’13 to the 15th Annual Texas National McNair Scholars Research Conference at University of North Texas (UNT). The conference showcased the works of more than 100 McNair scholars from around the United States and provided participants with the opportunity to partake in a graduate school fair.

SAVE THE DATE:
Donald Asher: July 6, 2013

The McNair Scholars Program and the School of Natural Sciences will host a workshop on campus on Saturday, July 6, 8:30 a.m.–4 p.m. The presentation is based on Asher’s best-selling guide to getting into graduate school, *Graduate Admissions Essays*. Asher specializes in professional development and higher education. This event is open to all students. The fee is $65 and includes a light breakfast, a boxed lunch and Asher’s book.
**McNair Scholars Research Presentations**

**KATHERINE BENAVIDEZ**
Research Director: Peter Beck, PhD, School of Natural Sciences
- Symposium on Undergraduate Research and Creative Expression (SOURCE), St. Edward’s University, 2013

**ERICA CARRILLO**
"USSR: Continuity in a New Russian State"
Research Director: Mity Myhr, PhD, School of Behavioral & Social Sciences
- 9th Annual St. Edward’s University McNair Scholars Research Symposium, 2012
- South Texas Regional McNair Scholars Research Conference, September 2012

**DELLEA CPOLAND**
"Transition to Democracy in the Middle East"
Research Director: Rodrigo Nunes, PhD, School of Behavioral & Social Sciences
- 9th Annual St. Edward’s University McNair Scholars Research Symposium, 2012
- South Texas Regional McNair Scholars Research Conference, September 2012
- 27th National Conference on Undergraduate Research
- Symposium on Undergraduate Research and Creative Expression (SOURCE), St. Edward’s University, 2013
- 15th Annual Texas National McNair Scholars Research Conference

**MARIA DEL SOL CORDOVA**
"The effects of divided attention in lineup recognition accuracy"
- 2013 Southwestern Psychological Association Conference in Fort Worth, TX

**JESSICA COTTRELL**
"Implications of the Black Male Body: An Analysis of the Societal Texts for the Young African American Male"
Research Mentor: Tera Hunter, Princeton University
- South Texas Regional McNair Scholars Research Conference, September 2012

**WENDY FLORES**
"Does Polyphenolic Antioxidants & Coffee extract attenuate the Imidacloprid effects in Adult C. elegans?"
Research Director: Fidelma O’Leary, PhD, School of Natural Sciences
- 9th Annual St. Edward’s University McNair Scholars Research Symposium, 2012
- South Texas Regional McNair Scholars Research Conference, September 2012

**GENESIS GRANADOS**
"Physical Characteristics, Personality Traits and Attraction"
Research Director: Jeannetta Williams, PhD, School of Behavioral & Social Sciences
- 9th Annual St. Edward’s University McNair Scholars Research Symposium, 2012
- South Texas Regional McNair Scholars Research Conference, September 2012
- Symposium on Undergraduate Research and Creative Expression (SOURCE), St. Edward’s University, 2013

**SHANAE JEFFERIES**
"Normative Determinism, A Look at Preparations for Naming"
Research Director: Jeannetta Williams, PhD, School of Behavioral & Social Sciences
- 9th Annual St. Edward’s University McNair Scholars Research Symposium, 2012
- South Texas Regional McNair Scholars Research Conference, September 2012
- 15th Annual Texas National McNair Scholars Research Conference

**KATHERINE NAJERA**
"Rotenone’s Effect on the Presentation of Parkinson’s Disease"
Research Director: Fidelma O’Leary, PhD, School of Natural Sciences
- 9th Annual St. Edward’s University McNair Scholars Research Symposium, 2012
- South Texas Regional McNair Scholars Research Conference, September 2012
- The 16th Annual MKN McNair Heartland Research Conference, September 2012
- Symposium on Undergraduate Research and Creative Expression (SOURCE), St. Edward’s University, 2013

**APRIL NAVARRO**
"Acute withdrawal but not long-term withdrawal from methamphetamine affects sexual behavior in female rats"
- 2013 Southwestern Psychological Association Conference in Fort Worth, TX

**VANESSA NEUTZLER**
"Examination of the effects of physiological stress and cortisol levels on the acquisition of long-term declarative memories."
Research Director: Fidelma O’Leary, PhD, School of Natural Sciences
- Symposium on Undergraduate Research and Creative Expression (SOURCE), St. Edward’s University, 2013

**LESLEY NIX**
"Modulation of acetylcholine signaling and its effects on protein aggregate clearance and toxicity in a transgenic Caenorhabditis elegans ASH neuron"
Research Director: Fidelma O’Leary, PhD, School of Natural Sciences
- 9th Annual St. Edward’s University McNair Scholars Research Symposium, 2012
- South Texas Regional McNair Scholars Research Conference, September 2012

**JESSICA LE**
"Working Memory and Transfer Training in Children with ADHD"
- The 16th Annual MKN McNair Heartland Research Conference, September 2012
- 15th Annual Texas National McNair Scholars Research Conference

**ERYN LEE**
"Undergraduate Exposure to Chromatography"
Research Director: Mary Kopecki, PhD, School of Natural Sciences
- 9th Annual St. Edward’s University McNair Scholars Research Symposium, 2012

**MARY KOPECKI**
"Undergraduate Exposure to Chromotography"
Research Director: Fidelma O’Leary, PhD, School of Natural Sciences
- 9th Annual St. Edward’s University McNair Scholars Research Symposium, 2012
- South Texas Regional McNair Scholars Research Conference, September 2012
Symposium on Undergraduate Research and Creative Expression (SOURCE), St. Edward’s University, 2013

**ELIZABETH PELSER**
“Examination of the Role of the Calcineurin OSM-9 in Mediating Enhanced Olfactory Discrimination in Caenorhabditis elegans”

**Research Director:** Fidelma O’Leary, PhD, School of Natural Sciences

9th Annual St. Edward’s University McNair Scholars Research Symposium, 2012
South Texas Regional McNair Scholars Research Conference, September 2012
Texas Academy of Science 2013 Annual Meeting
Symposium on Undergraduate Research and Creative Expression (SOURCE), St. Edward’s University, 2013
27th National Conference on Undergraduate Research

**NICHOLAS TAFACORY**
“The Participation and Influence of Social Groups within the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1906”

**Research Director:** Mity Myhr, PhD, School of Behavioral and Social Sciences

9th Annual St. Edward’s University McNair Scholars Research Symposium, 2012
South Texas Regional McNair Scholars Research Conference, September 2012
World History Association of Texas (WHAT) Regional Conference, March 2013
Symposium on Undergraduate Research and Creative Expression (SOURCE), St. Edward’s University, 2013

**ELVIA VALLE**
“Attempts at European Unification: The Long View”

**Research Director:** Peter Austin, PhD, University Programs

9th Annual St. Edward’s University McNair Scholars Research Symposium, 2012
South Texas Regional McNair Scholars Research Conference, September 2012
27th National Conference on Undergraduate Research
Symposium on Undergraduate Research and Creative Expression (SOURCE), St. Edward’s University, 2013

*Acceptance of the scholars was as of the printing of this newsletter.

Best Wishes in Graduate School

Congratulations to our scholars who have been accepted to the following graduate schools:

**Erica Carrillo**
St. Edward’s University
*Master of Liberal Arts (MLA)*

**Elizabeth A. Pelser**
UT Southwestern Medical Center
*PhD Program Division of Basic Science*

**Shanae S. Jefferies**
Iowa State University
*Master of Sociology*

**Nicholas B. Tafacory**
St. Edward’s University
*Master of Liberal Arts (MLA)*

**Jessica Le**
University of North Texas
*Master of Science, Clinical Mental Health*

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Being a McNair scholar was the greatest blessing that I received as an undergraduate. My success and preparation for graduate study was largely due to the McNair Scholars Program. I can still feel the influence of the program two years later. I have a drive and work ethic that I acquired during my summer research with the McNair Program. The support that I received from faculty and staff has been phenomenal. Marta Noyola, assistant director of the McNair Program, has been a driving force throughout my graduate experience, constantly giving me advice and, at times, much-needed pep talks. As a graduate student, having that accolade — McNair Scholar — attached to my name not only opened doors for me, but changed how professors viewed me. They know that because I was a McNair scholar as an undergraduate, I am committed to my education.

I’m currently finishing my last semester and writing a thesis on rock ‘n’ roll in the 1950s, focusing on Chuck Berry, Muddy Waters and Etta James. These artists will be used to show the evolution of music since the 1950/1960s. Additionally, I’m researching 20th century U.S. Social History PhD programs to apply in the fall.

I benefited from the McNair program in so many ways; it provided me with a strong undergraduate foundation of research that has contributed to my success in graduate study. My oral histories with the Enduring Women project are currently on display at the Bullock Texas State History Museum. I have witnessed firsthand what the McNair Program can do and would advise upcoming scholars to take every opportunity McNair gives you and run with it. You have an incredible support system that values and believes in you. As long as you have the drive and determination, a quality that all McNair scholars have, you can do anything.

**McNair Alumni Highlight: Kristen Perez**

> Kristen Perez (BA in History ’12)

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**Intellectual Entrepreneurship Internship**

McNair scholars participate in the Intellectual Entrepreneurship Internship program, which pairs them with doctoral student mentors from the University of Texas at Austin. Scholars shadow their mentors by sitting in on graduate classes at UT, assisting with doctoral research and meeting with their mentors to discuss life as a graduate student.

**Elizabeth A. Pelser (Biology 2013)** My experience with the IE Internship was incredibly helpful during application time. I was mentored by UT Institute for Neuroscience PhD student Ben Scholl, who gave me advice on everything from the application process to grant writing and presenting research at conferences. His educational background is very different from mine: his undergraduate degree is in Physics and he was in biomedical engineering for some time before deciding to pursue a PhD. Listening to the story of his application process gave me some much-needed reassurance that graduate schools would look at me as more than the sum of my undergraduate degree. He was admitted based on his skills as a researcher, and in every meeting his enthusiasm for his work was infectious. We were able to attend a conference together, where we both presented posters on our research. He set an example for me through his hard work and dedication to his degree. I enjoyed learning about graduate school from his perspective and feel confident that I will have a similarly good experience.

**Nicholas B. Tafacory (Global Studies 2013)** The IE internship has been an extremely valuable experience. I gained significant insight into how undergraduate education differs from graduate school. My mentor, Andy Straw at UT, helped me prepare my CV and personal statement. With his help I feel that I have a much stronger and more well-rounded personal statement and CV, both of which have greatly helped me with my overall applications. Through work with my mentor, I was exposed to the rigorous graduate school curriculums, class materials and the overall day-to-day graduate school process. I was able to experience the life of a graduate student more directly and gained a first-hand account of what to expect when I start my graduate studies in the fall. In fact, because of the IE program, I now know that I’m ready to take on the next step towards pursuing my graduate degree.
Academic Profile:
2006 BS in Chemistry,
St. Edward’s University
2012 PhD in Chemistry, Purdue University

How did the McNair Program help you prepare for graduate school?
The McNair Program offered me a variety of opportunities that helped me in preparation for graduate school. They provided a mentor (Dr. Henry Altmiller) who is an expert in my discipline (chemistry), someone I could learn from and someone who not only invested in me intellectually but encouraged and supported my dream of higher education. They gave me the opportunity to conduct research as an undergraduate and to garner skills that would later become valuable in conducting research as a graduate student. Consequently, I was provided with the opportunity to present my research at major conferences, where I practiced effective communication of my ideas as well as thinking on my feet. The McNair Program provided funds that helped me with tuition and other school associated costs and enabled me to focus more on studies rather than being concerned about tuition payments. I found a support system in the McNair Program, people who encouraged me on my path to success and friendships that will last a lifetime.

What advice do you have for our current McNair undergraduate and graduate students?
I would say, dream big and believe in yourselves and never give up because you have people who believe in you and are willing to support you as you work towards your dreams.

Who has inspired you in life and why?
My mother (Hortense Drummond) is my biggest inspiration. She was a single mom with two kids and not much of an education. She struggled but she ensured that we were never hungry. I saw perseverance in her, self-motivation, tenacity and courage, because she had a bigger dream for us than she was able to live herself.

What do you most appreciate about your mentor/advisor?
My graduate school adviser (Dr. Robert Graham Cooks) is the one of the most brilliant people I have ever met. They say that in life you should not seek happiness first, you should first seek your purpose, and if you find purpose, you will find happiness. I think he has found his purpose and passion (teaching, chemistry and mass spectrometry), which is why, even at his age, he is awake early mornings to be in the lab. I really admire that about him and it encourages me to seek my purpose in this world.

How would you characterize your educational path?
I would say my educational path has been a character-building experience, one full of many good Samaritans, especially at the road blocks. I have had many experiences, which all helped to make me a better and well-rounded individual. The most important part of the journey was the kindness, encouragement and support I received from numerous people (too many to name them all here) along the way. I owe them all a lot and wouldn’t have made it this far without their investments.

What are your future plans?
There is a lot I would like to do. Currently I am working at a chemical company as a development chemist. My dream here is to take on a leading role in a particular sector of the organization through a balance of my technical expertise as a scientist and my avid interest in business. Aside from work, one of my passions has always been making education available to those kids who are less fortunate. I constantly find opportunities to volunteer at schools with less resources available to them, where I can be a part of teaching children chemistry, a subject area which they often believe is very difficult. It’s always a pleasure to see the looks on their faces when they finally grasp the concepts. I plan to continue in this endeavor and hopefully one day help children, not only by being a mentor but also by providing financial support to attain their dreams.
Alumni Spotlight: Where Are They Now?

Many of our students are currently pursuing a graduate education — they are well on their way to earning a doctoral degree. The following is a brief list of some of our most successful scholars.

**SCHOLARS IN DOCTORAL PROGRAMS**

Daniel Lyles, PhD Science & Technology Studies, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Amalia Martinez, PhD Clinical and Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Alliant International University

Victoria Rodriguez, PhD Developmental and Psychological Sciences, Stanford University

Brenda Yvonne Torres, PhD School of Medicine Immunology, Stanford University

Leon Alberto Venegas, PhD Biological Science-Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology Program, University of Illinois at Chicago

**PhD GRADUATE McNAIR SCHOLARS**

Dahlia Campbell, PhD (2012) Chemistry, Purdue University

Ilse Carrizales, PhD (2013) Counseling Psychology, Oklahoma State University

**GIVE US AN UPDATE!**

The U.S. Department of Education requires all McNair Programs to provide Annual Performance Reports and keep track of alumni until the attainment of a doctoral degree. Alumni can update their information by contacting Marta Noyola at martaic@stedwards.edu — or visit us on Facebook and like our page, St. Edward’s University McNair Scholars Program.