Scholars Shine at Heartland Conference

By Robert Rodriguez
Project Coordinator

The 6th Annual Ronald E. McNair Heartland Research Conference, co-hosted by the University of Kansas and Kansas State University, was a resounding success. The conference was held at the Marriott Country Club Plaza Hotel in Kansas City, Missouri from September 27-29, 2002.

Over one hundred McNair Scholars from a dozen universities attended the conference and presented their research projects. Scholars came from universities as far away as New Mexico and Wyoming.

Six KU Scholars were among those who presented research projects: Chad Clarke, Aarika Fulson, Bonnie Hanni, JoMarie Hart, Sarah Smarsh, and LaTasha Reed. In addition to presenting their research projects, the attending Scholars participated in a graduate school fair and heard presentations from guest speakers including Dr. Myra Gordon, Associate Provost for Diversity and Dual Career Development at KSU, and Dr. Allan Headley, the Program Director of the Division of Graduate Education at the National Science Foundation. The scholars were also treated to a panel of Ph.D. holders who encompass a wide variety of professions.

Doctoral Candidate joins McNair Staff

By Robert Rodriguez
Project Coordinator

The KU McNair Scholars Program is pleased to announce that it has hired John Bruni to serve as a half-time Program Assistant. John holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Rochester, a master’s from Villanova University, and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in English at KU. He has taught many courses in the English department, received numerous awards, including a Graduate School Summer Fellowship, and presents papers regularly at national conferences. An article of his which examines the effects of computers on student writing has been accepted for an edited collection. He has been working for the Dean’s Scholars Program for over one year and has served as a tutor, writing consultant and GRE instructor for the KU McNair Program in previous years. John is committed to the principles of diversity and equal educational opportunity for all, and we welcome him as the newest member of our McNair Staff.

Technology Grant Improves Services for Scholars

The KU McNair Scholars Program has received a one-time $10,000 technology supplement to be used toward the purchase of computer hardware, software and/or to support technology training for staff. New Dell Pentium 4 computers are now available for Scholar use.
**Scholar Spotlight**

**Aarika Fulson**

By Jennifer Boyce
Student Assistant

Energetic, caring, creative. These are three words that KU McNair Scholar Aarika Fulson would use to describe herself. Aarika is a transfer student from Wichita State University and is majoring in Communication Studies.

This past summer Aarika completed her first Summer Research Internship in which she conducted research on African American shopping habits. Two of the most beneficial things she derived from this experience were the opportunity to delve deeper into a topic that interested her and to be able to build strong friendships with other students in the Program.

Through the McNair Scholars Program, Aarika also has participated in graduate school fairs in order to learn about various graduate programs throughout the nation. The Program has provided several other benefits for Aarika, and has helped enable her to be successful in her college experience. She says, “By being involved in this program, I have been able to learn about graduate school, understand it’s process, and figure out what I can do once I have a master’s degree.”

When Aarika is not busy with her undergraduate schoolwork, she can be found at the KU Office of Multicultural Affairs and Multicultural Resource Center where she works. Through this job she assists other undergraduates and particularly first year students at the University. She also spends a lot of time putting her McNair Scholars knowledge to use, as she is busy finding a graduate program that best fits her and her educational goals and filling out graduate school applications.

The determination and motivation Aarika possesses will be instrumental for achieving her future goals. After graduation, Aarika plans to pursue her master’s degree in counseling psychology, and eventually earn a doctorate.

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**McNair Mentor Accolades**

**Peter Ukpokodu**
Chair of the African and African-American studies and courtesy associate professor of theatre and film, published an article, “African Heritage from the Lenses of African-American Theatre and Film,” in the spring 2002 *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*. His essays on Imamu Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones), August Wilson, Athol Fugard and others have been published in Black Drama. His reviews of “The Drama of South Africa” and “South African Theatre As/And Intervention” were published in the May 2002 Theatre Survey.

**Roma Lee Taunton**
professor of nursing, received the Sigma Theta Tau International Pinnacle Mentor Award at the Chapter Leader Academy in Indianapolis in June. The award recognizes an outstanding individual who fosters and actively supports professional development and growth and scholarly advancement of nurses.

**Cornel Pewewardy** (associate professor, T&L) published the article “Surveying the Landscape: Perceptions of Multicultural Support Services and Racial Climate at a Predominately White University” in the Winter/Spring 2002 issue of the *Journal of Negro Education* (Howard University) with Bruce Frey (assistant professor, PRE). Cornel also facilitated the panel discussion “Native American Jurisprudence: Native Philosophies and Tribal Law” at the 2002 Tribal Law and Governance Conference, which was held at the KU School of Law on October 4 and 5.

**McNair Spring 2003 Calendar**

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<th>Month</th>
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<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>16 Classes begin&lt;br&gt;20 MLK Day, Office Closed&lt;br&gt;24 Symposium, 3pm—5pm&lt;br&gt;246 JR Pearson Hall&lt;br&gt;27 Individual meetings begin</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>14 Symposium, 3pm—5pm&lt;br&gt;246 JR Pearson Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>3 FAFSA Deadline&lt;br&gt;7 Symposium, 3pm—5pm&lt;br&gt;15-23 Spring Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>4 Symposium, 3pm – 5 pm&lt;br&gt;246 Joseph R. Pearson Hall&lt;br&gt;12 Lied Center Event &quot;Brown Butterfly,&quot;</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>1 McNair Annual Awards Banquet&lt;br&gt;9 Stop Day</td>
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In spring 1998, a McNair Scholar, Laurie Ramirez, convinced me to apply to the McNair Scholars Program. My decision to apply and the Program’s acceptance of my application proved to be one of my better educational moves. As an undergraduate in the Bachelors of Social Work program, I had just completed a year-long research and statistics class taught by Mahasweta Banerjee, a social work professor. Her insistence in my learning the principles of research complemented the goals of the McNair Scholars’ research component.

My research looked at the variables that affected the self-esteem of Two-Spirit persons (Native American & Canadian gays, lesbians and bisexuals). The literature search produced mostly historical information on Two-Spirit people, although I found cross-cultural self-esteem studies on mainstream lesbian and gay teens. No one had conducted a study on the self-esteem of Two-Spirit people. This made my research all the more interesting. I constructed my measure (survey), mailed it out and as the responses came back I had to turn the data into numbers. Then came the statistical number crunching. I pushed them this way, pulled them that way, stood back and looked at them for some kind of pattern. The numbers seemed to be endless. There were so many variations that I wanted to try and would lay in bed after an exhausting day and wonder at what the results were yielding, as variables became statistically significant. With the help of my mentor, Dr. Michael Yellow Bird (now at Arizona State University), I completed my research.

After graduating with a bachelor of social work degree from KU in 1999, I moved back to Seattle, Washington and began working as a social worker in the Native American Community. After going to school for 4 years including all but one summer, I decided to wait to apply to grad school. I needed a break and a period of not being poor. I had also wanted to get some practical experience in my field, so I would better understand the principles and theories in a Master of Social Work program. In January 2002, I applied to the University of Washington’s MSW program and was accepted into their advanced standing program, which means I would graduate with a master’s in 11 months. I was offered and accepted a position as a Research Assistant on a project conducted by Karina Walters, Ph.D., (Choctaw Two Spirit). The research will be looking at the overall wellness of Two-Spirit People. In all of these endeavors, I give thanks to the many people the Creator has placed in my path (Laurie Ramirez, Chico Herbison, Tanya Kooi, Robert Rodriguez, Michael Yellow Bird, Mahasweta Banerjee, Karina Walters and many more).
With a committed staff you will inevitably have a quality program. Tanya and Robert’s dedication to the Scholars’ success is reflected in the success I have achieved in my academic and personal life. From family matters to decisions about which direction to go in life, the McNair staff would always encourage me to follow and pursue my dreams. The McNair staff is devoted to what they do. They care about their students and are intent in helping them achieve success. They instilled in me the concept of believing in myself. They encouraged me to overcome self-imposed limitations and cast aside thoughts of inferiority. The office has been like a therapist’s office, a soup kitchen, and an academic resource center. From reading and re-reading my writing drafts to counseling me in my personal life the embrace of the program has minimized many of the stresses of being a first generation low-income college student.

The most meaningful benefit that I derived from my participation in the Program is a newly refined direction in life. For this I give thanks to being amongst those who truly care about me and want to see me succeed. At the McNair office, I was surrounded by caring, supportive friends, and given the attention that one greatly appreciates and needs at a university of 27,000 students. The McNair program indeed has helped me to be an accomplished scholar. Even as a graduate student I continue to visit the McNair office. Much like a home away from home I feel comfortable knowing if I have a problem of any nature I have an un-judging environment I can retreat to for comfort and advice.

By Eve Lane
Former McNair Scholar

There is no way for me to express in writing just how much the McNair Scholars Program and its staff has helped me to become a better student and a more insightful scholar. As an undergraduate, whenever I was unsure about how to do something, the McNair office was where I would go in search of answers. Whenever I would score low on an exam or whenever I just needed a friend to talk to, I would know that the McNair office was a safe refuge for me to run and seek guidance. It was also a place for fellowship with friends.

The Program’s staff and Scholars encompass a wide range of races, ethnicities, age, and academic and personal interests. This makes for interesting group dynamics. With such a broad spectrum of people, I would never know what would happen in the office, but I always knew there would be excitement.