McNair Banquet Honors Graduates and KU Chancellor

Twelve graduating McNair Scholars were honored at the Annual McNair Awards Banquet on May 4. The 2008-09 graduates were: Daniel Barrera, Kasey Cullors, Ibari Ezekwe, Vernon Harris, Jennifer Henslee, Jay Middleton, Mahalet Misgana, Sarah Neff, Sylvia Niccum, Noy Phimphasone, Lisa Reichuber and Chris Reine. In addition, graduating Scholar Sylvia Niccum and former Scholar Sarah Smarsh provided the audience with inspirational speeches. The event was held in the Kansas Union, and included the presentation of the Educational Opportunity Programs Champion of Opportunity Award to former McNair mentor and KU Chancellor Robert Hemenway. The award recognizes an individual who demonstrates exceptional leadership in advocating for underrepresented students.

Four special awards were also presented to graduating McNair Scholars. Sylvia Niccum received the LaTina Sullivan Memorial Award, Chris Reine received the Chico Herbison Leadership Award, Jay Middleton received the Ronald E. McNair Challenger Award and Jennifer Henslee received the McNair Spirit Award.

McNair Scholars Program Staff

This program is federally funded by the United States Department of Education in the amount of $271,392 per year.

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Former KU McNair Scholars Earn Ph.D.’s

Shawn Arellano, a marine biologist conducting research in Hong Kong, and Joni Murphy, an art historian and professor at Haskell Indian Nations University, have two things in common: both are former KU McNair Scholars and both recently earned Ph.D.’s.

Shawn earned her doctoral degree from the University of Oregon in June 2008. Her dissertation focused on the biology and ecology of the larvae of a deep-sea mussel in the Gulf of Mexico. In the course of conducting her research, she has taken deep-sea submersible dives, traveled throughout the US and abroad, and been featured in a Science channel special. She is currently a post-doctoral fellow at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

Joni earned her doctoral degree from the University of Kansas in December 2008. For her dissertation she studied the Native American contemporary artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith. Her research interests include the significance of native grasslands, accounts of Native Americans present at the Battle of Little Big Horn and gender issues in captivity narratives. She was selected to be a Fulbright Scholar to Nepal in 2007 and plans to serve as a Fulbright Scholar to Peru in 2010. She is currently an English professor at Haskell University. Congratulations Dr. Arellano and Dr. Murphy!
Scholar Achievements

Joshua Gapetz, current McNair Scholar, has been awarded the KU Harley S. Nelson Scholarship for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Dagoberto Heredia, current McNair Scholar, has been named the KU Hispanic American Leadership Organization Student Senate Representative.

Chris Reine, current McNair Scholar, was awarded the 2009 Donald K. Alderson Award. This award is presented to one graduating senior at KU each year in recognition of his or her outstanding commitment to university service.

Derrais Carter, former McNair Scholar, was recently accepted into the National Council for Black Studies/Ford Foundation Summer Institute.

Brent Lank, former McNair Scholar, has earned a master’s degree in writing and book publishing from Portland State University.

Dorothy Stites, former McNair Scholar, has been named the Deputy Secretary of the Kansas Department of Labor. Dorothy states, “As a past graduate of the Ronald McNair program, I have a strong belief in the program and the preparation afforded me for any level of success I have achieved.”

McNair Mentor Accolades

Ruth Ann Atchley, associate professor of psychology, will serve as the interim chair of the KU psychology department beginning July 1, 2009.

Bill Carswell, associate professor of architecture, moderated and presented at the Kendall College of Art and Design “Thinking Outside the Frame: The New Visual Culture” colloquium.

James Gentry, professor of journalism, conducted a workshop on understanding financial statements at the “Covering the 2009 Financial World: New Rules and New President” program sponsored by the Arizona State University Reynolds National Center for Business Journalism.

Dorothy Pennington, associate professor of communication studies and African and African-American studies, joined the editorial board of the Oxford University Scholars’ Round Table Forum on Public Policy and presented “The Rhetorical Condition as Mediator in the Response of African-Americans to Perceptions of Terrorism: Condoleezza Rice as Symbol” at the National Communication Association’s African-American Communication and Culture Division meeting.

McNair Scholars Abroad—Australia

For the past several months I studied abroad in Australia. This has encouraged me to think every step of the way—from the time I left the United States and for every moment I spent in Australia, Fiji and Malaysia. These three countries seem to infinitely differ from each other in terms of their development and the way their citizens treat each other.

Some of the lifestyles in the far southern hemisphere are nothing like those in America. I sometimes questioned whether any rights or opportunities existed for the middle-class or their minorities. This thought struck me when I observed the Australian Aborigines in rural areas, Fijian individuals who are not part of the royal family, and women’s rights being violated on the streets of the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur. The most respected people in Malaysia and the Fijian Islands are those of the kings’ and chiefs’ family, and they seem to be the only ones with dreams and future goals. On my trip around the Fijian Islands, we stopped in a small village where they did not have running water, and the dreams of the future leaders, their children, do not exist. Education is not emphasized and the knowledge of other groups is not seen to be important as it would only help improve the lifestyle of those who are part of the respected groups. Every group is socially predetermined, and no one dares to go against the standard.

From what I have seen, I know this experience will stay with me until my last day on this earth. Study abroad is an opportunity only a few individuals in America and the world are fortunate enough to experience. I am glad I am one of them, and I hope more people find the courage to do so as it will help them understand their way of life and those of others, and perhaps inspire them to change the world for the better.

KU McNair Scholars Program To Host Puerto Rican EPSCoR Scholars

Two students from the Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, Recinto de San German McNair Scholars Program will participate in the 2009 KU EPSCoR Summer Research Internship, which will be held in conjunction with the McNair SRI. Joel Millan and Eric Ortiz will conduct and present research projects, take a GRE test prep course and participate in other scholarly activities.
Maryland Conference Reflections

By Noy Phimphasone
Current McNair Scholar

Attending the 10th Annual McNair Scholar and Undergraduate Research Conference at the University of Maryland at College Park was a very enjoyable and amazing experience. When I heard about the opportunity to present my research at a national level, I immediately applied. At the Heartland McNair Research Conference, I only presented initial results of my presentation. Since then, I was able to gather more data and present a finished research project. Being able to present my finished project was a very rewarding experience and I felt grateful for this chance.

McNair conferences allow scholars to strengthen their networking skills, establish new friendships, and learn new research from different scholars. At this conference, I was able to befriend several students from California State University at Fullerton which is one of the graduate programs I applied to. I was also a part of the scholar-to-scholar panel where scholars talked about their McNair experience and gave advice to other scholars.

After the conference ended, we were able to stay a night in Washington DC. I have never been to Washington DC before and I especially wanted to attend this conference during this presidential administration. One of my favorite places to see was the White House. It felt very surreal being there. I was really hoping Michelle Obama would come out so I could at least get an autograph; unfortunately, I had no such luck.

Current and Former Scholars To Attend Graduate School

Congratulations to the following current and former McNair Scholars who will enter graduate programs in fall 2009:

- **Daniel Barrera** will attend the University of California at San Diego’s Biological Sciences Ph.D. Program, where he plans to pursue an emphasis in plant genetics.
- **Kasey Cullors** will attend Bowling Green State University’s Master’s Program in Popular Culture.
- **Jennifer Henslee** will attend Middle Tennessee State University’s Industrial and Organizational Psychology Master’s Program.
- **Richard Martinez** will attend New Mexico State University’s Counseling Psychology Ph.D. Program.
- **Jay Middleton** will attend Northern Iowa University’s Master’s Program in Clinical Psychology.
- **Mahalet Misgana** will attend the University of Kansas’s Audiology Doctorate Program.
- **Sylvia Niccum** will attend the University of Kansas’s Master’s Program in Curriculum and Teaching.
- **Chris Reine** will attend Washburn University’s Master’s Program in Counseling Psychology.
- **Andria Walden** will attend the University of Kansas’s Master’s in Social Work Program.

Scholars Present Research at Oklahoma State University

Four KU McNair Scholars presented their research at the 20th Annual Oklahoma State University Research Symposium in February 2009. **Sabrina Gregersen, Jay Middleton, Earl Brooks and Ibari Ezekwe** made the five hour trip from Lawrence, KS to Stillwater, OK.

The OSU Research Symposium was more than just an academic conference. In addition to presenting research to faculty evaluators and peers, students heard from guest speakers, conducted graduate program visits and participated in social activities. The four KU McNair Scholars also were able to meet former KU McNair Scholar **Eboney Crawford**, a doctoral student in OSU’s counseling psychology program.
Scholar Spotlight: Emily Hooker

By Clarice Amorim
McNair Student Assistant

As a teenager, Emily Hooker dreamt of going to college and being an attorney. She changed her mind about that career, but her aspiration for a post-secondary education continues. She is a double major in journalism and psychology, and plans to go to graduate school and earn a doctoral degree in social psychology.

Emily has been very successful at KU: she not only is a member of the University Honors Program and a McNair Scholar, but was also recently selected to be a Dean’s Scholar. As a McNair Scholar she will conduct a 2009 Summer Research Internship where, under the mentorship of Dr. Ann Brill, she will analyze representations of men in magazines. “I am very excited about these opportunities,” she said. Being a good student does not mean that Emily spends all of her time studying: “I hang out with friends and I love watching movies, love to cook with my boyfriend and talk on the phone with my family,” she said.

When asked what was most important in her college years thus far, she smiled. “There was not one single life-changing event since I came to college. It is more the fact that I am here, I’m making it, and I am very proud.”