Greetings! We hope this newsletter finds you well. First we want to announce that the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program at The University of Kansas has received funding for serving students for another five years. We are excited to continue to serve traditionally underrepresented students in graduate education in pursuing Ph.D. degrees and contribute to the diversity of professoriate and research institutes. Our strengths comes from our great research institution that espouses strong faculty and administrative support. We are grateful to faculty and research institutes/centers that supported the grant proposal. Special thanks to our grant writing and editing team that submitted a successful proposal (Dr. Ngondi Kamatuka, Dr. Maritza Machado-Williams, Dr. Whitney Court, Dr. Karin Chang-Rios, Annie McKay, and Allyson Flaster MS.Ed, Rebecca Dukstein, M.S.Ed., Julia O'Dell, Kimberly Moore).

We have had an action-packed year at KU McNair and wanted to use this special feature to highlight our graduating class, participation at various research conferences, Summer Research Internship and Symposium, and few notes from our Scholars who enrolled in graduate school this semester.

From the McNair Scholars Staff, we wish you a all a Happy Holiday and wish you the best in the New Year to come. McNair Scholars Staff

Please visit our website at: www.mcnair.ku.edu
Visit the “Degrees Earned by Former Scholars” page to ensure your information is correct and contact the McNair Scholars Program at mcnair@ku.edu or (785)864-3412 to update your information. Also, join our fan page on Facebook @ KU McNair Scholars.
Scholar Achievements

Sarah Bregman, a current McNair Scholar, was awarded the Foreign Language Area Studies Award.
Jessica Brooks, a current McNair Scholar, was awarded an NSF Research Fellowship.
Cody Lown, a current McNair Scholar, was awarded the TRIO Student Graduate Fellowship.
Adam Nicholson, a current McNair Scholar, was awarded the KU Undergraduate Research Award, J. Michael Young opportunity award to attend the Annual ASA meeting, and was named a Hall Center Scholar.
Kristopher Velasco, a current McNair Scholar, was awarded the Rising Junior Award by the Political Science department.
Carolisa Watson, a current McNair Scholar, was awarded the Elizabeth Miller Watkins Memorial Scholarship and was named a Hall Center Scholar.
Brian Miller, a former McNair Scholar, received Master of Counseling from Arizona State University.

Earl Brooks, a former McNair Scholar, received an MA in English at UNC Chapel Hill, this fall Earl will attend Penn State University for his Ph.D.
Marissa Moehring, a former McNair Scholar, received her MS in Aeronautics and Astronautics Engineering from Purdue University with a focus in Composite Materials.
Maritza Stephanie Sanchez, a former McNair Scholar, received her MS in Medical Social Work from The University of Kansas.

Publication: Journal of Undergraduate Research-KU

Diana Restrepo-Osorio, a current McNair Scholar, published her research titled: Taste and Odor Problems in Clinton Lake Reservoir’s Drinking Water.

Kenneth Stowe, a current McNair Scholar, published his research titled: Scapegoat Theory and the Discursive Representations of Immigration And The Migrant Body.

Senior Reflections

By Ashleigh Dixon, Graduating McNair Scholar

Through the McNair Scholars Program I was able to see that I am capable of much more than I initially gave myself credit for. I have been able to use the tools of research and my drive for success to complete tasks such as: writing a proposal, researching in depth the areas of study that I have interest in, and presenting my research clearly to individuals whom are not in my field.

Last summer I was afforded the opportunity to attend the University at Buffalo’s 17th Annual McNair Scholars Conference, where I presented my research to college students and faculty from across the United States. I was also given the honor to present my research as the keynote speaker for the annual KU McNair Scholars Symposium, where I presented my work to fellow peers, KU faculty, and their guests.

Today I cannot imagine advancing in my field or obtaining the career I’ve always wanted without attending graduate school and completing more research. If I had to give one piece of advice for new undergraduate and/or McNair students it would be, “do not limit yourself.” The McNair Scholars Program provides students with several opportunities and experiences to grow as a professional student and gain the knowledge needed for further advancement in education.

May 12, 2012, I will graduate from the University of Kansas. My educational journey will continue onto graduate school as I apply to MPH (Master of Public Health) and MPH/MBA (Master of Business Administration) programs for Fall 2013. I plan to work at the women’s fitness center, where I am currently an intern, for the next year.

Ithar Hassaballa is a graduating senior and will attend the University of Kansas’s Ph.D. program in Public Health and Applied Behavior Science program in the fall. Ithar’s career goal is to collaborate with various health organizations and build the capacity for public health promotion. Eventually, she wants to become a public health professor. “I believe in the importance of understanding a population as a public health professional. One way of appreciating a community is by learning to become aware of the culture and the way of life of its people.”

“Although my great interest is in health and development in East Africa, I am also passionate about giving back to my American community, more specifically the state of Kansas.”

“I am grateful for the opportunities given to me by the University of Kansas, and the skills I learned here in Lawrence. The support from the Jayhawk community propels me to keep my passion for education, and I want to give back to the University of Kansas in the future.”

Ithar Hassaballa will be recognized as the best and brightest in the School of Education and will receive the Senior Leadership Award at convocation on May 12, 2012. By Mulu Negash.
This spring semester, three scholars Ithar Hassaballa, Suraj Keshary, and Ylianna Ruiz attended the 2012 National McNair Scholars and Undergraduate Research Conference at the University of Maryland. Throughout the course of the trip scholars embarked on several outings in Washington, including the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, and downtown D.C.

Before attending the conference, scholars were also given the opportunity to speak at the Congressional Breakfast. The scholars shared their experiences and met with representatives. By sharing their stories with representatives the scholars were able to show strength and determination to pursue their goals and bring life to the McNair Scholars Program.

Once at the conference, scholars presented their research and had the opportunity to network with other scholars from across the country. Yliana Ruiz describes the conference as “a great way to further her research ideas and gain a national perspective by seeing what other scholars are doing”.

Graduate School Updates

Congratulations to the following current McNair Scholars who entered graduate programs in fall 2012!

- Jessica Brooks will attend Yale University’s Master’s in Environmental Sciences program.
- Briana Sprague will attend Pennsylvania State University’s Ph.D. program in Human Development program.
- Cody Lown will attend Michigan State University’s Master’s in Geography program.
- Ithar Hassaballa will attend the University of Kansas’s Ph.D. in Public Health and Applied Behavioral Science program.
- Melissa Malcolm will attend Pittsburgh State University’s MAT in Teaching program.
- Reanna Putnam will attend Colorado State University’s Ph.D. in Sociology program.
- Patrick Miller will attend the University of Notre Dame’s Ph.D. in Quantitative Psychology program.
- Kevin Mohommed will attend Wichita State University’s Master’s in Criminal Justice program.

Newly Graduate Students

“Things are going really well. The classes and research opportunities are really rich and fun. My advisor is great, and she is really involved in the research that both I and my lab mates are doing. This was my top school, and it has exceeded my expectations!”
- Patrick Miller, University of Notre Dame

“I'm doing incredibly well at Penn State! It's been incredibly exciting to start working on research projects right away; my advisor anticipates that I'll be able to defend my thesis early.”
- Briana Sprague, Pennsylvania State University

“I have the perfect advisor to further my education. Thanks to McNair I've had a great first couple of months of grad school.”
- Cody Lown, Michigan State University

“Everything is amazing. My classmates are so interesting and very down to earth! It's definitely a strong community here.”
- Jessica Brooks, Yale University
In October, Eric Rivera & Carlos Fernandez presented their research at the national SACNAS conference. They also networked with hundreds of other scientists, ranging from undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral students from various disciplines including science, technology, engineering, & more. Scholars also attended several hundreds of booths from National Research Centers (NIH, NSF, Ford Fellowship etch). They also got to visit with various graduate programs in Biomedical research and Summer Research Programs.

SACNAS: Society for Advancing Chicanos/Hispanics and Native American Scientists Conference

In September, seven Scholars attended the 16th Annual MKN-Ronald E. McNair Heartland Research Conference in Kansas City. Sarah Bregman, Ruaa Hassaballa, Clint Jensen, Suraj Keshary, D. Adam Nicholson, Kenneth Stowe, and Erin White, presented their Summer Research Project. Scholars networked with other McNair Scholars, Faculty Mentors and visited with various graduate programs at the Graduate School Fair.
2012 Summer Research Symposium

2012 Participants

Sarah Bregman, Mentor: Dr. John Kennedy Constructing Security on Jeju Island: An Analysis of Elite Rhetoric.

Jessica Brooks, Mentor: Dr. Val Smith Water Hyacinth Biogas Production in the Lake Victoria.

Carlos Fernandez, Mentor: Dr. Liu Lingjia An Alternative Algorithm that Indicates the Time at which the Sun will Set.

Paul Fowler III, Mentor: Dr. Jennifer Weber Jacob’s Ladder—Migration of Fugitive Slaves to Kansas, 1861-1865.

Jaime Fuller, Mentor: Dr. Allan Hanson Chinese International Students and the University


Ithar Hassaballa, Mentor: Dr. Mary Fry & Dr. Theresa Brown, Strong Girls Rock Jayhawk Nation Event: Increasing Positivity Through Praise Phrases

Ruaa Hassaballa, Mentor: Dr. Peter Ukpokodu Minority Healthcare Gap: History’s Possible Affect on Minority Patients’ Trust of Physicians and Care

Suraj Keshary, Mentor: Dr. Allan Cigler Case Study: The Attempt of Conservatives in the Kansas Legislature on the Composition of the State Senate.

Cody Lown, Mentors: Dr. Shannon O’Lear Evaluating Power in the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority Network and its Influence on the Geography of Public Transportation

Adam-Daniel Nicholson, Mentors: Dr. David Smith and Dr. Tracey LaPierre God and Mammon: The Influence of Income and Religion on Political Support for Conservatism

Myette Simpson, Mentor: Dr. Elizabeth Friis The Flexibility of the Spine of Athletic and Non-Athletic Adolescents

Kristopher Velasco, Mentor: Dr. Bob Antonio, The Role of Social Capital in the Workplace: An Analysis of Social Cohesion and Efficiency

Maureen Wangare, Mentor: Dr. Glenn Adams Self-Construal as a Predictor of Acculturation Orientation and Psychological Well-Being in African Immigrants

Carolisa Watson, Mentor: Dr. Renee Perelmutter Liminal Rites in Liminal Spaces: Rites and Rituals of the Military Experience

Sarah Weaver, Mentor: Scott Reinardy Short-term Study Abroad Programs and Learning Outcomes

Erin White, Mentor: Dorthy Daley, Opportunities, Challenges, and Obstacles Inherent in Advancing Sustainable Tourism
Senior Reflections Continued

By Brittany Wilbur
Graduate Intern

Jessica Brooks is currently a graduating senior and will attend Yale University in the fall for a Master of Environmental Science in the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, funded by the National Science Foundation graduate research fellowship. There she plans to write her thesis on a water management issue in Africa.

When asked about the McNair program Jessica said "being in McNair Scholars helped me realize what I wanted out of my graduate program and shaped not only the quality of my applications, but also ensured where I was applying was a worthwhile match for me. Additionally, I have gained a lot of confidence in my academic, social, and professional abilities and potential”.

Her advice to other McNair scholars is to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the McNair program and use your professors to help you think about what you want in graduate school and life. After graduate school she hopes to work for an organization that is improving water management in the world.

Briana Sprague is currently a graduating senior and will be attending The Pennsylvania State University's PH.D. program in Human Development. She will be focusing on Alzheimer’s disease and cognitive decline in older adults.

When asked about the McNair program Briana said “this program has provided me with many opportunities that I don’t think would have been as accessible to me otherwise. McNair has, on a personal level, provided me with an incredibly supportive network that I’ve come to see as an academic family”.

Her defining moments as a McNair scholar were her first conference in Buffalo, her visit to California (UC-Davis), and the SRI. These experiences helped Jessica feel confident about her research and future plans. Her advice to other scholars would be to take advantage of the services provided by McNair. She expressed that her applications would not have been nearly as strong as they were if she had not taken advantage of the opportunities provided by McNair.