McNair Scholars Program Quarterly Newsletter at the University of Northern Iowa
End of Summer 2014

STEP UP your game with research
Learn how to find the FUNDS
Explore NEW opportunities

McNair Scholars Program
University of Northern Iowa

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We’ve all but wrapped up our Summer Research Internship, at least the on-campus segment where the work of research design, implementation, and analysis takes place. Congratulations are due to our summer scholars, Brittnie Dotson and Vanessa Espinoza, for their hard work.

As the academic year begins, we will concentrate on preparing both oral and poster presentations of the work done over the summer. We’ve tentatively scheduled a trip to Kansas City in September to make oral presentations at the National McNair Conference there. We will probably also attend another conference in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin in early November to make poster presentations and to attend the usually quite large graduate college fair.

The academic year also marks the start of a new series of seminars and workshops for our seniors designed to make a positive impact on the process of applying for admission to graduate programs. There will be other seminars directed towards our new students to give them a glimpse of what lies ahead – research and graduate education.

As I’ve said before in this space, if you’re new to McNair, take some time to look around our website [http://www.uni.edu/web/mcnair](http://www.uni.edu/web/mcnair) and at our Facebook page [https://www.facebook.com/UNIMcNair](https://www.facebook.com/UNIMcNair).

If you find that you may be interested in our program, and think that you may qualify, come by the office, give us a call, write a letter or an email or a text, or come up with a new way to communicate with us.

Regards,

Dr. Dennis M. Irons, Director
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EVENTS

August
1 Summer Research Internship Ended
1 Summer Undergraduate Research Symposium
25 Class Begins

- Check out the Calendar webpage to see the Fall 2014 Schedule (soon to be posted).

NEWS

This summer we have made many improvements to the UNI McNair Website, as well as, all of our documents are now available online.

Check out the following pages:

- **How To Apply**

- **McNair Resources**

Our website also now includes a Events and Conferences section to help our students find great regional and national opportunities to present research and learn more about the graduate school application process.

Check it out at: [http://www.uni.edu/web/mcnair/events-and-conferences](http://www.uni.edu/web/mcnair/events-and-conferences)

Virginia McCall presenting at the NAPE Conference in April. Read her story in the last issue.
Why JOIN McNair?

Brittnie Dotson with her research poster at the Summer Undergraduate Research Symposium on August 1st.

- Conduct graduate-level research under the guidance of a faculty mentor
- Receive instruction in research and writing, and presentation and communication skills
- Learn research presentation skills
- Attend retreats and weekly workshops and prepare for graduate school entrance exams (GRE), for the graduate school application process
- Attend cultural events, on and off campus
- Learn business networking skills
- Visit graduate schools nationwide and meet with graduate schools administrators and students
- Travel to National McNair Conferences to present research
- Information on graduate school fellowships
- Receive other tangible benefits, including:
  - Graduate school application fee waivers and McNair Scholars fellowships
  - Free transcripts
  - GRE fee waiver
  - GRE preparation material
  - Access to technical equipment and computers

LEARN HOW TO APPLY at http://www.uni.edu/web/mcnair/how-apply

PROMOTE MCNAIR!

Fall semester is quickly approaching. Do you know of someone that would be great for McNair?

Send him or her our way!

Need posters, brochures, general information about the program? Check out our Publications page to download materials or contact us!
Student Spotlight — Vanessa Espinoza

Vanessa Espinoza, a Spanish and education student and McNair Scholar here at UNI, had the opportunity to attend the Iowa N.E.W. Leadership Institute at the University of Iowa May 19 – 23, 2014. The week was jam-packed full of sessions and curriculum designed to empower women across the political spectrum.

Vanessa was selected with 34 other young women to participate out of 200+ applicants. This year’s class represented 12 colleges/universities across Iowa. She was recommended by Sarah Montgomery, an assistant professor for Curriculum & Instruction, to fill out an application. Vanessa said at first she did not know what to expect but after the first day, she knew the experience was going to be life-changing.

One of the first sessions Vanessa attended showcased wage negotiation. Throughout the week, all participants met with University of Iowa leaders and other speakers three times and practiced their skills in how to professionally start a salary negotiation.

Other sessions focused on philanthropy, non-profit leadership, cultural diversity, and overcoming challenges, to mention a few of Vanessa’s favorites. She said, “The stories said the same thing, you are not born a leader, anyone can be a leader.”

Vanessa said that the conference taught her leaders are created through support and finding a passion. This is what gives people the edge and momentum to make an influential change.
“Being a leader is hard, it’s not rainbows, it is hard work. If you don’t do anything, nothing will ever get done,” said Vanessa referring to what it takes to be an effective leader.

Another important part of the institute was hands-on workshops and presentations. At the end of the week, Vanessa with other team members, had to present a political action project. The team was given a law and asked to argue and explain why a law should or should no longer exist to three faculty from the University of Iowa College of Law.

Vanessa’s team was given the stance of why felons in the state of Iowa should be given the right to vote. Vanessa was also selected by her team to be the speaker for her group. Vanessa said it was a challenging activity but something that gave her practice in policy analysis, relationship-building, and strategic communication.

Reflecting on the Iowa N.E.W. Leadership Institute, she said it is an experience she will take with her as she continues to work toward her dreams of receiving her Ph.D. and being able to give back and inspire students to reach their full potential. She quoted the most important advice she took from the conference was, “We are important people as women...we have a voice and need to be heard. We need to support each other as women and need to be leaders...and find something you are passionate about.”

Further Information

If your are interested in learning more about the Iowa N.E.W. Leadership Institute, please visit the University of Iowa’s Women’s Resource and Action Center’s (WRAC) website.

If you would like to view more photos from the event, check out their Facebook page.

Special thanks to WRAC for allowing McNair to share photos from this event.

Participants standing on the steps of the Old Capitol. Photo courtesy of the University of Iowa’s Women’s Resource & Action Center. Photo taken by Laurie Haag.
Below are brief descriptions of the research two of our McNair Scholars have been working on this summer, being part of the Summer Research Internship (SRI).

SRI includes ten weeks of field and/or laboratory research with at least one faculty mentor from their academic department who guides the student’s research through to completion. Upon completion of the research, the student and faculty member prepare a report on their research project. The research is reported upon at a research symposium at the end of the summer, or in early autumn.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor for next summer, please visit the Mentors webpage.

**Brittnie Dotson**  
Junior  
Major: Biology, Minor: Chemistry  
**Research:** Atrazine is one of the most commonly used herbicides in the U.S. While effective on target plants, it has been associated with harmful effects on non-target organisms such as humans. Atrazine is a frequent contaminant in groundwater and produces several metabolites. To determine if Atrazine metabolites induce acute toxicity in non-target human cells, human liver cell proliferation assays will be performed.

**Vanessa Espinoza**  
Senior  
Major: Spanish Teaching  
**Research:** While the Hispanic population increases, so should the enrollment rate in college. Although the enrollment seems to increase, the numbers seem to be lower than other ethnic populations. I seek to find out how first generation Latinos in a Midwestern University overcome the odds to go to college. This study will focus on: the path Latino students have to go through before attending college, similarities in their culture and life at home and school (struggles, adversity, and discrimination) and their attribution to success.

**CONGRATULATIONS** to our SRI students for all their **HARD** work they put in this **SUMMER**!
Advice from a past McNair Scholar!

"The McNair program will be demanding, but it will give you the tools needed for graduate school. 30 page papers will not be as daunting thanks to the summer research project, and academic conferences will be seen as social events and not stressful experiences."

- Raul I. Munoz, McNair Scholar Alumni
  Currently a Ph.D. Student at the University of Texas at El Paso working toward a doctorate in history.

SHOUT-OUT to our Mentors!

Thank you to all our faculty mentors for SRI this summer! These faculty members are what help our students be successful. A special thanks to the following:

Dr. Jennifer Jo Cooley (Spanish)
Dr. Kavita R. Dhanwada (Biology)

Dr. Jennifer Jo Cooley served as Vanessa Espinoza’s mentor (on the left) and Dr. Kavita R. Dhanwada as Brittnie Dotson’s (on the right).
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To submit articles for consideration in Telemetry contact mcnair@uni.edu.
With any questions or concerns feel free to contact the McNair Staff listed above.