



McNair *Newsletter*

Spring 2012

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Note from the Director

Spring is a very exciting time at the offices of the McNair Scholars Program. The graduating seniors, who applied to graduate programs in many disciplines during this fall, have received their acceptances and rejections. I am so proud to report that all 11 students in the 2012 cohort are going on to M.A. or Ph.D. programs at prestigious departments at major institutions such as Duke, Notre Dame, the University of Illinois, Stanford, Miami, Indiana University, USC, and the University of California at Irvine, Riverside, and Santa Barbara.

The seniors have accomplished what we hoped they would and what each successive cohort will be asked

research interests) and our new “rising junior” cohort, which started two weeks ago, will work with faculty mentors this summer either here at UCSB or at summer programs offered by other universities around the country. As the short articles in this newsletter demonstrate, our students travel together to present their work at McNair Research Conferences as several did this year at the University of Maryland and Berkeley, write up research with faculty, and offer poster presentations at the annual UCSB undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (URCA) Colloquium. This year will also be the second year of the publication of the UCSB McNair Scholars Research Journal with articles from eight of our former students.

We invite friends of McNair (faculty, staff, and students) to visit with our scholars and talk about their work at this year’s URCA event on May 17 at Corwin, see the second issue of the McNair Research Journal when it goes online during the second week in June, and check in with the office to find out details of the August McNair research presentations, highlighting the terrific work undertaken during our summer program this year. Join us for these stimulating intellectual events that showcase our undergraduate students, those we hope will soon enough be the future leaders and faculty of colleges and universities throughout the country.

Dr. Beth Schneider

Senior Year, Next Stop, Grad School

Student Profile: Laila Nur



Laila Nur has been a McNair Scholar since 2010. Now completing her senior year, she has received acceptances from several prestigious graduate schools, including Columbia, Stanford, and the University of Michigan. Her path to becoming a McNair Scholar and graduate student was

aided by the guidance and commitment of Stephen Jones, an academic counselor, and Tara Atherly, a former Resident Director at San Rafael, who listened to her desire to teach and make a difference in this world. Laila remembers that Mr. Jones went the extra step and called the McNair office on her behalf to ensure that she knew everything about the application process and benefits it would provide her. These moments represented the beginning of a future Laila had not previously contemplated and helped build her self confidence.

Laila says that McNair is like a family because staff have taken the time to listen and help her when she has needed it. She mentions that McNair has helped her navigate the university, make decisions, and understand

her financial options.

Laila also credits the McNair summer research program for helping her to understand the foundations of conducting graduate level research under the tutelage of a faculty mentor. Through this, she gained newfound confidence in herself and her academic work. Further reinforcing her confidence, Laila received the MESA Engineering Program scholarship and Adil Yaqub is My Hero scholarship. Laila is working with Dr. Mary Brenner who she says always challenges and pushes her academically. This mentorship opportunity has given Laila a greater understanding of the level of work and specificity required in her research.

Laila believes that McNair was put in her life for a reason. She describes how the McNair student space functions as a second home and family. She comes to the office most days to study or work on grad school materials. Laila says that McNair provides guidance

to students like her who want to help themselves but are not familiar with the inner workings of the academy. Beginning in Fall 2012, Laila Nur will be working towards a Masters in Education at University of Southern California's Math for America program.



Junior Year, On the Rise

Student Profile: Anthony Hearst



McNair Junior cohort member Anthony Hearst is in the Department of Chemical Engineering. After participating as a research intern on environmental campaigns designed to promote public awareness of environmental issues, he discovered that the majority of the campaigns' advertisements were comprised of pseudo science. This sparked his

interest in crop production and methods to accurately collect data to help improve the quality and sustainability of agriculture production. Anthony is pursuing the emerging field of Remote Sensing as it applies to technologies such as global positioning systems (GPS), imaging spectrometers and computer modeling to study industrial and ecological processes on a macro scale. Remote sensing is an innovative approach to crop production management, as well as tool for gathering data on energy use and emissions from food production. Currently, the majority of Anthony's time is dedicated to working on research in the Geography Department



under the guidance of Dr. Dar A. Roberts and PhD candidate Keely Roth in the Viper Lab. The Viper Lab conducts research that closely mirrors Anthony's interests and it is the ideal place for him to expand

his knowledge about remote sensing of natural and cultivated plants species at UCSB.

Anthony is deeply appreciative of the McNair Scholars Program. He feels that the program has challenged him academically, assisted him in developing his communication and writing skills, and allowed him to explore his research interests. The McNair community has introduced him to colleagues who are going through a similar process with research, course work, and the pursuit of a post-baccalaureate degree. Anthony hopes in the future that he can engage with underrepresented students and spark their interests in studying atmospheric sciences, a field in which there are few minorities. Anthony will be spending the 2012 summer conducting research at the University of California, Irvine.



The McNair Writing Corner

by Dr. Ellen Broidy



For McNair Scholars, everything somehow comes down to writing, whether it's an application for admission to a summer program, a cv, a statement of purpose for graduate school, or a final paper for publication in the McNair Scholars Journal. No matter the length of the assignment, there is something inherently stressful about academic writing – most likely because so very much

hangs on “getting it right.”

While there is little anyone can do to alleviate fully the stresses associated with academic writing, UCSB McNair works with scholars to foster confidence in their abilities to think and write critically. From the moment a student enters the program, s/he embarks on a process of refining written communication, with a focus on articulating central questions, identifying relevant resources, building persuasive arguments, and finding solid evidence to support conclusions. In other words, from the very beginning, McNair Scholars walk the walk and talk the talk of research and scholarship. As an added bonus, scholars learn to “speak” across disciplines, sharing their knowledge and expertise both with those well-versed in their fields as well as with interested and engaged non-specialists.

As the Writing Specialist for the McNair Scholars Program, I have the pleasure (and the challenge) of helping guide young scholars on the path to clear and persuasive writing. Needless to say, this is not always an easy road – for any of us. The understandable tendency to mirror the language of published scholarly writing, often without the depth of context or meaning can result in good ideas mired in excessive verbiage and fine and novel insights buried in unnecessarily florid prose. With this in mind, my goal for McNair Scholars is simple and attainable. I want each Scholar's writing to be noteworthy for both its sophistication and simplicity – sophisticated ideas expressed in the clearest and most straight-forward terms. As we prepare the second volume of the McNair Scholars Journal, I see that collectively we are well on our way to meeting that goal.

Welcome Our New Transfers!



Adrianna Alexandrian
Major: English and Feminist Studies
Hometown: Santa Barbara, CA
Graduation Date: June 2013
Mentor: Dr. Laury Oaks
Mentor Department: Feminist Studies
Research Interests: Women's health, community health, health policy



Erenis Lemus
Major: Physics
Hometown: Hanford, CA
Graduation Date: 2014
Mentor: Dr. Deborah Fygenson and Dr. Claudio Campagnari
Mentor Department: Physics
Research interests: Biophysics/High energy particle physics



Mynor Medrano
Major: Biochemistry-Molecular Biology
Hometown: Burbank
Graduation Date: June 2013
Research Interests: Cellular communication in bacteria



Jorge Ramirez
Major: Sociology/ Black Studies
Hometown: Windsor, California
Graduation Date: Fall 2013
Mentor: Dr. George Lipsitz
Mentor Department: Sociology/Black Studies
Research Interests: Challenging dominant discourses of farm laborers and spaces within segregated racialized places



Billi Jo Starr
Major: Sociology
Hometown: Santa Barbara, CA
Graduation Date: June 2013
Mentor: Dr. John Sutton
Mentor Department: Sociology
Research Interests: Restorative juvenile justice, child development, and incarceration policies

Once McNair Always McNair! Alumni Profile: Sebastian Ferrada



UCSB McNair Scholar alumni Sebastian Ferrada, earned his Bachelors' degree in Chicana and Chicano Studies in June 2010. This year, Sebastian returned to UCSB to continue his work in the department as a Ph.D. student with advisor Dolores Inés Casillas. Regarding his transition to graduate work, Sebastian says that it "feels like a new experience" and that he has "rediscovered UCSB." Sebastian has developed a deeper level of passion about and involvement with his work, and views his life as a graduate student as "part of [his] everyday experience." Additionally, by "interacting with professors on a closer level," Sebastian has been intensely challenged intellectually. Because his work has become a central focus of his life, he finds himself "always trying to tie in new experiences with [his] personal research" to improve conditions for his communities.

Sebastian entered his graduate program with a skill set that has helped him tremendously. He attests that the UCSB McNair Scholars Program provided him with the language of graduate school, which has simplified his transition immensely. During the year Sebastian took off from school, he gained invaluable experience and practiced the skills learned during his McNair tenure to prepare for the following year's application process. Sebastian strongly recommends that current scholars have a clear vision of research interests, which, he believes, will help with the graduate school application process. Also, because graduate school is time consuming, he stresses the importance of appropriate time management.



Currently, Sebastian's research explores how language can be a marker of race and sexuality. In addition, he is a teaching assistant in his home department. Sebastian is also working with Linguistics professor, Mary Buscoltz on a project entitled, "School Kids Investigating Language in life and Society." His role is teaching ethnographic research tools to high school students in Carpinteria to help them succeed in college. Sebastian looks forward to presenting as a panelist on a presentation entitled "Listening to Accent and 'Authenticity' on Modern Family" at this year's National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies Conference.