The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program (TRIO McNair Scholars Program) introduces the E.M.E.R.G.E. (Engaging McNair Scholars in Excellence, Resilience, and Graduate Education) newsletter to highlight and celebrate the academic and scholarly achievements of the TRIO McNair scholars.

The title of this eMagazine is inspired by the article published in the January 2016 issue of *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* titled “Emerging Scholars,” we believe TRIO McNair Scholars programs are one of the best opportunities in the nation to prepare first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students for careers in academia, especially in the professoriate. We believe that our campus’ TRIO McNair scholars are some of the most talented emerging scholars in the country who have been working with some of the top scholars in their field.

In addition to promoting, celebrating, and supporting our scholars, it is important that TRIO McNair professionals and advocates continue to raise awareness about the need to increase the graduate education pipeline and diversify faculty ranks.

We cannot and do not do this work alone. We are grateful to our student scholars, faculty and research mentors, campus partners from student affairs to academic affairs, our Federal program officers, and the U.S. Department of Education for collaborating with us since 1990 to fulfill the legislative purposes, mission, and vision of the TRIO McNair Scholars Program.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about our scholars through this eMagazine. We know you will be proud.
Establishing the TRIO Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program (formally known as the TRIO McNair Scholars Program) on the campus in 1990 memorialized the legacy of Dr. Ronald E. McNair by ensuring that undergraduate first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students are provided with the academic support they need to conduct research and enroll in graduate education programs across the country, ultimately leading to the Ph.D. degree.

Our current and alumni/ae scholars represent the best of the best on campus and throughout the nation. We are very proud of the many research experiences and academic accomplishments that continue to propel our scholars in the direction of becoming future faculty at the nation’s top academic institutions. Some highlights of this past year include: producing a journal of research abstracts, scholars presenting their research at a national McNair research conference, and over 20 scholars participating in the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Undergraduate Research Symposium.

We are very pleased to report that many of our graduating scholars will be embarking upon their graduate education journey in the fall at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois at Chicago, University of California at Berkeley, University of Southern California, the Ohio State University, University of Wisconsin Madison, and Xavier University in Chicago.

The UIUC TRIO McNair Scholars Program staff work diligently each year to meet or exceed the program objectives established by the U.S. Department of Education. For example, the 2014-2015 program year yielded successful outcomes in research and scholarly service delivery, graduate school enrollment, graduate school continuation, and Ph.D. attainment. We were able to accomplish meeting or exceeding our program objectives because of student resilience and the support and collaboration of faculty and research mentors and other advocates and partners who believe in the mission and vision of TRIO McNair programs: diversify the graduate education pipeline and the professoriate.

We are grateful to so many for helping our scholars achieve their research and graduate education goals. We hope you will read and share the E.M.E.R.G.E. eMagazine with your faculty, staff, scholars, and potential students.

Appreciatively

Wallace Southerland III, Ph.D.
### McNair Scholars by College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Number of Scholars</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College of Applied Health Sciences</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>College of Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>College of Agricultural, Consumer, &amp; Environmental Sciences</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>College of Media</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>College of Business</td>
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<td>College of Engineering</td>
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### 2015-2016 McNair Faculty Mentors

- Dr. Sayeepriyadarshini Anakk, Physics
- Dr. James Anderson, Educational Policy, Organization & Leadership
- Dr. Flavia Andrade, Kinesiology & Community Health
- Dr. Ryan Bailey, Chemistry
- Dr. Renee Baillargeon, Psychology
- Dr. Daniel Bodony, Aerospace Engineering
- Dr. Kelly Bost, Human Development & Family Studies
- Dr. Jason Chambers, Advertising
- Dr. Rosanna Giordano, Illinois Natural History Survey
- Dr. Diana Grigsby, Kinesiology & Community Health
- Dr. Marc Hertzman, History
- Dr. Fatima Husain, Speech & Hearing Science
- Dr. Princess Imoukhuede, Bioengineering
- Dr. Robin Jarrett, Human Development & Family Studies
- Dr. Nicole Lamers, LAS Administration
- Dr. Zhi-Pen Liang, Electrical & Computer Engineering
- Dr. Stephen Long, Plant Biology
- Dr. Ruby Mendenhall, Sociology
- Dr. Ralph Nuzzo, Chemistry
- Dr. Eva Pomerantz, Psychology
- Dr. John Rogers, Electrical & Computer Engineering
- Dr. Nehemiah Scott, Business Administration
- Dr. Felipe Soto-Adames, Illinois Natural History Survey
- Dr. Karen Tabb Dina, School of Social Work
- Dr. Margarita De L Teran-Garcia, Nutritional Sciences
- Dr. Angela Wiley, Human Development & Family Studies
- Dr. Assata Zerai, Sociology

### SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- **100% Achievement of Program Objectives.**
- **40% Graduate School Enrollment.**
- **75% of Scholars have Cumulative GPA above 3.5.**
- **13 Scholars Graduated May 2016.**
- **12 New Cohort Scholars.**
My name is Osazomon Imarenezor and I am a senior majoring in Chemistry in the college of the Liberal Arts and Sciences. Born from two immigrant Nigerian parents from the South Suburbs of Chicago, I am deeply rooted in weaving culture, the arts, and STEM into one Mecca. My passion for research began in high school at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA). I conducted prehumen fibroblast cells in order to find correlation with the damaging effects of conventional beauty alterations among women. My research at the university began with Professor Princess Imoukhuede, Ph.D in Systems Biology where I received my first grant from the American Heart Association and later published her work in the Journal for Cellular and Molecular Bioengineering this past year. I transitioned her research focus to Sociology and am currently working under Dr. Ruby Mendenhall with the Chicago Black Mothers’ Project. I will be graduating with a bachelor of science in Chemistry and a certificate of undergraduate research.

Invited Lunch Presentation
“The Beauty of Diversifying Your Research”
Osazomon Imarenezor
Senior, Chemistry, Liberal Arts & Sciences

Undergraduate Research Symposium Winner
Aaminah Long

“Diversity as a Crutch: Black Students and Inclusive Practices at Predominately White Institutions”

Outstanding Oral Presentation in the area of Education/Social Sciences/Humanities/FAA
McNair Spotlight

My name is Aaminah Long and I am a rising senior double majoring in Psychology and Sociology. My primary area of research is education policy and leadership. Specifically, my research aims to explore the dynamic between Black students and diversity initiatives implemented at predominately white institutions. I’ve presented my research at conferences such as the Educational Opportunity Association (EOA) and Southeastern Association of Educational Opportunity (SAEOPP). I’ve been awarded with the Chez Family Foundation Scholarship, Roger B. Smith Scholarship as well as the Illinois Leadership Certificate.

My name is Theola Maxon. I am currently a senior studying Human Development and Family Studies with a concentration in Child and Adolescent Development in the college of ACES. My research is conducted under the leadership of Dr. Robin Jarrett, Assistant Professor in the Department of Human and Community Development, whose research is focused on school readiness primarily of low-income African-American children and their families. Dr. Jarrett is the type of mentor that a scholar should want because she is so willing to help her scholars and lab assistants accomplish their goals. She always motivates each of us on a daily basis! Since becoming a McNair scholar, I have presented at the following conferences: The 24th Annual National Ronald E. McNair Research Conference & Graduate Fair (October 2015), The 2015 Illinois Summer Research Symposium (July 2015), The SAEOPP McNair Conference (June 2015), The Undergraduate Research Symposium (April 2015), and The Undergraduate Research Symposium (April 2016).

My name is Arianna M. Jenkins and I am a rising senior double majoring in Psychology and Political Science. My research mentor is Dr. Joseph Cohen in the Department of Psychology. My research interests have evolved into how child maltreatment within the U.S. causes a lasting emotional and social affect and a developmental divergence from their age-related potential in education. I have attended numerous conferences, including the Undergraduate Research Symposium (2015 & 2016), Illinois Summer Research Symposium (2015), Association of Black Sociologists Research Conference (2015), and the SAEOPP National McNair Conference (2015 & 2016). I am proud to have won second place at the 2015 SAEOPP National McNair conference and have also been granted a scholarship by the Illinois Club to further my endeavors towards attaining a graduate school admission and degree.
My name is **Malik Lee** and I am a Junior in Information Systems & Information Technology. My mentor is Dr. Nehemiah Scott. Dr. Scott is a Assistant Professor in the College of Business. I have done research and data collection in the area of organizational behavior and innovation. My research interests are Technology Strategy, Corporate Governance, Small Business, and Entrepreneurship.

My name is **Kimberly Galvez** and I am a rising Junior in the Department of General Studies. My research mentor is Dr. Angela Wiley. I am a team member of the Abriendo Caminos Research Project at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. My research interests are to study academic achievement in order to discover new ways to narrow this gap.

My name is **Andrea Huerta** and I am a rising Senior majoring in Food Science and Human Nutrition in the College of ACES. My mentor is Dr. Margarita Teran-Garcia in the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition. My research interests lie in the dietary patterns among Hispanic Americans and their association with the development of obesity and metabolic diseases.

My name is **Stephanie Gil** and I am a rising Junior in the Department of Community Health. My research mentor is Dr. Angela Wiley. I am a team member of the Abriendo Caminos Research Project at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. My research interests are the changing landscape of public health in America and abroad.

My name is **Kimberly Galvez** and I am a rising Junior in the Department of Liberal Arts and Science. I am majoring in Psychology and my research mentor is Dr. Angela Wiley. I am a team member of the Abriendo Caminos Research Project at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. My research interests are to investigate the success of therapies for people with eating disorders daily functioning, impairment, and outcomes.
My name is **Tracy Reyes** and I am a Junior majoring in Psychology with a minor in Social Work. I am part of the TRIO McNair Scholars Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. My mentor is Eva M. Pomerantz and she is a professor of Psychology. I've been working in her "Center for Parent-Child Studies Lab". My particular research area is examining whether there are any differences in how teachers communicate with parents. My research interest is how the role of parents affect their child’s motivation and achievement in school and the sensitivity and affect in a parent-teacher conference and how effective it is/can be for the child.

My name is **Aisha Tepede** and I am a rising Senior majoring in Community Health and minoring in Chemistry. At the moment I am part of HDFS 494 STRONG Kids, the class focuses on the multiple factors of obesity and how they relate to obesity. Along with my research with childhood obesity, I am working with Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint, where we are looking at obesity and cancer related diseases in African American women. In addition to McNair, I am a part of the organization called Sistas in STEM. The organization focuses on encouraging women of color to partake in STEM fields. We do so by going to local Champaign-Urbana schools and conducting different science experiments to peak young girls interest.

My name is **Jacob Reed** and I am a rising Senior double majoring in Sociology and African American Studies. I aspire to utilize my undergraduate concentrations and research to pursue a PhD in Education. My long term goal is to serve as a Professor, researcher, and mentor at the University level focusing mainly on Black and Latino students. In addition to the McNair Scholars program, I am a Gates Millennium Scholar. I am conducting undergraduate research with Anthony Sullers, Jr. in the College of Education, focusing on Black and Latino male student success! I am excited for the road ahead.

My name is **Evelyn Zepeda** and I'm a rising Junior in the College of Applied Health Sciences studying Community Health with concentrations in Health Education and Promotion, Epidemiology, and Health Planning and Administration. My mentor is the amazing Dr. Andiara Schwingel who is head of the Aging and Diversity Research lab on campus as well as a professor in the University. My research interests include obesity prevention through elimination of food deserts, nutrition workshops, active lifestyle promotion and policy development for the workplace. Health disparities due to the lack of resources in local areas is something that I would like to work with, and hopefully provide a dynamic change for communities.

My name is **Maria Valenzuela** and I am a rising Junior majoring in History and Latino/a Studies. My research mentor is Dr. Marc Hertzman. My research interests were sparked by a History course I was enrolled this past semester. The course explored the rational for the development of musical categories. Thus, my research interests are to master historiographical literature on race, immigration, and labor. I hope to conduct ethnographic research in Mexico and Chicago, Illinois.
Caroline Quintanilla earned her B.S. degree from the School of Social Work. She will be attending the University of Illinois' Advanced Standing MSW Program with a full tuition waiver for the Fall of 2016. She currently studies social determinants of maternal health disparities with Dr. Karen Tabb of the School of Social Work, but hopes to delve more deeply into reproductive and sexual health research in graduate school. She plans to pursue her PhD. In addition to being a McNair Scholar, she is also a HEALS Scholar and a member of the Senior 100 Honorary. She has presented at two different UIUC research conferences, but also at the American Public Health Association's Annual Meeting.

Brandon Boston earned his B.S. degree in Communication. Brandon’s McNair faculty mentor was Dr. James D. Anderson in the Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership Department. Brandon has research interest in access and equity. More specifically, he is interested in African American males in higher education. Brandon also has an interest in the organizational structure in K-12 schools. As a McNair Scholar, his first project examined the impact college readiness, social capital, and financial aid has on African American males’ persistence through college. Brandon had the privilege of presenting his research project four times. Three of the four were at the following conferences: 2015 Undergraduate Research Symposium, 2015 Illinois Summer Research Symposium, and the 2015 National Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program. Brandon will be taking a leap year to teach in New Orleans, but plans to resume his graduate studies at the Ohio State University.

Jennifer Aguayo, earned her B.S. degree in Community Health with the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health. Her study abroad experiences have inspired her to pursue a career and research projects in the field of international higher education. Jennifer’s research projects include studying minority student participation in study abroad, and assessing college environments for positive racial and ethnic identity development. She is very passionate about her journey through higher education, and has been accepted into the University of Wisconsin-Madison for the Global Higher Education Master's Program!

Jazmin Landa earned her B.S. degree in Kinesiology. During her first year, she worked under the supervision of Dr. Baillargeon from the Psychology Department. She also worked in the Infant Cognition Lab for four semesters. Her research was presented in both oral and poster presentations at the Illinois Summer Research Symposium as well as the 20th Annual SAEOPP McNair/SSS Research Conference. Additionally, Jazmin is currently working under the supervision of Dr. Jarrett from the Human Development and Family Studies Department. She also works closely with graduate student Sarai Coba-Rodriguez. In this project, she examines at school readiness beliefs of Latina mothers of preschoolers. Jazmin has presented this research in oral and poster presentations at the Illinois Summer Research Symposium as well as the 21st Annual SAEOPP McNair/SSS Research Conference. She has also won two awards for my research presentations at both conferences. This upcoming fall Jazmin will be starting her master’s degree in occupational therapy. She is interested in working with low-income children with disabilities.
Emerging Class of 2016

**Francisco Gonzalez** earned his B.S. degree in Aerospace Engineering minoring in Computational Science and Engineering. Over the last year Francisco has been working as a Blue Waters Intern with Dr. Arif Masud from the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering on developing residual-based turbulence models applicable to arterial blood flow. During his tenure as a McNair Scholar Francisco has presented at the McNair/SSS Scholars Research Conference in Atlanta, GA receiving 2nd place in the physical sciences oral presentation, received a La Casa Latina Outstanding Scholar Award, the David Kuck Computational Science & Engineering Undergraduate Award, and has submitted a paper for publication in the Journal of Computational Science Education. This summer Francisco will attend the Computational Physics Workshop at Los Alamos National Laboratory before continuing his graduate studies at the University of Illinois as a SURGE Fellow, where he will work with Dr. Maciej Balajewicz.

**Ivy Hernandez Delgado** earned her B.S. degree in psychology. She conducted research under the direction of Dr. Justin Rhodes, for 3 years as a member of the behavioral genetics laboratory. Her research interest is in fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Her senior thesis involves studying the effects of binge-like does of alcohol exposure on neonatal development, especially in the prefrontal vortex. Ivy has also examined exercise as a potential therapeutic intervention for the behavioral impairments produced by alcohol exposure. She has attended the Research Society of Alcoholism and Society for Neuroscience conference and presented a poster on her senior thesis. Ivy also was awarded a conference travel grant by the office of undergraduate research, to attend both conferences.

**Viridiana Luna** earned her B.S. degree in Molecular and Cellular Biology. Her research mentor is Dr. Flavia Andrade from the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health. The research project that she has been working on with Dr. Andrade is on the topic of food insecure pregnant women in the United States. They are interested in understanding the effects of food insecurity on metabolic risk factors. She will begin her doctoral program in the Division of Nutritional Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in Fall 2016. Viridiana was awarded the Graduate College Distinguished Fellowship that will fund 3 years of her graduate training. She will be joining the Abriendo Caminos research under the mentorship of Dr. Margarita Teran-Garcia.

**Christopher Para** earned his B.S. degrees in Chemistry and Communications. Outside of classes he conducted research in biosensors and their applications in cancer genomics. Additionally, he presented his work in the Undergraduate Research Symposium, 24th Annual National Ronald E. McNair Research Conference, and the Illinois Summer Research Symposium. He is taking a gap year this year and anticipates to matriculate in an MD/PhD program in the following Fall.
Miguel Moscoso received his B.S. degree in Electrical Engineering. For his B.S. thesis, he worked under Professor Minh Do on a project titled "Imaging-genomics". His current research interests include statistical signal and image processing. He will be completing his graduate work at the University of Southern California in electrical engineering.

Anita Oladunni earned her B.S. degree in Human Development and Family Studies with a concentration in Family Studies and a minor in chemistry. Since the Spring of 2015, Anita has worked in the Ethnographic Research Lab of Dr. Robin Jarrett in the Human and Community Development Department on projects regarding school readiness amongst urban low-income African-American populations. Her research interests include empowerment strategies of black women and girls and immigrants, maternal and child health, breastfeeding promotion, and African hair and skin. Anita has presented research at the Illinois Undergraduate Research Symposium, Illinois Summer Research Symposium, and SAEOPP SSS Scholars Research Conference. Anita has been awarded the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s President’s Award, Dean’s List, Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, ACES Various Donor’s Scholarship, International Programs and Studies Scholarship, and an Achievement and Excellence Award from the Office of Minority Student Affairs. Post graduation, Anita plans to get her EMT license, begin research at Rush University Medical Center, and obtain a Masters in Public Health before entering medical school.

Gabriel Velarde earned his B.S. in Material Science and Engineering. His faculty mentor was Dr. John Rogers. Gabe’s research interest is examining electronic materials. He has presented at the UIUC Undergraduate Research Symposium 2015-2016, Dow Corning Project Runway 2015, Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers National Conference 2015. Due to his outstanding contributions, he has received research awards from the University of California, Berkeley Rising Star Scholarship 2016, La Casa Cultural Latina-Outstanding Student Scholar Award 2015, Kevin Moore Memorial Scholarship 2015, Illinois Scholars Undergraduate Research Program Scholarship 2014, Keramos Honor Society 2014, National Science Foundation Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship 2013, and the UIUC President’s Award Scholarship 2012.

Ariana Romero earned her B.S. in Speech and Hearing Sciences. She will be going on to pursue my Masters of Science in Speech-Language Pathology at Xavier University of Chicago. She hopes to become a speech pathologist and work with children in a school setting. She has always enjoyed working with children while volunteering at local elementary schools, tutoring bilingual students, and babysitting her siblings. Her research interests is to continue working with children. She shared with us, “I am very thankful to have been given the opportunity to be a part of such an amazing and inspiring cohort; McNair has encouraged her to continue on her journey to academic success.”

Emerging Class of 2016
2016 Mom’s Day Scholastic Awards Ceremony Recipients

48th Annual

McNair Scholar Award Recipients (from Left to Right): Theola Maxon, Anita Oladunni, Caroline Quintanilla, Project Director Dr. Wallace Southerland, Evelyn Zepeda, Oludemilade Akinrotimi, Viridiana Luna, Brandon Boston, Jasmin Garcia, and Jazmin Landa.
My name is Brandon Boston and I am senior studying Communication. I remember my first time stepping foot onto this campus. I was awed by the beauty and architecture that surrounded me. Overjoyed with the idea of being a student at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, or what my aunt calls “The Brainiac School.” I was prepared and excited to start the next chapter of my life...At least that’s what I thought. Becoming a student at the Brainiac School quickly became overwhelming and stressful. From trying to figure out how to pay for over-priced textbooks, and struggling in Chem 101. I soon realized how unprepared I was for college. Before coming into this university; I never thought about studying for a test, attending a teacher’s office hours, proofreading a paper, or how much of an impact a B minus has on your GPA (it’s ridiculous).

Alongside not being prepared for college, I did not know who I was, what I was passionate about, and what I wanted to do with my life. I am not kidding when I say I googled “how to find your purpose in life.” I was really that curious and driven to figure out who I was and set out on a journey to figure this out. While on my journey I have experienced many lows and many highs, and my path has crossed with many great individuals. People I have had the opportunity to learn from, teach, and share laughs and tears with. People I have the privilege of calling a friend. People I have the privilege of calling a mentor. People I looked up to, and said “I want to be great just like them.” Through resources such as OMSA, I have had the privilege to be exposed to so many opportunities. To this day, I am grateful to my freshman year Student Support Service mentor, Tanisha King-Taylor, because she is the reason why I got my first job on campus as a student intern for the Office of Diversity and Social Justice Education. And I am still working there today, learning so many transferable skills to be used well after I graduate. Student Support Services also introduced me to the Ronald E. McNair Scholars program.

The McNair Scholar’s program is a rigorous graduate school prep program that has given me the tools necessary to be successful in a Ph.D program. I am proud to say that in Fall 2017, I will enter at doctoral program in Educational Policy at The Ohio State University. Furthermore, OMSA has supported me finan-

This past winter break, I had the privilege of studying abroad in Hong Kong, China for two weeks. I learned about and immersed myself into a culture that is very different from my own. Coming from an underrepresented population, this was a very unique experience. Not many individuals get the chance to experience the wonders within their own state (I am speaking of the Black and Brown children living in the city of the Chicago who have never been downtown), and I got the chance to go abroad for the first and certainly not the last time. I am truly grateful to OMSA for providing me with financial support to study abroad in such a vibrant and beautiful city.

Overall, Being a student at this university has made me realize that I will always be behind no matter where I go in life. But Being in Student Support Services and a McNair Scholar, as well as being the son and grandson of such strong and beautiful women has given me a foundation to understand what it means to work hard and to apply myself. I have learned that there are so many opportunities inside and outside of this university, and the most important thing I could do is apply. I wouldn’t be a McNair Scholar if I didn’t apply, I wouldn’t have gotten rejected by five graduated schools if I didn’t apply, I would not be giving this speech today if I did not apply to this Brainiac School. I guess I am trying to say that the most important thing anyone could do is try. And lastly, to wrap up with an update on my journey of finding myself. About two years ago, I found my passion, and about a semester ago, I found myself. I can tell you all that the person I was looking for has been there all of my life and that I have a passion for education. I no longer say, “I want to be great like such and such.” Instead, I now say, “I am great.” And I want you all to be great too.

Reprinted here as delivered by Brandon Boston at the 2016 Mom’s Day Scholastic Awards Brunch on Sunday, April 10th, 2016
My greatest challenge was growing in a Latino culture that taught me to not aspire to be more as a woman. As an immigrant, I lacked the guidance in navigating the system, however, I independently and proactively searched for help to assure my wholesome excellence. Dealing with financial insecurities, filling out college applications is scary when you and your family lack knowledge about the process. However, I've learned to be independent, searching for answers. I would advise students to always contact professors or advisors through email or office hours, and do everything possible to assure the completion of your goals. McNair has assured me that achieving my dream of obtaining a PhD in Public Health is no longer unreachable, and thanks to their wonderful staff and preparation, I will be successful in being a responsible, productive citizen. This scholarship will help relieve the stress of the cost of higher education.
Good morning, students, families, and staff. I hope everyone is enjoying themselves and having a good time. Congratulations to the students who are here celebrating their academic achievements.

My name is Viridiana Luna. I am a senior and will be graduating in May with a Bachelor’s of Science in Molecular and Cellular Biology. I am part of the McNair Scholars program here at U of I.

I, like some of you here, am a Latina, daughter of immigrants, born and raised in Chicago’s southwest side. I attended Whitney Young High School. I owe a lot of my success to my parents. I am a product of over 25 years of their hard work and sacrifice in this country. They go out of their way to help me in whatever way they can. I could not have gotten this far in my academic career without their love and support. Thank you mom and dad. I hope you all take the time today to thank the individuals who have been your system of support.

The last time I attended the Mom’s Day Scholastic Awards Ceremony, I was accepting the Dean Michael Jeffries Scholarship. I’d like to thank Dean Jeffries for contributing to students’ education through this scholarship. And I’d also like to thank him for keeping in touch with me these past couple of years to see how I am doing and making himself an available resource.

Being apart of the McNair program has given me the confidence to pursue opportunities that I would not have even considered before. I spent my last summer in Boston completing a research internship at the Harvard School of Public Health. Overall, my experience was positive and has benefitted me greatly in my academic goals. I made lasting friendships with the other students I met through the internship. However, there were some days that I felt guilty for having this opportunity because the only other people that looked like me at the School of Public Health were the custodial staff. We need to keep moving forward and open the doors for the students who will be coming into these academic spaces in the future.

Last semester, I went through the graduate school application process. It was one of the most overwhelming times in all of my 4 years as an undergraduate student. I had so many questions that renaged from: “Who do I email about getting an application fee waiver?” To “What if I get accepted but can’t afford to attend?”

I sat in my mentor’s office holding back tears as I explained to her my concerns about graduate school. I didn’t know if applying to PhD programs would be the best thing to do because I was still an undergrad and thought that applying to Masters programs might be a better option. My mentor held up my CV and told me “Look at everything you’ve done. You are going to get into one or more of the schools you apply to.”

This story does have a happy ending. Next fall, I will begin a PhD program in the Division of Nutritional Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a fellowship from the Graduate College that will provide me with full funding for 3 years.

I encourage you to view your identities, backgrounds, and experiences as students of color at a predominantly white institution as a powerful asset. You are resilient. You are intelligent. And you are worthy of all the good things that come your way. The fact that you are here today is an indication of your potential. Make the most of that potential. The sacrifices you make now for your education will pay off in the future.

Reprinted here as delivered by Viridiana Luna at the 2016 Mom’s Day Scholastic Awards Brunch on Sunday, April 10th, 2016
Jasmine Brown & Theola Maxon
“Connecting Homes and Schools: A Photo Elicitation Study”
*Mentor: Dr. Robin Jarrett*

Chris Para
“Optimization of a Signal Enhancement for the Detection of microRNA Using Silicon Photonic Microring Resonator Arrays”
*Mentor: Dr. Ryan Bailey*

Viridiana Luna
“The Effect of Immunoaffinity Column Chromatography Elution Buffers on HDL Apolipoprotein Detection”
*Mentor: Dr. Kelly Bost*
Jennifer Aguayo

Studying abroad was a journey full of growth and challenges. My first semester in Spain helped me develop confidence and independence. There I also found my passion for salsa dancing, something that is now an important part of my soul. My second semester abroad in Ecuador, was full of new challenges and adventure. I took classes at Universidad San Francisco de Quito, and interned at the Rotary Club Medical Center 12 hours a week. Ecuador tested my academic and personal resilience, teaching me that I am always a work in progress. Studying abroad has been an invaluable part of my undergraduate career, and I now aspire to make a professional career out of expanding such opportunities to other students.

Written by Jennifer Aguayo

Brandon Boston

My study abroad experience in Hong Kong, China was amazing! The focus of the trip was to observe different primary and secondary school classrooms, and compare and contrast them with American classrooms. We visited two international schools and two public schools. What I found to be most interesting was the progressiveness of each school. Students in one secondary international school were required to have Apple MacBook laptops when they reached the 6th grade. This was the expectation because all of the class assignments were computer based. Outside of observing classrooms, I immersed myself into the Hong Kong culture. I had the opportunity to enjoy delicious authentic Chinese food, view their beautiful monuments, and fellowship with hospitable people. This was all made possible because of your gracious donation. I want to thank you for assisting me financially to study abroad in such a vibrant city. Studying Abroad in Hong Kong was my first time outside of the United States, as well as my first time being so far away from my loved ones. I am so glad that I leaped outside of my comfort zone. This experience made me realize that there is so much to learn in the world, and that people are more similar than they are different.

Written By Brandon Boston
ORAL PRESENTATIONS

“Diversity as a Crutch: Black Students and Inclusive Practices at Predominately White Institutions”
Aaminah Long, Junior, Psychology, Liberal Arts & Sciences

“South Chicago Black Mothers’ Project”
Osazomon Imarenezor, Senior, Chemistry, Liberal Arts & Sciences

“The Importance of Parental Involvement in Regards to Low-Income African-American Children’s Potential Educational Attainment”
Theola Maxon, Senior, Human Development & Family Studies, Agricultural, Consumer, Economics, and Sciences

“A Maternal Perspective of School Readiness”
Anita Oladunni, Senior, Human Development & Family Studies, Agricultural, Consumer, Economics, and Sciences

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

“Determining the Identity and Possible Origin of a Collembola Pest of Lettuce and Tree Seedlings”
Alejandra Flores, Senior, Molecular & Cellular Biology, Liberal Arts & Sciences

“Effects of Student-faculty Interactions on African American Males in Higher Education”
Brandon Boston, Senior, Communications, Liberal Arts & Sciences

“Numerical Simulation of Highly Pulsatile Blood Flow through Idealized Femoral Artery Bifurcations”
Francisco Gonzalez, Senior, Aeronautical Engineering, College of Engineering

“Detecting microRNA Signatures to Differentiate Tissue Type by Developing a Signal Enhancement Strategy for Use on Silicon Microring Resonators”
Christopher Para, Senior, Chemistry, Liberal Arts & Sciences

“The Effects of Food Insecurity on Pregnant Women in the United States”
Viridiana Luna, Senior, Molecular & Cellular Biology, Liberal Arts & Sciences

“Sodium Content in Convenience Soups: A Tale of Two Countries”
Ahrianna Mitchell-Sodipe, Senior, Food Sciences & Human Nutrition, Agricultural, Consumer, Economics, and Sciences

“To me she is perfect: Perceptions of Self-Body Image among Mexican Kindergarten aged Children and their Mothers”
Evelyn Zepeda, Sophomore, Interdisciplinary Health Sciences, Applied Health Sciences

“Exploring the Organization of White Matter Tracts in Tinnitus Patients Using Diffusion Tensor Imaging”
Ariana Romero, Senior Speech & Hearing Sciences, Applied Health Sciences

“Can Exercise Serve as an Intervention for the mPFC-associated Behavioral and Anatomical Maladaptation’s Induced by Alcohol Exposure?”
Ivy Hernandez Delgado, Senior, Psychology, Liberal Arts & Sciences

“Balancing the Scale: the Effects of Socioeconomic Status on a Child’s Health”
Aisha Tepede, Junior, Community Health, Applied Health Sciences

“We are Mexicans and We Like ‘La Comida Rica’: Unhealthy Dietary Patterns among Hispanic Families”
Andrea Huerta, Senior, Food Science & Human Nutrition, Agricultural, Consumer, Economics, and Sciences

“Playing Safe: Patterns Influencing Physical Activity Among Hispanic Families”
Kimberly Galvez, Sophomore, Psychology, Liberal Arts & Sciences

“Unfulfilled Promises: Mexico and Mexican Immigration in the Late 20th Century”
Kimberly Galvez, Sophomore, Psychology, Liberal Arts & Sciences

“Technology Acceptance and US Small Business”
Maria Valenzuela, Sophomore, Latina(o) Studies, Liberal Arts & Sciences
The **McNair Legacy Award**, in honor of Dr. Ronald E. McNair, who was a physicist, astronaut, and pioneer in the field of science, is presented to the student who has exhibited passion, commitment, and excellence in his/her scholarship to the field of science.

Like Dr. McNair, **Francisco Gonzalez** will definitely make a significant contribution in the field of aerospace engineering. He has been working as a Blue Waters Intern under the direction of Dr. Arif Masud in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. During his tenure as a McNair Scholar, he has presented at the McNair Conference in Atlanta, GA receiving 2nd place in the physical sciences oral presentation, received La Casa Latina Outstanding Scholar Award, the David Kuck Computational Science & Engineering Undergraduate Award, and has submitted a paper for publication in the Journal of Computational Science Education. Francisco will be staying at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as a SURGE Fellow. He will work with Dr. Maciej Balajewicz in the Department of Aerospace Engineering on developing theoretical and computational tools to reduced order models of multi-scale and multi-physics problems. Please join me in congratulating Francisco Gonzalez our 2016 McNair Legacy Award recipient.

**Special Thanks to Former Assistant Director of McNair, Dr. Michelle Cruz-Santiago**, for returning to encourage our new and graduating scholars toward graduate education achievement.
RONALD E. McNAIR POSTBACCALAUREATE ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR THE 2016-2017 COHORT

Established on the campus in 1990, the UIUC TRIO Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The program provides research, mentoring, advising, and graduate school preparation opportunities for eligible rising juniors and seniors to promote their academic excellence and pursuit of a PhD.

Vision

We envision a program in which all McNair Scholars achieve academic and personal success so they can become the next generation of scientists, researchers, and professors. We seek to empower scholars to believe that the vision they have for the world can be realized through their research and service efforts in the academy.

Eligibility

- Citizen or Permanent Resident of the United States
- Currently enrolled as a full-time undergraduate student at the U of I
- Must have completed freshman year
- Undergraduate cumulative grade point average of at least 2.85
- Be (1) a first-generation university student who also meets the income level established by the U.S. Department of Education OR (2) a member of a group underrepresented in graduate education (American Indian or Alaska Native, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander)
- Commitment to a career path in which a doctorate is required
- Willingness to participate in all McNair sponsored activities/events

If you are interested in applying or would like to mentor a scholar, please contact Nameka Bates, Assistant Director at 217-265-4692.
DESCRIPTION

Established on the campus in 1990, the UIUC Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program (McNair Scholars Program) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The program provides research, mentoring, advising, and graduate school preparation opportunities for eligible sophomores, juniors and seniors to promote their academic excellence and pursuit of a PhD. TRIO McNair Scholars engage in rigorous research with faculty mentors, attend relevant workshops and seminars, and commit to preparing themselves for doctoral studies following the completion of undergraduate Studies.

VISION

We envision a program in which all McNair Scholars achieve academic and personal success so they can become the next generation of scientists, researchers, and professors. We seek to empower scholars to believe that the vision they have for the world can be realized through their research and service efforts in the academy.

MISSION

The mission of the program is to prepare participants to be the next generation of scientists, researchers, and professors through rigorous graduate school preparation, academic development, and research training.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As a result of their McNair experiences, participants will be able to:

◊ Distinguish between undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral level education;
◊ Research and identify potential graduate programs in their field of study;
◊ Research and identify potential sources of financial support for graduate study;
◊ Develop a cogent research design; and
◊ Describe and present their research at national conferences and to varied audiences.