Welcome to the Ronald McNair Scholars Program at NMU

On behalf of the College of Graduate Education and Research, thank you for your willingness to serve as a Ronald McNair Scholar mentor. You have joined a select group of individuals dedicated to encouraging and enhancing the personal scholarship of a promising future doctoral student.

This handbook provides you with program information including contacts, regulations, policies, guidelines, and expectations for the success of the relationship with your mentee. It also acquaints you with services and activities that are available to the student to enhance their educational experience and ensure their academic success.

The NMU McNair Scholars Program strives to provide your mentee with information and experiences that will make the graduate school transition easier and more rewarding, and you are an integral element to that success. We hope you enjoy this opportunity, help your newly found colleague develop lasting scholarly networks, and become a guiding inspiration that helps create the next generation of scholars. Welcome to the NMU McNair Scholars Program.

Brian Cherry, Ph.D.
Assistant Provost
Graduate Education and Research

Heather Pickett, M.A.E.
Director
McNair Scholars Program

Jennifer Broadway, M.Ed.
Coordinator
McNair Scholars Program

Terri Williams, B.A.
Secretary
McNair Scholars Program

Ronald E. McNair

Ronald Ervin McNair was born on October 21, 1950, in Lake City, South Carolina. He attended North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro where, in 1971, he graduated magna cum laude with a BS degree in Physics. In 1976 he earned his Ph.D. in Physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Dr. McNair’s many distinctions include: Presidential Scholar (1967-71), Ford Foundation Fellow (1971-74), and National Fellowship Fund Fellow (1974-75). He was also named Omega Psi Phi Scholar of the Year (1975), was honored as the Distinguished National Scientist by the National Society of Black Professional Engineers (1979), and received the Friend Of Freedom Award (1981).

Ronald McNair was nationally recognized for his work in the field of Laser Physics. In 1978, he was one of 35 applicants selected
from a pool of ten thousand for NASA’s space shuttle program. On his first space shuttle mission in February 1984, McNair orbited the earth 122 times aboard Challenger. He was the second African American to fly in space.

He received three honorary doctorates and was also a sixth degree karate black belt and an accomplished jazz saxophonist. On the morning of January 28, 1986, McNair and six other crewmembers died in an explosion of the space shuttle Challenger.

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McNair Scholar Contacts

Program Director
Heather Pickett
2807 West Science
(906) 227-2538
hpickett@nmu.edu

Program Coordinator
Jennifer Broadway
2809 West Science
(906) 227-2560
jebroadwa@nmu.edu

Program Secretary
Terri Williams
2804 West Science
(906) 227-2590
tewillia@nmu.edu

About the McNair Scholars Program

The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program is designed to prepare undergraduate participants for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities. McNair Scholars are from disadvantaged backgrounds and have demonstrated strong academic potential. Northern Michigan University’s McNair Program works closely with scholars in completing their undergraduate requirements, encouraging, and supporting their entrance into graduate programs, and tracking their progress to successful completion of advanced degrees. The goal of McNair is to increase the attainment of Ph.D. degrees by students from underrepresented segments of society.

Eligibility

Applicants must be undergraduates who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents and attend Northern Michigan University. The program is designed to assist low-income, first-generation college students and students typically from groups underrepresented in graduate schools (Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Pacific Islander). Additionally, candidates must:

- Be an undergraduate student
- Be dedicated to entering a Ph.D. doctoral program
- Have completed at least 40 credit hours with a 2.75 overall GPA
- Be committed to completing the Summer Research Component
Mentor Guidelines

One of a McNair Scholar’s first tasks in the junior year is to identify a faculty mentor. You may be approached by a student asking if you are in need of a research assistant, are looking for some help, or is just curious about your research interests. Feel free to ask the student if they are a McNair scholar searching for a mentor. As with all close working relationships, the fit between student and mentor must be good for both parties. While you might choose to not pursue the relationship, consider suggesting other faculty whom you believe are a better fit for the student.

If you already have a promising candidate who you think would be a good fit with you and your research interests, please ask if the student is already part of the program. If not, suggest that they visit our offices to complete an application.

As researchers on the rise, most McNair scholars have the passion and commitment to complete the summer research project...if they get some valuable assistance from you. Working with your scholar to develop a research timeline can decrease anxiety about the project and provide structure to the research process. For many scholars this will be the first time they work on a project of this caliber, and they may need assistance in processing information. Your commitment to their growth and development is invaluable and appreciated.

Each mentor is expected to meet with his/her scholar on a frequent basis during the spring semester prior to the research summer. Most mentors establish a weekly meeting time outside of their office hours so that the scholar receives adequate attention to develop a research project. You will continue to meet with the student on a regular basis during the summer. A mentor should be willing to spend additional time with the student if s/he is having difficulties, and contact the McNair Program staff for additional assistance.

Scholars are expected to commit about 20 hours per week to their research projects during an approximately six-week summer research internship. Mentor time commitment is flexible, depending on the needs of your student, your comfort level, and other commitments you may have. Likewise, workdays are flexible, and it is up to you and your student to develop a schedule for the summer.

As a mentor, you can also guide your scholar by giving them inspiration and providing relevant insights about the graduate school process. You are expected to abide by the following guidelines to establish and maintain a connection to your McNair scholar.
**Scholar Development**

- Meet with your scholar regularly.
- Take the time to get to know one another. Talk about yourself: your interests, hobbies, travel experiences, family background, as befits your comfort level.
- Discuss what influenced your decision to obtain a graduate degree.
- Introduce your student to faculty members, graduate students and community contacts in his/her field of interest.
- Serve as a positive role model in research and scholarship.
- Acquaint the scholar with the leading journals in your discipline. Encourage reading.
- Alert the McNair office of any difficulties of an academic and/or personal nature that the scholar may be encountering.

**Directing Research**

- Meet early and frequently in the winter semester to select a topic and develop a research proposal.
- Assist the scholar in identifying a research question.
- Clearly define research goals.
- Help the scholar gain the essential knowledge to understand the nature of the research. Suggest readings that will expedite this.
- Help the scholar develop a research proposal and submit it to the McNair office prior to the summer session.
- Help your scholar complete the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) application process, if necessary.
- Develop a timeline with your scholar to keep them on track with the research and hold them accountable for meeting deadlines.
- Ask your scholar if they fully understand what you are talking about and if they need further explanation.
- Inform the McNair Director when any major changes in the topic, orientation or structure of the research project occur.
- Oversee the completion of a 20- to 30-page (double-spaced) publishable research paper appropriately formatted and cited for your discipline. **The final research paper and poster are due just prior to the beginning of the fall semester. Students who need additional time to complete their paper need to make arrangements with the McNair office.**
- Provide direction in the development of a research poster to be displayed at NMU.
- Invite your scholar to department colloquia, conferences and other occasions to hear others discuss their work.
- Assist your scholar in researching potential professional conferences within their discipline where they can present their research project. Some funds may be available to support your student to attend
conferences where the scholar’s work is presented.

**Graduate School Preparation**

- Clarify the realities of graduate school based upon your own experiences.
- Enhance your scholar’s awareness of the opportunities and demands of graduate education.
- Help your scholar evaluate graduate schools and programs and introduce scholars to pertinent sources of information.
- Encourage the scholar to think about and discuss their goals and career objectives.

We greatly appreciate your help with program evaluation. After your student scholar has graduated with their baccalaureate degree, you will be asked to fill out an evaluation of your experiences serving as a McNair Program mentor, and to assess the performance and progress of your student. Your thoughtful feedback directly informs the efficacy and efficiency of the McNair Program.

**Program Assistance Provided to Scholars**

McNair Scholars are offered numerous opportunities to increase scholastic skill and improve research abilities. As a mentor, you are welcome to attend, participate, and even lead sessions. Sessions vary depending on the scholastic standing of the individual. Some of these include:

**Seminars and Workshops**

The NMU McNair Scholars Program offers a series of seminars that aim to provide scholars with an understanding of what it means to be a scholar and do research, what it takes to get into graduate school, and how to best complete graduate school applications. Academic department seminars and lectures coordinated with the faculty mentor provide exposure to graduate academic culture. The seminars help strengthen relationships with other McNair Scholars. The goal is to assist and motivate scholars to formulate academic goals and to enhance the climate of support necessary for success in graduate school.

Presenters may be McNair Program staff, university professors, graduate students, or other university staff who can discuss their own graduate school experiences or provide direct instruction. Scholars are expected to attend and participate in all seminars. Topics vary by semester and year, but typically include:
Study skills and time management
Library and online research methodology
Reading and critical analysis
Research design
Finding funding for graduate school
Networking, interviewing, and presentation skills
Finding appropriate graduate schools
Navigating the graduate school admissions process
Writing workshops (proposals, abstracts, literature reviews, graduate school statements)
GRE workshops

Academic Support and Tutoring

When a scholar first enters the McNair Scholars Program, they are given an academic needs assessment. This assessment is used to develop an individualized academic support plan.

The program helps participants connect with tutors through various services available on-campus. Tutoring is a service that individual scholars may or may not need, but the McNair program utilizes services from several organizations that will help students increase their academic skills.

Like the McNair Scholars program, Student Support Services is federally funded to serve low-income, first-generation college students with not only tutoring, but also academic and personal advising, financial aid assistance, study skill workshops, and graduate school exploration. Most McNair scholars are likely qualified to utilize their services.

Tutoring Services provides free walk-in tutoring and tutor-facilitated study groups. They also assist with study and organizational skill building, career advising, and provide referrals to other campus services. Additionally, specialty tutoring labs are available for peer tutoring in subject areas.

The NMU Writing Center helps students develop better writing skills through individualized peer assistance. Help with organizing students’ writing, outlining, citation styles, grammar, and plagiarism avoidance are featured.

Graduate School Exploration and Preparation

Group and individualized sessions are available to assist scholars in maximizing their graduate school potential. Activities include Graduate Record Examination (GRE) preparation through workshops and guided learning. Workshops focus on utilizing preparation materials, preparing for the Quantitative Ability, Verbal Ability, and Analytical Writing components of the test.
Scholars receive assistance in finding graduate schools that are matches to their interests and abilities, and mentors’ suggestions are invaluable in this, too. Workshops provide experience in writing entrance essays and searching for financial assistance. Graduate school application completion assistance is provided individually. The program also sponsors trips to regional research colleges to let scholars experience graduate school atmospheres and explore potential programs.

Research Experience

The key element that distinguishes doctoral study is independent research. Typical undergraduate programs have little or no emphasis on this aspect of scholastic life, but understanding how research is done is essential in graduate school. McNair Scholars identify a faculty mentor to provide guidance, direction, and supervision in their research. Some faculty members have expressed willingness to work with a McNair Scholar, but scholars are free to contact other faculty members in their major discipline to arrange their own research opportunity.

Learning How to be a Researcher

Research techniques come easy to some, and require more effort by others. In the year before the summer internship experience, scholars will attend workshops and receive services that provide insight into empirical research, research methodology, library-based research, ethics, and statistics. Contact with mentors during this phase is critical and guides the development of the research proposal.

Identifying a Mentor

As mentioned previously, the scholar’s first task is to identify a faculty mentor in his/her major area of study who will guide the research. This is the responsibility of the scholar, but the McNair staff can assist with introductions to faculty who have expressed interest in helping out. Please contact the McNair office to get names of potential candidates in your discipline if you would like to be a mentor but do not have a candidate in mind.

Scholars will ask prospective mentors about their research interests, what work they could do, what working hours are expected, what publication opportunities may be available, and the level of personal support the mentor can provide. If you are interviewed, be open and candid, and feel free to interview
several potential mentees. Research success depends on having an excellent relationship with your mentee and having all expectations addressed at the start. Once you have agreed to be a mentor, you will need to do the following:

- Contact the McNair Director. The Director will reach out to the faculty mentor to provide individual orientation to the program.
- Complete a Directed Study Form for the development of a research proposal during with winter semester prior to summer research.
- Complete a Directed Study Form (end of winter semester) for the summer research.
- Develop a meeting schedule to discuss the steps needed to prepare the research proposal and for the summer internship.
- Become immersed in the literature related to your research topic.

Is it possible to have more than one mentee? Absolutely! Just be aware of the time commitment that is needed.

**Faculty Mentor Responsibilities**

The scholars are told that the role of the faculty mentor is to assist them in selecting and designing an appropriate research program and to supervise all research-related activities. The mentor should direct the student to the appropriate background literature and provide training and assistance for the scholar to learn required techniques or procedures. In addition, the research mentor is asked to review and critique a rough draft of the research proposal, presentation abstract, final paper, and poster presentation. The mentor should be available to offer support and advice for graduate school opportunities. **We encourage our faculty research mentors and scholars to co-author and publish the final research paper.** Please see the Appendix for further information provided to scholars regarding the relationship with their mentor.

**The Summer Internship**

The Summer Internship actually begins during the prior winter semester when scholars, with your guidance, develop their research plan. It is up to the mentor to determine working hours and degree of independent mentee access to research facilities. The program does not require that the mentor be present with the scholar at all times. During the summer research internship, which typically occurs after the junior year, the scholar will:

- Actively conduct research under the supervision of the faculty mentor for approximately six weeks working 20-30 hours per week.
- Maintain a research journal or logbook.
- Attend McNair seminars as scheduled.
- Complete a final 20- to 30-page (double-spaced) paper formatted in the style appropriate to their discipline.
To support these activities the scholar will:

- Receive a $2,500 stipend during the summer to conduct the research.
- Receive a tuition waiver for two college research credits.
- Receive a housing stipend.

**Results Dissemination**

In the semester following the research internship, scholars will explore mechanisms to share their research with others. Participants will present their research posters at the university using formatting guidelines provided by your academic department. A workshop by the McNair Program Director will assist scholars in using their computer to develop the poster, and the McNair program will print the poster.

You and your mentee should consider peer-reviewed journal publication of the research. Provide your mentee with advice regarding appropriate journals and assist them in editing and preparing an article for joint publication.

Scholars will be encouraged to present their findings at regional conferences. The program will, to the best of its ability, support scholar travel requests for these conferences, and will actively pursue university support for mentors if requested.

**Scholar Responsibilities, Expectations, and Codes of Conduct**

Following are guidelines provided to scholars regarding the program’s expectations of their activities and efforts. If you have any concerns with your student’s behavior, please contact the program director immediately. Scholars will:

- Meet individually with the program coordinator or director every month during the academic year.
- Attend all assigned program activities.
- Select a faculty mentor after orientation and before they start the research experience.
- Maintain at least a 3.0 GPA each semester. Students entering the program with less than 3.0 GPA will remain on probation until they are able to raise their GPA to at least 3.0.
- Participate in a tutoring program, if needed.
- Attend scholarly presentations sponsored by their academic department.
- Maintain a research journal or logbook.
Complete a research poster for display at NMU.

Complete GRE training and take the GRE.

Complete at least six graduate school applications.

Behave in a professional manner. Professional behavior includes:

- **Active Participation**: Scholars actively participate in discussions of assigned readings at all seminar events. They bring interesting research, internship, and graduate school information to meetings to share with other scholars. They also ask questions and share their concerns about these topics.

- **Respect for others**: Courtesy and respect for others are fundamental elements of professional behavior. A professional strives to understand the differences among classmates and colleagues, provides fair constructive feedback when asked to evaluate others, contributes equitably in group work, and is punctual and avoids disrupting the work environment. Professionals respect expectations of confidentiality and privacy, and are respectful and attentive at meetings. They expect to learn from the experiences of other participants.

- **Commitment to quality**: A professional aims for the highest possible standard of performance and endeavors to produce work in which s/he can take pride.

- **Responsibility**: A professional takes responsibility for his/her own progress by completing their work and being prepared for meetings and other activities. A professional also takes responsibility for his/her actions with care for consequences that might involve or affect others.
  - Scholars confirm all appointments with faculty mentors or McNair staff and are punctual to all meetings and activities.
  - If scholars are late or cannot participate in a seminar or other event they must inform the Program Coordinator as soon as possible.

- **Personal integrity**: Professionalism is reflected by the extent to which others can rely upon you. A professional can be counted on to follow through on commitments, avoid conflicts of interest and bias, and adhere to the rules of organizations with which he/she is involved, such as the McNair Office and Graduate School.
Appendix
Responsibilities Contract

**McNair Scholar Responsibilities Contract**

I, ____________________________, accept the offer to participate in the Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program at the Northern Michigan University. I fully understand that the purpose of this program is to prepare me for graduate study leading to a **doctoral degree** and I am expected to give my full commitment to this goal.

I further agree to:

- Maintain at least a 3.0 GPA and work to continuously raise my GPA
- Maintain full-time student status
- Attend and actively participate in ALL program activities and events, unless prior permission is received
- Complete all assignments in a timely manner
- Meet with my designated program adviser (either the coordinator or director) once a month, unless otherwise specified
- Complete the summer research program at NMU
- Attend and present research (summer or academic) at least once during tenure in the program at a conference or venue coordinated with my faculty mentor and Program Coordinator
- Make appointments with adviser or McNair adviser for assistance completing graduate school applications
- Participate in the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) workshops and complete practice exams
- Take the Graduate Record Examination, and report the scores obtained to the McNair Program Director
- Apply to at least six graduate schools for graduate study
- Release NMU grade reports and financial aid award notices to the Program Coordinator
- Behave in a professional manner with all members of the university community and conduct myself in a manner befitting a Ronald E. McNair Scholar
- Release the following information to the Program Coordinator pertaining to my graduate studies upon receiving my BA/BS degree at NMU: name and location of graduate school or place of employment, telephone number, email, and permanent address
- As part of my participation in the McNair Scholars Program, I agree to cooperate with follow-up surveys for the annual report to the Department of Education

**Scholar Expectations:**

- I understand that satisfactory participation includes attendance at ALL seminars/workshops, scheduled meetings with my faculty mentor, Program Coordinator and Director, summer and academic year research, presentation at a research symposium, and other required meetings. Exceptions may require a written explanation approved by the Program Coordinator prior to the scheduled event.
If I need to miss an appointment, seminar or meeting, or attend late or leave early, I must contact the Program coordinator ahead of time. Excused absences only consist of an academic conflict (class, lab, conference, etc.), family emergency, or extended illness.

All absences (excused or unexcused) will require a meeting with the Program coordinator or Director.

I will adhere to the research plan developed in concert with my faculty mentor.

I will strive to submit a publishable research paper and abstract, approved by my faculty mentor.

I hereby certify that I have read the sections on Scholar Responsibilities, Expectations and Consequences. I fully understand the meaning and agree to the conditions for acceptance and/or continuation in the Northern Michigan University McNair Scholars program. I understand that at the conclusion of each regular semester the McNair staff (Program Coordinator, Director) will discuss my eligibility to continue in the program. Further, I understand that failure to comply with the rules governing the program is grounds for my dismissal from it. My eligibility to continue as a McNair Scholar is also affected by changes in the direction of my originally stated academic and career goals, if they no longer fit the program mission. As long as I meet all the program expectations and maintain good quality of work, I am eligible to receive a stipend of $2,500 during my summer internship.

Student Signature ___________________________ Date __________

Coordinator Signature ___________________________ Date __________

Director Signature ___________________________ Date __________
Mentor Role and Responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities of the Mentor

Mentoring is a vital component of the NMU McNair Program and a good faculty mentor is essential for McNair Scholar success. Participants have the opportunity to conduct high-level, ongoing research under the guidance of their faculty mentor. A special bond of mutual respect characterized by trust, open communication, creativity, flexibility, and discipline is implied in this mentor-mentee relationship. The NMU McNair mentoring component is designed to provide a mutually satisfying experience for both the mentor and the student. The following pages provide a guide for the students in going through the mentoring experience.

McNair mentors play the role of trusted teachers, counselors, guides, tutors, and coaches. They offer their mentees advice and guidance on:

- Planning their research and academic program, including course selection,
- Developing research skills to analyze data, present, write about and publish their research, and
- Planning and preparing for admission into and successful completion of a doctoral degree.

Accepting the responsibility to serve as a faculty mentor is only the beginning of a meaningful and challenging experience. A McNair mentor should be willing to meet the following program expectations:

- Meet with the scholar to prepare research proposals and progress reports,
- Assist the scholar in the completion of a directed study form for up to two credits of summer directed study,
- Attend McNair functions (i.e., annual recognition banquet and poster session), if able,
- Meet with the McNair director and/or program coordinator at least twice during the year to provide feedback,
- Complete end of the year evaluations, and
- Keep in close communication with the McNair staff regarding matters that are relevant to the performance and progress of the scholar.

Research Expectations

- Help the scholar to identify a focus area and prepare a research action plan, including a timeline.
- Meet with the scholar to discuss responsibilities and expectations of both parties.
- Set regular meetings with the scholar to discuss research progress.
- Set attainable short- and long-term goals, review research plans, and assess his or her needs.
Provide support and advice to the scholar as s/he progresses through the research experience.
Provide opportunities for the scholar to design experiments, present results, and publish them.
Stress the importance of keeping a research journal or logbook.
Acquaint the scholar with research methods, data collection, interpretation, and evaluation.
Guide the scholar in the preparation of his or her poster presentation for the Annual Celebration at NMU.
Direct the scholar with the writing of a publication quality paper due in September after summer research is completed.

**Personal and Professional Expectations**

Give the scholar sound constructive criticism.
Help the scholar discover personal potential and clarify educational and career goals.
Provide academic and professional contacts that will help the scholar with the graduate admission process, transition to graduate education, and enhancement of personal and professional development.
Suggest educational and research resources for graduate school.
Provide direction and encouragement.
Help the scholar to improve his or her self-esteem.
Communicate with the scholar openly and honestly.
Help the scholar connect theory with practical application.
Teach the scholar to read and think critically.
Hold the scholar to high standards of academic output.
Serve as resource and referral person for the scholar.
Serve as the scholar’s role model, friend, and confidante.
Show willingness to help the scholar make valuable academic and professional contacts.

**Benefits of Mentorship**

Fulfillment of the scholarship goal for tenure and academic advancement.
A dedicated, funded, and capable student to assist in your ongoing research.
Mentees can provide fresh lenses to research questions, potentially contributing a creative approach to research.
Development of a publication and presentation collaborator.
Pleasure of passing on your knowledge and skill.
Reward of seeing a student’s growth under your guidance.
Opportunities for increasing grants that require use of undergraduates.
Excitement from learning from students and making joint discoveries.
Students will be eligible to receive one credit of directed study for the winter semester, and up to two credits of directed study during summer.
Interactions with Your Mentor (Information provided to McNair Scholars)

The quality and success of the McNair mentoring experience depend upon the attitude that each mentor and scholar bring to the process: talent, maturity, academic strength, motivation, commitment, desire to learn, creativity, and willingness to accept challenges. Progressing through the research and mentoring experience requires a joint effort or “alliance” between the faculty mentor and the mentee. McNair scholars have specific roles and responsibilities:

- Identify the mentor.
- Seek the mentor’s help to identify a focus area and prepare the research action plan, including a time line.
- Meet initially with the mentor to discuss responsibilities and expectations of both parties, the research goals and expectations, and to complete a directed study form.
- Punctuality and preparation for all meetings.
- Discuss research goals and expectations with the mentor.
- Meet regularly with the mentor to discuss research progress, review research plans, and assess needs.
- Communicate with mentors openly and honestly.
- Commit to carrying out agreed upon goals.
- Keep a positive attitude and be receptive to advice, counsel, and constructive criticism.
- Seek opportunities to design experiments, present results, and publish.
- Seek opportunities to learn about research methods, data collection, interpretation, and evaluation.
- Commit to the responsibility of being a serious researcher.
- Strive to become an integral part of a research team, the academic department, and the university.
- Stay motivated to achieve maximum benefits within the mentoring relationship.
- Prepare the poster presentation with the help of the mentor.
- Write a publishable research paper before the end of the senior year with the mentor’s help.
- Meet with the mentor to prepare progress reports and end of the year evaluation.
- Invite and encourage mentors to attend special McNair functions.
- Keep in close communication with the McNair director and program coordinator regarding matters that are relevant to the research and mentoring experiences.
- Accept challenges to enrich the overall learning experience.
- Identify academic and professional contacts at prospective graduate programs.