Northern Michigan University

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program

Student Handbook
Welcome to the Ronald McNair Scholars Program at NMU

On behalf of the College of Graduate Education and Research we would like to welcome you to the McNair Scholars Program. You have joined a select group of individuals dedicated to personal scholarship and doctoral degree attainment.

This handbook provides you with program information including contacts, regulations, policies, and expectations for your success as a McNair Scholar. It also acquaints you with services and activities that are available to enhance your educational experience and ensure your academic success.

The NMU McNair Scholars Program strives to provide you with information and experiences that will make the graduate school transition easier and more rewarding. We hope you will take full advantage of the opportunities, develop lasting scholarly networks, and find a few friends along the way. Congratulations, and welcome to the program.

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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.
# Contents

Welcome to the Ronald McNair Scholars Program at NMU .............................................. 2  
Ronald E. McNair ........................................................................................................ 2  
Contents ........................................................................................................................ 3  
Contacts ....................................................................................................................... 4  
McNair Scholars Participant Overview ................................................................. 4  
  Eligibility .................................................................................................................. 4  
Program Activities ....................................................................................................... 5  
  Seminars and Workshops ......................................................................................... 5  
  Academic Support and Tutoring ........................................................................... 6  
  Graduate School Exploration and Preparation .................................................... 6  
  Research Experience ............................................................................................... 7  
  Travel Policy ........................................................................................................... 9  
Scholar Responsibilities, Expectations, and Codes of Conduct .............................. 9  
Appendix .................................................................................................................... 11  
Responsibilities Contract ............................................................................................ 11  
Mentor Role and Responsibilities ........................................................................... 15  
Benefits of Mentorship .............................................................................................. 16  
Interactions with Your Mentor ................................................................................. 17
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McNair Scholars Participant Overview

The Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program is designed to prepare 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 who attend Northern Michigan University. The program is designed to assist low-income, first-generation college students and students from groups typically underrepresented in graduate schools (Native American, African American, Hispanic, or Asian Pacific Islander). Additionally, candidates must:

★ 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 McNair Research Internship.
Program Activities

McNair scholars are offered numerous opportunities to increase scholastic skill and improve research abilities. These 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 you 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 your faculty mentor provide exposure to graduate academic culture. The seminars help strengthen relationships with other McNair Scholars and with your research mentors. The goal is to assist and motivate you to formulate academic goals and to enhance the climate of support necessary for your 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 that will benefit you as a graduate student. You 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 you first enter the McNair Scholars Program you will be 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 you may or may not need, but the McNair Program utilizes services from several organizations to help you increase your academic power.

- 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 skills workshops, and graduate school exploration. You 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 your writing, outlining, citation styles, grammar, and plagiarism avoidance are featured.

Graduate School Exploration and Preparation

Group and individualized sessions are provided 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, and preparing for the Quantitative Ability, Verbal Ability, and Analytical Writing components of the test.

Scholars receive assistance in finding graduate schools that are matched to their interests and abilities. 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 you 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 you are free to contact other faculty members in your major discipline to arrange your 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 your summer internship experience, you will attend a number of workshops that provide insight into empirical research, research methodology, library-based research, and statistics. You will also learn to construct a research proposal and explore research ethics.

Steps to Starting Your Research

Your first task is to identify a faculty mentor in your major area of study who will guide your research. This is your responsibility, but the McNair staff can assist you with introductions to faculty who have expressed interest in helping out. You’ll want to ask the prospective mentor about their research interests, what work you could do, what hours you would work, what publication opportunities are available, and the level of personal support the individual can provide. You should feel free to interview several potential mentors. Research success depends on having an excellent relationship with your mentor and having all expectations addressed at the start. Once you’ve found your mentor:

- Complete the Research Mentor Agreement Form (in the Appendix) as soon as possible, prior to the beginning of the research. Return the signed form to the McNair office for approval.
- Complete and submit a directed study or research credit form, signed by you and your faculty mentor.
- Submit a one-page proposal of your intended research project, signed by you and your faculty mentor.
- Develop a meeting schedule with your mentor to discuss the steps needed to prepare for the summer internship.
- Immerse yourself in the literature related to your research topic.

Faculty Mentor Responsibilities

The role of your faculty mentor is to assist you in selecting and designing an appropriate research project and to supervise all research-related activities. The mentor should direct you to the appropriate background literature and provide training and assistance for you to learn required techniques or procedures. In addition, your research mentor will be asked to review and critique a rough draft of your proposal, presentation
abstract, and final paper. Your faculty or research mentor should be available to offer you 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 about your relationship with your mentor.

The Research Internship

The research internship typically begins during the winter semester when you develop your research plan. During the research internship, which typically occurs the summer after your junior year, you will:

- Actively conduct research under the supervision of your faculty mentor.
- Maintain a research journal or logbook.
- Attend McNair seminars as scheduled.
- Provide a research proposal, and three progress reports
- Complete a 20- to 30-page (double-spaced) paper formatted in the style appropriate to your discipline.
- Present your research either orally or with a poster.

To support these activities you will:
- Receive a $2,500 stipend during the summer to conduct your research. Expect to spend approximately six weeks with 20-30 hours per week actively conducting research.
- Receive a tuition waiver for two college research credits.
- Receive a housing allowance to defray the cost of on-campus or off-campus housing.

Results Dissemination

In late summer you will complete a 20-30 page research paper and submit it to the McNair office before the beginning of the fall semester. From this, you will develop a poster presentation for public display at the university, using formatting guidelines provided by your academic department. A workshop by the McNair office will assist you in using your computer to develop your poster, and the McNair program will pay for the cost of printing your poster.

At the NMU Celebration of Student Research, Creative Works, and Academic Service Learning in the spring, you and your peers will have the opportunity to present your results to a local audience. Additionally, you and your faculty mentor should consider peer-reviewed journal publication for your research. Your mentor can provide advice regarding appropriate journals and assist you in editing and preparing your article for publication.

Selected scholars and their mentors may be invited to present their findings at regional conferences. The program may financially support travel requests for these conferences, depending on cost and available funding.
Travel Policy

As a McNair Scholar, travel funds may be expended to travel to a professional conference in your discipline, or to a McNair Program conference elsewhere in the country. The only requirement for conference participation is that the Scholar has been accepted to present his/her research project at the conference. Additionally, travel funds will also cover the costs of visitation to a potential graduate school.

*McNair travel funds cover the following:

- Registration fees for conferences
- Transportation costs, including flights, trains, taxi or shuttle rides to and from the airport, or mileage if you plan to drive (as long as mileage is less expensive than a flight).
- Hotel Accommodation
- Meals, including breakfast, lunch, and dinner (excluding alcoholic beverages and tips).
- McNair DOES NOT cover travel to international destinations.

Unless explicitly listed above, it must be assumed that McNair travel funds do not cover any other costs.

Priority is given to:

- Scholars who have excellent attendance records for McNair activities and events.
- Scholars who are graduating seniors.
- Scholars who have participated in the Summer Research Institute.
- Scholars who maintain at least a 3.0 GPA

Application Process

Once you have located a conference that you want to attend, McNair staff will work with you to register, make travel and lodging arrangements, and arrange for per diem payments for meals. This procedure is described in greater detail in the Travel Application Checklist, located in the appendix.

 Scholar Responsibilities, Expectations, and Codes of Conduct

★ Meet individually with designated program staff every month during the academic year.
★ Attend all scheduled program activities.
★ Identify a faculty mentor after orientation and before you start your research experience.
★ Maintain a 3.0 GPA each semester.
★ Participate in a tutoring program, if needed.
★ Attend scholarly presentations sponsored by your academic department.
★ Maintain a research journal or logbook.
★ Complete a research poster for display at NMU.
★ Present your research findings at a venue determined with help from your faculty mentor.
Complete GRE training and take the GRE.

Complete at least six graduate school applications.

Behave in a professional manner. Professional behavior includes:

- **Active Participation**: Actively participate in discussions of assigned readings at all seminar events. Bring interesting research, internship and graduate school information to meetings and share it with other scholars. Also, ask questions and share your 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 others' expectations of confidentiality and privacy. Be respectful and attentive at meetings and 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 he or she can take pride.

- **Responsibility**: A professional takes responsibility for his/ her own progress by completing work and being prepared for meetings and other activities. A professional also takes responsibility for his/her actions with care for consequences that might evolve and for how his/her actions will affect others.
  - Confirm all appointments with your faculty mentor or McNair staff and be punctual to all meetings and activities.
  - If you must be late or cannot participate in a seminar or other event, you must inform the Program Coordinator as soon as possible.
  - You are responsible for making arrangements to meet with program staff in the event you miss a seminar.

- **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

Travel Application Process

To apply for travel funds, Scholars should complete the Travel Request Form and submit to McNair Assistant Director for review at least 4-6 weeks before the travel. All scholars are required to seek additional funds from their department and college.

Please, use the steps enumerated below to assist in planning for conference travel.

If you plan to ATTEND A CONFERENCE:
- Notify the McNair staff of the topic/field of the conference.
- Complete any registration forms associated with the conference. Note the deadlines for registration and, if you intend to present a paper, proposal submission.
- Determine the exact dates and times that you wish to attend. Be sure to consider when you want to arrive at the location, which will influence when you want to leave Marquette. For example, if a conference in Seattle, Washington, begins at 1:00pm on a Thursday, do you want to leave early Thursday morning (which may be inconvenient), or Wednesday night (which will involve another overnight stay and therefore cost more)?
- Meet with the McNair Secretary to make travel arrangements. We will schedule flights and make reservations at the hotel for you. It is easiest to do this while you wait, so that you can advise us on any issues that arise. For example, there may not be a flight available when you want to leave, so you will need to inform us of your second choice. In most cases, your tickets and confirmations will be sent to the McNair Program office, where you will need to pick them up.
- Make arrangements as soon as possible, preferably at least a month in advance. Flights will be less expensive, early registration and hotel reservations are priced lower, and so forth. This will benefit you, because the less money you spend per conference, the more conferences you can attend.

If you plan to VISIT GRADUATE SCHOOLS: (See Checklist)
- Thoroughly investigate and select the programs you would like to visit. Seek advice from your faculty and graduate mentors and from the McNair staff.
- Determine dates and times of travel. While weekends might interrupt your schedule the least, consider staying for at least one weekday, so that you can attend a class meeting (assuming the faculty allow visitors into their classrooms).
- Contact the departments and arrange visits with faculty and graduate students there.
- Meet with the McNair Secretary to make travel arrangements. We will schedule flights and make reservations at a hotel for you. It is easiest to do this while you wait, so that you can advise us on any issues that arise. You might also find out if you can stay with graduate students during your visit. Departments often encourage strong candidates to visit, and will help you make accommodations.

Points to remember
- McNair Program travel funds can only be used for travel within the United States.
Once registrations, flights, and hotel accommodations have been confirmed, YOU are responsible for any charges for changes or cancellations. Please do remember this and plan accordingly.

If possible, try to take extra money and/or a cash card along for contingencies: getting snowed in at the airport and needing to buy food, missing the shuttle and having to catch a cab. If this will be a hardship for you, discuss alternatives with the McNair staff.

The McNair Program will not pay for or reimburse:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Personal purchases (books, souvenirs, etc.)
- Cost of meals beyond per diem limits
- Tours, excursions, and non-conference-related events and entertainment
- Car insurance if you rent a car
- Tips you give to service providers
- Family or friends accompanying you
- Personal phone calls, movies, or room service at your hotel room

Please don’t hesitate to call the McNair office if an emergency arises or if you encounter difficulties while traveling that we may be able to help you resolve.

Contact numbers:
- McNair Program Office: 906-227-2590
- McNair Director: 906-227-2538
- McNair Program Coordinator: 906-227-2560

Keep these numbers with you in case of emergency.
**McNair Scholar Responsibilities Contract**

I, ______________________________ accept the offer to participate in the Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program at 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 designated program staff member at least once per month and with the Program Director at least once per semester.
- 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 advisor or Program Coordinator 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 advisor, 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 meeting with the Program Director or Program Coordinator. 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 or 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

Program 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 and identification 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:

- Participate in an orientation meeting for effective mentoring of McNair Scholars,
- Meet with the scholar to prepare research proposals and progress reports,
- Assist the scholar in the completion of a directed study form for four 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 for NMU’s Annual Celebration.
- Direct the scholar with the writing of a publication quality paper due at the conclusion of the summer during which research occurs.

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 student.
- Serve as the student’s role model, friend, and confidante.
- Show willingness to help the mentee make valuable academic and professional contacts.

Benefits of Mentorship

- Fulfillment of the scholarship goal for tenure and academic advancement.
- Utilization of 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, and two credits of directed study for the summer semester.
- You will receive $250 to defray material costs associated with your mentee’s work.
Interactions with Your Mentor

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 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.