McNair Scholars 2019-2020

Valentina Campos
Kinesiology

Gabriella Garcia
Psychology

Krystal Garza
Engineering

Megan Greige
Geology

Katherine Lanoue
Biomedical Science

Eduardo Luna
Kinesiology

Ryan Nerios
Kinesiology

Natalia Pellum-Mackey
Biology

Daniel San Miguel
Biochemistry

Loren Walker
Geology

Congratulations McNair 2019-2020 Scholar Graduates

Fall 2019
Micah Bachner
LarReshia Brumfield
Naila Flores
Andrew Garcia
Yadira Martinez-Gomez
Cerina Ramirez
Rudy Salomon
Angelia Val

Spring 2020
Mariya Aleksich
Gisselle Balderas
Rosa Borrego-Butler
Robert Bretzing-Tungate
Louis Chavez
Gabriella Garcia
Megan Greige
Albert Hernandez
Damaris Sanchez

Summer 2020
Ryan Nerios

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Ronald E. McNair

Outside This Issue:
TRiO

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McNair Faculty Mentors

Thank you to the following Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi faculty members who support the program by mentoring and directing research. McNair would not be a successful program without their dedication.

**College of Science and Engineering**

Dr. Keisha Bahr  
Dr. Mark Besonen  
Dr. Eugene Billiot  
Dr. Feri Billiot  
Dr. Chris Bird  
Dr. Gregory Buck  
Dr. Kirk Cammarata  
Dr. Patrick Fitzpatrick  
Dr. Luis Garcia  
Dr. Xavier Gonzales  
Dr. James Hogan  
Dr. Yuxia Huang  
Dr. Scott King  
Dr. Bruce Lee  
Dr. Chunca Liu  
Dr. Ruby Mehrubeoglu  
Dr. Paul Montagna

Dr. Dorina Murgulet  
Dr. Valerie Murgulet  
Dr. Cosmima Nicula  
Dr. Christopher Patrick  
Dr. Dara Orbach  
Dr. Frank Pezold  
Dr. David Portnoy  
Dr. Jai Prakash  
Dr. Brandi Reese  
Dr. Lee Sme  
Dr. Greg Stunz  
Dr. Jeffrey Turner  
Dr. Benjamin Walther  
Dr. Kim Withers  
Dr. Doyeon Won  
Dr. Ning Zhang

**College of Education**

Dr. Toyin Ajisafe  
Dr. Randy Bonnette  
Dr. Nikola Grafnetterova  
Dr. Donald Metrose  
Dr. Daniel Newmire  
Dr. Bethanie Pletcher  
Dr. Lon Seiger  
Dr. Frank Spaniol  
Dr. Corinne Valadez  
Dr. Heather Webb

**College of Liberal Arts**

Dr. Isabel Araiza  
Dr. Olga Berkout  
Dr. Pamela Brouillard  
Dr. Lisa Comparini  
Dr. Charles Etheridge  
Dr. Gina Glanc  
Dr. Mark Hartlaub  
Dr. Sam Hill  
Dr. Amy Houlihan  
Dr. Melissa Jarrell  
Dr. Michelle Maresh-Fuehrer  
Dr. Pamela Meyer  
Dr. Miguel Moreno  
Dr. Catherine Quick  
Dr. Phillip Rhoades  
Dr. Carey Rote  
Dr. Collin Scarince  
Dr. Steve Seidel  
Dr. Yuliana Zaikman  
Dr. Anthony Zoccolillo

**College of Nursing**

Ms. Carmen Hernandez  
Dr. Cathy Miller  
Dr. Christina Murphey

**College of Business**

Dr. Mohan Rao  
Dr. Lawrence Smith

McNair Scholars Research Presentations and Opportunities

*Scholar’s abstract was accepted to present but conference was postponed or cancelled due to COVID-19.

**Gisselle Balderas***

“Semantic Competition Between Interlingual Homographs”

**Faculty Mentor:** Miguel Moreno, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor; Department of Psychology  
- Southwestern Psychological Association Annual Conference, Frisco, TX; April 2020

**Robert Bretzing-Tungate***

“Analysis of Elasmobranch Field Identification Using CO1”

**Faculty Mentor:** David Portnoy, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor; Department of Life Science  
- 21st Annual University of Maryland National Conference for McNair Scholars; March 2020

**Gabriella Garcia***

“Visual Search and Automation: Do you Believe What you are Told?”

**Faculty Mentor:** Miguel Moreno, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor; Department of Psychology  
- Southwestern Psychological Association Annual Conference, Frisco, TX; April 2020

**Megan Greige***

“Estuarine DOM Composition Response to Hurricane Harvey: Lessons Learned from Corpus Christi Bay, Texas”

**Faculty Mentor:** Dorina Murgulet, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor; Department of Physical & Environmental Sciences  
- 21st Annual University of Maryland National Conference for McNair Scholars; May 2020

**Albert Hernandez***

“Commercial Activity Trackers Overestimate Step Count Implications for Ambulatory Physical Activity Monitoring”

**Faculty Mentor:** Toyin Ajisafe, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor; Department of Kinesiology  
- 21st Annual University of Maryland National Conference for McNair Scholars; May 2020

**Abigail Champion***

“Effects of Menstrual Cycle on Measure of Body Composition”

**Faculty Mentor:** Heather Webb, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor; Department of Kinesiology  
- American College of Sports Medicine Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA; May 2020

**Anna Longoria-Porterfield***

“The Big “O”: The Influence of Gender Roles and The Sexual Double Standard on the Frequency of Orgasms in Females”

**Faculty Mentor:** Yuliana Zaikman, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor; Department of Psychology  
- Society for Personality & Social Psychology Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA; February 2020
### Research Scholars Spring/Summer 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Faculty Mentor</th>
<th>Research Project</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gisselle Balderas</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Miguel Moreno, Ph.D.</td>
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<td>“The Big “O”: The Influence of Gender Roles and The Sexual Double Standard on the Frequency of Orgasms in Female”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eduardo Luna</td>
<td>Kinesiology</td>
<td>Daniel Newmire, Ph.D.</td>
<td>“The Effect of Muscular Fatigue during a Farmers Walk on Muscular Recruitment and Activation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan Nerios</td>
<td>Kinesiology</td>
<td>Daniel Newmire, Ph.D.</td>
<td>“Muscle Research Project-LBM/SMNN”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Scholar Graduates: Where are they Headed?

We would like to congratulate the 2019-2020 cohort of graduate scholars. They have done many wonderful things during their time at TAMUCC and are representing the TAMUCC McNair Scholars Program well in their respective graduate programs.

I started my journey in TRIO in high school when I joined Upward Bound by the advice of one of my freshman year science teachers. After completing four years of Upward Bound, I transitioned to a community college where I joined Student Support Services. When I chose to transfer to TAMUCC, the director of the TRIO programs at the community college urged me to make sure I applied for the McNair Scholars Program when I got there. That was some of the best advice I received when transitioning to TAMUCC. My intended goal during and after my college career was to do research and McNair gave me the opportunity to do that. I found direction and support when I joined McNair. The constant updates, deadlines, and check-ins with Anabel kept me in line with the duties and responsibilities attached to my research project. Having to write a journal article for the McNair Journal also helped me prepare for graduate school by allowing me to practice a skill I will use for the rest of my academic and professional career. Most importantly, having to choose and work with a mentor has taught me what it is like working in conjunction with a faculty member when completing a research project. All the experiences I have gained in McNair prepared me for the road ahead in graduate school and in my career. I have experienced roadblocks through this journey, but I would absolutely do it again.

Scholar Spotlight: Robert Bretzing-Tungate

Robert Bretzing-Tungate joined the McNair Scholars Program as a junior in September 2018 and will complete his undergraduate studies in Marine Biology in May 2020. During his tenure as a McNair Scholar, he produced a research project under Dr. David Portnoy. He has presented his McNair research project at several national conferences including the Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science Annual Meeting. McNair staff is proud of his accomplishments and takes great pleasure in presenting him with this year’s Scholar Spotlight.

I started my journey in TRIO in high school when I joined Upward Bound by the advice of one of my freshman year science teachers. After completing four years of Upward Bound, I transitioned to a community college where I joined Student Support Services. When I chose to transfer to TAMUCC, the director of the TRIO programs at the community college urged me to make sure I applied for the McNair Scholars Program when I got there. That was some of the best advice I received when transitioning to TAMUCC. My intended goal during and after my college career was to do research and McNair gave me the opportunity to do that. I found direction and support when I joined McNair. The constant updates, deadlines, and check-ins with Anabel kept me in line with the duties and responsibilities attached to my research project. Having to write a journal article for the McNair Journal also helped me prepare for graduate school by allowing me to practice a skill I will use for the rest of my academic and professional career. Most importantly, having to choose and work with a mentor has taught me what it is like working in conjunction with a faculty member when completing a research project. All the experiences I have gained in McNair prepared me for the road ahead in graduate school and in my career. I have experienced roadblocks through this journey, but I would absolutely do it again.

Gisselle Balderas: Applying to a Master of Arts Program with an emphasis on Psychology at the University of Houston-Victoria in Fall 2020.

Gabriella Garcia: Applying to a Master of Arts Program with an emphasis on Psychology at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi in Fall 2020.

Robert Bretzing-Tungate: Accepted to the Fisheries and Mariculture Program at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi in Fall 2020.

Megan Greige: Applying to a Master of Science Program with an emphasis on Environmental Science at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi in Fall 2020.

Albert Hernandez: Applying to a Master of Science Program with an emphasis on Kinesiology at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi in Fall 2020.

Gisselle Balderas: Applying to a Master of Science Program with an emphasis on Psychology at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi in Fall 2020.

Albert Hernandez: Applying to a Master of Science Program with an emphasis on Kinesiology at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi in Fall 2020.
Faculty Mentor Spotlight: Dr. Yuliana Zaikman

Dr. Yuliana Zaikman shares her experience as a McNair Faculty Mentor

The focus of the McNair Scholars Program is preparing undergraduate students for doctoral studies through academic research opportunities under the guidance of a Faculty Mentor. One of the many valued Faculty Mentors that has worked with the McNair Scholars Program is Dr. Yuliana Zaikman, Assistant Professor of Psychology in the Department of Liberal Arts. She is currently mentoring McNair Scholar, Anna Longoria-Porterfield.

1. What characteristics do you look for in your mentees?

I usually look for students who have taken at least one class with me (usually face to face class so we have had some personal interaction) and who I had the chance to get to know better. I look for students who express interest in doing research and going to graduate school. I look for students who performed well in my class, illustrated good critical thinking skills, and have good quality of writing skills.

2. What is the most rewarding part of being a Mentor?

I think the most rewarding part of being a mentor is seeing something “click” for the student. It might be them realizing something about their future career path or perhaps finally understanding a research concept they were struggling with. I also enjoy having students ask me questions that really show that they want to know for the sake of knowing.

3. What qualities does a Faculty Mentor need to possess to be effective?

I think the qualities a Faculty Mentor should have in order to be effective is sincere desire to help the students with their research, time to meet with the student on a weekly basis, time to provide detailed feedback and answer all the questions the students might have. I also think it is important for the Faculty Mentor and the student to share research interests. I believe that the best way for the mentor to be effective is to be able to share their own expertise on the research topic.

McNair Alumni Spotlight: Dr. Samantha Hernandez

Samantha Hernandez (Political Science, 2011) obtained her Ph.D. in Political Science in May 2018 from Arizona State University. She shares her experience and lessons she gained as a McNair Scholar.

The McNair Scholars Program really helped me understand what exactly I was getting myself into with graduate school. Learning how to do field research, understanding social dynamics of graduate school, and preparing myself for work in graduate school was extremely helpful. McNair also helped boost my confidence, specifically when it came to research. I knew that I would produce quality research that looked at demographics that in a way that was not happening in Political Science. I went into graduate school with an understanding of what the McNair program helped me embrace. They prepared me for the fact that there would be less people in my program that looked like me and how that would play into being able to complete my degree. Thanks to the McNair Scholars Program, I am now able to celebrate my “doctor-day” every March. While you are applying and when you are in a graduate program, you may feel that it is impossible to keep going, but it is not. My advice to anyone entering graduate school is to celebrate the small wins and remember who you are. Your program is part of your life, but it will not define who you are.
GIVE US AN UPDATE!

The U.S. Department of Education requires all McNair programs to provide Annual Performance Reports and keep track of alumni until the attainment of a doctoral degree. Alumni can update their information by completing the form below and mailing the information to the McNair Scholars Program – or by contacting Anabel Hernandez at anabel.hernandez@tamucc.edu.

Name: ______________________________________________________________________________
Address: ____________________________________________________________________________
City & State: ________________________________________________________________________ Zip Code: _____________________________
TAMUCC Cohort Year: _________________________________________________________________
Highest Degree Attained and When: ______________________________________________________
Degree in Progress: Master’s ______ PhD ______ or Education Complete________
Field of Study: ______________________________________________________________________
Expected Year of Completion: ___________________________________________________________
School in Attendance: __________________________________________________________________________
Email Address: _________________________________________________________________________

Alumni News

Anna Haga (Nursing, 2017) obtained a master’s degree in Family Nurse Practitioner in May 2020 from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Stephanie Tiet (Interdisciplinary Studies, 2017) entered a master’s program in English in the Spring 2020 at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Brenda Vela (Sociology, 2010) entered a doctorate program in Social Work in the Spring 2020 at the University of Texas in Arlington.

Doctorate Recipients

Meagan Bryand (Communication, 2009) obtained her Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership in December 2015 from the University of Houston-Clear Lake.

Samantha Hernandez (Political Science, 2011) obtained her Ph.D. in Political Science in May 2018 from Arizona State University.

Renae Hudak (Kinesiology, 2013) obtained her Doctor of Physical Therapy in June 2017 from the University of Texas Health San Antonio.

Jerahme Martinez (Chemistry, 2009) obtained his Ph.D. in Biochemistry in May 2016 from Rice University.

Amanda Whitmill (Bio-Medical Science, 2011) obtained her Ph.D. in Cell Biology in August 2016 from the University of North Texas.

Justin Williams (History, 2009) obtained his Ph.D. in Philosophy in August 2019 from the University of North Texas.

McNair Scholars Program
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
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Corpus Christi, Texas 78412

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Dr. Amy Aldridge Sanford
Associate Provost

Dr. Eugene Billiot
Professor-Science & Engineering

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Clinical Assistant Professor

Ms. Penny Long
Financial Aid Advisor

Dr. Frank Lucido
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Dr. Michelle Maresh-Fuehrer
Associate Professor of Public Relations

Dr. Gerardo Moreno
Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dr. Frank Pezold
Dean of College of Science & Engineering

Ms. Nancy Salinas
Student Development Specialist

Dr. Steve Seldel
Professor-Psychology

Ms. Angela Walker
Associate Dean of Students