Welcome McNair Scholars 2015-2016

Bianca Arreola  
Major:  Psychology/Sociology

Leanna De Leon  
Major:  Kinesiology

Elisa Silva  
Major:  Sociology/Criminal Justice

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Congratulations to our 2015 McNair Scholars Graduates

Danielle Tefft  
B.A., English  
Fall 2015

TyEisha Lawson  
B.S., Kinesiology  
Fall 2015

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. Mark Besonen  
Dr. Eugene Billiot  
Dr. Feri Billiot  
Dr. Chris Bird  
Dr. Gregory Buck  
Dr. Xavier Gonzales  
Dr. James Hogan  
Dr. Scott King  
Dr. Chuntao Liu  
Dr. Ruby Mehrubeoglu

Dr. Paul Montagna  
Dr. Dorina Murgulet  
Dr. Lee Smee  
Dr. Greg Stunz  
Dr. Magesh Thiyagarajan  
Dr. Dugan Um  
Dr. Benjamin Walther  
Dr. Kim Withers  
Dr. Paul Zimba

**College of Education**
Dr. Randy Bonnette  
Dr. Donald Melrose  
Dr. Bethanie Pletcher  
Dr. Frank Spaniol  
Dr. Corinne Valadez

**College of Liberal Arts**
Dr. Isabel Araiza  
Dr. Pamela Brouillard  
Dr. Charles Etheridge  
Dr. Gina Gianc  
Dr. Mark Hartlaub  
Dr. Sam Hill  
Dr. Amy Houlihan  
Dr. Michael Jin  
Dr. Melissa Jarrell  
Dr. Miguel Moreno  
Dr. Michelle Maresh-Fuehrer  
Dr. Catherine Quick  
Dr. Pamela Meyer  
Dr. Philip Rhoades  
Dr. Michael Ramirez  
Dr. Steve Seidel  
Dr. Carey Rote  
Dr. Anthony Zoccolillo
Spring 2016 McNair Scholars Conference Presentations

Matthew Cruz

“Phenotypic variation in intertidal limpets (Cellana sandwicensis) along a depth cline in Papahanaumokuakea Marine National Monument”

Faculty Mentor: James Hogan, Ph.D. Assistant Professor; Department of Science and Engineering
- 2015 MSGO Symposium, Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi, Dec 2015

Lynette Lambert

“Content Analysis of the Schneider Family Book Awards Children’s Division from 2004 to 2015”

Faculty Mentor: Corinne Valadez, Ph.D., Associate Professor; Department of Education
- 2016 Texas Association for Literacy Education, San Antonio, TX, Feb 2016

Lauren Hernandez

“Choosing to Enjoy: The Advantages of Malleable Beliefs about Enjoyment”

Faculty Mentor: Steve Seidel, Ph.D., Professor; Department of Liberal Arts
- 17th Annual Convention Society for Personality and Social Psychology, San Diego, CA, Jan 2016

Maritza Hernandez

“Malleable Beliefs about Enjoyment Predict Exercise Attitudes and Health Outcomes”

Faculty Mentor: Amy Houlihan, Ph.D., Associate Professor; Department of Liberal Arts
- 17th Annual Convention Society for Personality and Social Psychology, San Diego, CA, Jan 2016

Sandra Morales

“Belief Malleability, Self-Control, and Empathy as Predictors of Rudeness”

Faculty Mentor: Steve Seidel, Ph.D., Professor; Department of Liberal Arts
- 2016 SWPA Convention, Dallas, TX, April 2016
Bianca Arreola
Major: Psychology
Faculty Mentor: Isabel Araiza, Ph.D.
Research Project: The researcher will explore the relation between parent’s racial/ethnic identity and their child’s mental health status; and identifying if it varies across socioeconomic status.

Clyde Avalos
Major: Mechanical Engineering
Faculty mentor: Magesh Thiyagarajan, Ph.D.
Research Project: The researcher will find a suitable power supply to operate a plasma actuator for aerodynamic purposes related to unmanned aerial vehicles.

Lori “Jae” Cerda
Major: Psychology
Faculty mentor: Miguel Moreno, Ph.D.
Research Project: Does exposure to powerless feelings to a situation generate cognitive deficits as measured by problem solving behaviors in participants?

Alfonso Cohou
Major: Marine Biology
Faculty mentor: Benjamin Walther, Ph.D.
Research Project: The researcher will explore how hypoxia affects the condition index and diet of Atlantic Croaker.

Leanna De Leon
Major: Kinesiology
Faculty mentor: Dr. Frank Spaniol
Research Project: The purpose of her study is to investigate the relationship between visual skills and batting performance of professional baseball players.

John Johnson
Major: Marine Biology
Faculty mentor: James Hogan, Ph.D.
Research Project: The researcher will analyze lionfish samples that have been collected from the invaded range of the Gulf of Mexico and the native Indo-Pacific region.

Corbin Lewis
Major: Chemistry
Faculty mentor: Feri Billiot, Ph.D.
Research Project: The researcher will explore the molecular interactions on the atomic scale.
Michelle McGaha  
**Major:** Biomedical Science  
**Faculty Mentor:** Xavier Gonzales, Ph.D.  
**Research Project:** The researcher will explore the physical and genetic characterization of marine tardigrades along the southern coastal regions of Texas.

Sandra Morales  
**Major:** Psychology  
**Faculty mentor:** Steve Seidel, Ph.D.  
**Research Title:** “Belief Malleability and Rudeness”

Jermeka Morrison  
**Major:** Criminal Justice  
**Faculty mentor:** Phillip Rhoades, Ph.D.  
**Research Project:** The proposed research is needed to continue assisting an ongoing coalition safety campaign use data collected to increase community awareness, create traffic safety presentations and literature.

Stacey Ogunrinade  
**Major:** Psychology  
**Faculty mentor:** Steve Seidel, Ph.D.  
**Research Project:** How hair length can be a determinable factor in reproduction in political figures.

Jennifer Ramirez  
**Major:** Kinesiology  
**Faculty mentor:** Randy Bonnette, Ph.D.  
**Research Project:** The researcher will explore the relationship of Visual Edge Performance Training (VEPT) scores and rank position on the team of DI collegiate tennis athletes.

Elisa Silva  
**Major:** Sociology  
**Faculty mentor:** Michael Ramirez, Ph.D.  
**Research Project:** Her project will examine the coping strategies used by consumers of Japanese anime/manga and other media to deal with the stigma they face for their consumptions.
TRIO National Day of Service 2016

On Saturday morning, February 27th, students and staff from the TAMUCC McNair Scholars Program and Student Support Services Programs met to organize and take donations to the Salvation Army. The students had been collecting donation items, such as extra clothes, over the previous four weeks and met early Saturday for breakfast before loading up the donations for the trip to the Salvation Army facility.

In all, TAMUCC’s TRIO programs were able to collect and donate 53 bags and 4 large boxes full of items ranging from clothing and shoes of all sizes to handbags and household necessities. Together with McNair, these TRIO programs provide services to over 450 TAMUCC students. The TRIO National Day of the Service gives students in these programs the chance to give back to their community by engaging in charitable activities to benefit the public. We thank all the campus for the many donations to make a difference in their community by helping the less fortunate.

Zoe Ramos
Major: Biochemistry
Faculty mentor: Feri Billiot, Ph.D.
Research Project: The researcher will study surfactant molecules of Valine, the varying effects of active groups and their interaction together.

Shane Smith
Major: Mechanical Engineering
Faculty Mentor: Ruby Mehrubeoglu, Ph.D.
Research Project: The purpose of his research is to investigate methods to synchronize the supercontinuum laser with the hyperspectral imaging camera to ensure homogenously illuminated media that will be measured.

Stephanie Tiet
Major: Education
Faculty mentor: Bethanie Pletcher, Ph.D.
Research Problem: Do classroom teachers have classroom libraries, how they are used by children, and what kinds of materials are included for student use in these libraries?
Faculty Mentor Spotlight: Dr. Isabel Araiza

I am the daughter of teenage parents. My mom was a high school drop-out and was just 16 years old when she had me; my dad was 18 and a senior in high school. Throughout my life, they drilled into my head that my education was the key to future opportunities. While they demanded that I dedicate myself to my schooling, I had to figure out how to be successful. Though I graduated high school at the top of my class, was inducted into my high school’s hall of fame, and received recruitment letters from highly selective universities, I had no idea how to navigate the college application process. I didn’t know what I didn’t know. As a result, instead of going to a top university, I attended my local community college, eventually transferring to my local university where I graduated with honors. Being a hard worker, with the grades to prove it, was not enough to get me into those elite undergraduate institutions; I needed social capital. This was a lesson I would have to learn a second time.

When I completed my undergraduate degree, I knew I wanted to go to graduate school. The first time I applied to graduate programs was a repeat of my experiences as a high school senior. I missed important deadlines and didn’t understand the relationship between the competitiveness of programs and funding opportunities. Those were hard lessons to learn; I elected to hold off on graduate school. Before reapplying to graduate programs, I visited with old professors, asked for advice, read everything I could get my hands on. I paid attention to details, noted deadlines, followed instructions, double and triple-checked all pertinent documents and all my materials. The second go-around was a success! I was accepted to three graduate programs—including my “first-choice,” Boston College. Two of the programs even offered me full rides and stipends for living expenses.

I was a fully-funded PhD student at Boston College, but I soon learned that getting there was just part of the battle. I became acutely aware that there was a lot that I didn’t know; graduate school was so different than my undergraduate experience. Again, I was navigating unchartered territory by myself. I had to watch and listen to other students and my professors. It wasn’t enough to engage with the subject matter; I needed to learn about the institution and the faculties’ taken-for-granted assumptions about navigating the program and the institution. This meant that I had to be willing to ask lots of questions, which also meant that I had to not worry about how others perceived me. This was quite challenging, given the amount of chest-thumping that happens in graduate school. To be frank, it was intimidating. The learning curve was steep; sometimes, I cried. Sometimes, I wondered what made me think I could handle being at such an institution. The first semester was incredibly intimidating, but each subsequent semester was better than the previous one. I look back at that time as one of the most challenging and rewarding periods of my life.

The lessons I learned as a high school senior through to my graduate-school years shape how I conduct myself as a McNair mentor and what I expect of my McNair scholar. The McNair mentor-mentee relationship is an important one. I don’t want my McNair mentees to ever feel alone, even as they transition to their graduate programs. Our relationship does not end when they are done with their undergraduate research project or when they get accepted into a program. I see myself as a resource for those students for as long as they want/need me to be a resource. I want them to be the best that they can be, and that means making myself available to students when the perceived need arises.

My responsibilities as a mentor are two-fold. First, I am here to help a student refine his/her academic skills. The better those skills are, the more graduate school options a McNair scholar will have. I want my McNair Scholars to be willing and able to apply to highly competitive institutions inside AND outside the state of Texas. Highly competitive graduate programs award funding; I don’t want my Scholars to get into debt pursuing a graduate education. Second, I offer my McNair Scholars cultural capital. I try to help Scholars navigate the non-academic challenges associated with undergraduate education, the graduate applications process, and their graduate school experiences should they want my counsel. To do this well requires an immense time commitment for both myself and my mentee.

I treat the McNair mentor-mentee relationship as a sort of apprenticeship. Because I want my students to be in a position to apply to highly competitive programs, I expect to commit time and energy to my McNair scholar, and I expect the scholar to do the same. At a minimum, I expect to meet with my mentee weekly. Students need not have stellar GPAs, but they need to have a strong work ethic and a commitment to follow timelines. They also need to be willing to be guided. There are no short cuts to refining academic skills and preparing oneself to apply to competitive institutions. But, if a student is willing to put in the time and effort, I am willing to do the same.
Graduate Scholar Spotlight: Dr. Meagan Bryand

The McNair Scholars Program helped prepare me for graduate school by providing me with mentorship and allowing me to participate in graduate-level research. Like many students, persistence was an issue for me. I wanted to quit many times for financial or personal reasons. One of the greatest aspects of the McNair Scholars Program is that students are teamed up with a mentor. I was privileged to study under Dr. Shawn T. Wahl who mentored me beyond the program. He introduced me to some of the leading scholars in the communication field that opened many opportunities for me. Even during my master’s and doctoral programs, Dr. Wahl extended his mentorship to me. Also, the McNair Scholars Program helped me prepare and present at local and national conferences. While working on graduate degrees, I was required to conduct many collaborative and individual research studies. An unspoken “rule” of graduate studies is that students present their research at conferences and potentially publish their research. Many of these studies come from work done in graduate classes, which was great. However, there is little to no guidance on how to submit to conferences, what to wear, or what areas to focus on when presenting. Thus, the McNair Scholars Program prepped me for these experiences by affording me many opportunities as an undergraduate student to present at local and national conferences.

The advice I would like to give to current McNair Scholars is apply to many graduate schools and continue to give back to the McNair Scholars community. For both my master’s and doctoral programs, I applied to about eight schools for each degree I sought; some schools I knew I could definitely get into, some were a bit challenging to get into, and some were long shots. As for giving back to the McNair Scholars community, students will find that there are so many of us out in the world! I was privileged to mentor a fellow McNair Scholar at West Virginia University and she is now working on her doctorate and mentoring other McNair Scholars. It really is true that we are a family!

I feel honored to be the first McNair Scholar to receive my doctoral degree. To represent a reputable, ever-growing institution is something to be proud of. As a first-generation, Hispanic, and one time low-income college student, earning my doctorate was bigger than me – it meant a great deal to my family. I now have seven family members who have or are attending college. I am very proud of my and my family’s accomplishments, but there are many more goals we hope to achieve.

Scholar Graduates: Where are they Headed?

We would like to congratulate the 2015-2016 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.

Correy Miller: Doctor of Clinical Psychology (Psy.D) at the American School of Professional Psychology at Argosy University San Francisco Bay Area

Sandra Morales: Master’s Program in Clinical Psychology at the University of Texas at Tyler

Danielle Tefft: Master’s Program in Educational Administration at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Lauren Hernandez: Master’s Program in Occupational Therapy at the University of Texas at San Antonio
Scholar Graduates: Where are they Now?

Texas

- Irene Perales enrolled in Ph.D. program in counseling at the University of Texas at Arlington.
- Oscar Villarreal enrolled in Master’s program in Chemistry at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi.
- Tabitha Perez enrolled in Master’s program in English Literature at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi.
- Renae Hudak enrolled in Ph.D. program in Physical Therapy at Texas Health Science Center.
- Kellie Rulong enrolled in Master’s program in Geology at the University of Houston.
- Yadira Uhlig enrolled in Master’s program in English at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi.
- Elizabeth Grant enrolled in Master’s program in Philosophy at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi.
- Teresa Aguilar enrolled in Master’s program in Psychology at the University of Texas at Dallas.
- Luis Lugo enrolled in Master’s program in Geology at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi.
- Cortney Parkhurst enrolled in Master’s program in Psychology at Angelo State University.
- Abby Quinonez enrolled in Master’s program in Occupational Therapy at Abilene Christian University.
- Mariela Vazquez enrolled in Ph.D. program in Chemistry at Texas A&M University – College Station.
- Jerahme Martinez enrolled in Ph.D. program in Chemistry at Rice University.
- Justin Williams enrolled in Ph.D. program in Ethics at the University of North Texas.
- Benda Vela enrolled in Master’s program in Sociology at San Jacinto College.

Sabrina Del Moral
Enrolled: Masters Sociology
University of Milwaukee

Chenika Fowler
Enrolled: Ph.D. Psychology
Utah State University

Samantha Hernandez
Enrolled: Ph.D. Political Science
Arizona State University

Megan Grime
Enrolled: Ph.D. Psychology
University Strathclyde Scotland

Megan Perkins
Enrolled: Ph.D. Neuropsychology
University of Vermont

Arthur Oaden
Enrolled: Masters Asian Studies
Ohio State University

Travis Wilson
Enrolled: Masters Science
East Carolina University

Keisha-Marie Alridge
Enrolled: Ph.D. Psychology
Chicago School of Professional Psychology

Irene Perales enrolled in Ph.D. program in counseling at the University of Texas at Arlington.
Oscar Villarreal enrolled in Master’s program in Chemistry at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi.
Tabitha Perez enrolled in Master’s program in English Literature at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi.
Renae Hudak enrolled in Ph.D. program in Physical Therapy at Texas Health Science Center.
Kellie Rulong enrolled in Master’s program in Geology at the University of Houston.
Yadira Uhlig enrolled in Master’s program in English at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi.
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Mariela Vazquez enrolled in Ph.D. program in Chemistry at Texas A&M University – College Station.
Jerahmie Martinez enrolled in Ph.D. program in Chemistry at Rice University.
Justin Williams enrolled in Ph.D. program in Ethics at the University of North Texas.
Benda Vela enrolled in Master’s program in Sociology at San Jacinto College.
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

Teresa Aguilar (Psychology, 2015) entered a master’s program in Fall 2015 at the University of Dallas.

Melissa Beeler (Environmental Science, 2013) obtained her master’s degree in Community and Regional Planning in May 2015 from the University of Texas in Austin.

Meagan Bryand (Communication, 2009) completed her Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at the University of Houston – Clear Lake in December 2015.

Arron Huss (Psychology, 2014) entered a doctorate program in Fall 2015 at Argosy University in Chicago.

Sandra Lynch (Psychology, 2012) received her Masters of Arts in Psychology from Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi in May 2015.

Cortney Parkhurst (Psychology, 2014) entered a master’s program in Fall 2015 at Angelo State University.

Megan Perkins (Psychology, 2015) entered a doctorate program in Fall 2015 at the University of Vermont.

Abby Quinonez (Kinesiology, 2015) entered a master’s program in Fall 2015 at Abilene Christian Academy.

Danielle Teftt (English, 2015) has entered a master’s program in Educational Administration in Spring 2016 at Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi.

Oscar Villarreal (Chemistry, 2011) entered a master’s program in Chemistry in Spring 2016 at Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi.