



EMU McNair Challenger

April 2018 Edition: Eastern Michigan University McNair Scholars Program

Like us on Facebook: "EMU McNair Scholars Program" & Follow us on Twitter: @EMUMcNair

NEW BEGINNINGS!

EMU McNair Staff

Dr. Heather Neff, Ph.D.,
Director
hneff@emich.edu

Kimberly Brown, M.A.,
Assistant Director
kbrown4@emich.edu

Chris Phanord, B.A.,
Graduate Assistant
cphanord@emich.edu

McNair Program

1011 Hoyt Hall
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
(734) 487-8240

The Future is McNair!!

Upcoming Events:

Spring Recess
March 30 - April 1

**McNair Awards
Celebration**
April 6, 12-2 pm, McKenny
Hall

Detroit '67
April 12 - 15, Quirk Theatre

Classes end: April 17

**Multicultural Graduation
Celebration**
April 20, Pease Auditorium

**Spring Commencement
Ceremony**
April 21, Convocation Center

McNair Scholars Retreat
May 15 and May 16

**GRE Preparation Course
with the Princeton
Review**
May 14 - June 18, Mondays
and Thursdays 9am - 12pm

Though some might think we're at the end of the year, McNair Scholars see April as the threshold of new beginnings! Read about the University Maryland McNair Research Conference, our many presentations at EMU's Undergraduate Symposium, and those we honored at the 2018 McNair Awards Ceremony. **Alyssia Hence**, McNair senior and co-recipient of this year's **Scholar of the Year Award**, reflects on her time as a McNair Scholar. We've also got updates from alumnae **Brandie Bentley** ('17) and **Courtney Williams** ('12).

Alyssia Hence: Tomorrow Begins Today!



Upon completing my second year of college as an Accounting Major, I decided to attend a meeting of the EMU Association of Black Social Workers. After years of contemplation, this was the moment when I decided to listen to my heart and follow my calling. The following semester I was admitted to McNair Scholars Program. My involvement with McNair quickly evolved into a deep passion for incorporating research into my Social Work practice. Over my three years with McNair I found a path to my future.

As a first-generation student, I was very aware of how unlikely it was I could attend grad school. McNair opened my horizons and prepared me to achieve that dream.

I am interested in exploring interventions that address the disparities affecting the lives of people with backgrounds like my own. Under the supervision of my mentor, Dr. Celeste Hawkins, I conducted a qualitative study of the reasons why African American high school students are more likely to experience suspension or expulsion. My paper, "Can You Hear Us Now? Engaging Young African American Voices in Urban Communities and Schools," was published in the *EMU McNair Scholars Research Journal* (2017). My findings led to my Honors Thesis, "Bullying in Grade School Children and its Connection to the School to Prison Pipeline." While conducting my research I was awarded the Provost's Undergraduate Research Stimulus Award, a Symposium Undergraduate Research Fellowship, and was named the National Association of Social Workers Southeast Michigan Student Social Worker of the Year.

My McNair research also led to my acceptance in a Summer Research Opportunity Program at the University of Michigan, which resulted in my co-authorship of a peer review publication. I could not have accomplished any these goals without the unwavering support of my McNair mentor, Dr. Celeste Hawkins.

I will graduate *magna cum laude* with my Bachelor's of Social Work, and will attend the University of Michigan, with funding, to pursue my Master's of Social Work. The McNair Scholars Program has offered me guidance, support, and encouragement. I've learned to take chances, welcome the unknown, and to value every opportunity.

I am thankful for all my experiences in the McNair Scholars Program. McNair really *does* work!

EMU McNair 2018
Graduate School Admissions

Sam Carano,

University of Michigan, Master of Science in
Electrical and Computer Engineering

Gwendolyn Dean,

Wayne State University, Master of Education,
Educational Leadership

Alyssia Hence,

University of Michigan, Master of Social Work
Wayne State University, Advanced Standing
Master of Social Work
University of Pittsburg, Master of Social Work

Demarco Johnson,

Eastern Michigan University, Master of Arts,
Criminology

Ivan LeBron,

St. Louis University, Master of Public
Health in Biosecurity & Disaster
Preparedness

Deborah Munganga,

Pennsylvania State University, Doctoral
Program, Political Science
Indiana University, M.A. in African Studies
George Washington University, Master of Arts
in International Development
University of Wisconsin-Madison, Master of
Arts in International and Public Affairs
University of Pittsburg, Master of Arts
in International and Public Affairs
Howard University, Master of Arts in
African Studies

Nyambura Njee,

New York University, Master of Arts,
African American Studies

Nayeli Sanchez,

The Ohio State University, Master of Science,
Environmental and Natural Resources
Grand Valley State University, Master of
Science, Biology, Aquatic Sciences
Central Michigan University, Master of Science,
Biology

Jesse Smith,

The Ohio State University, Doctoral
Program, Chemistry
Texas A & M, Doctoral Program, Chemistry

Yeliani Valdez,

The Ohio State University, Doctoral Program,
Social Work
Wright State University, Master of Social Work

Sina Webster,

Howard University, Master of Science,
Occupational Therapy
Georgia State University, Master of Arts,
Women and Gender Studies
University of Illinois, Chicago, Master of
Science, Occupational Therapy
DePaul University, Master of Science,
Occupational Therapy

Faith Williams,

University of Texas, Austin, Master of Arts,
Women and Gender Studies
Georgia State University, Master of Arts,
Women and Gender Studies
DePaul University, Master of Arts,
Women and Gender Studies

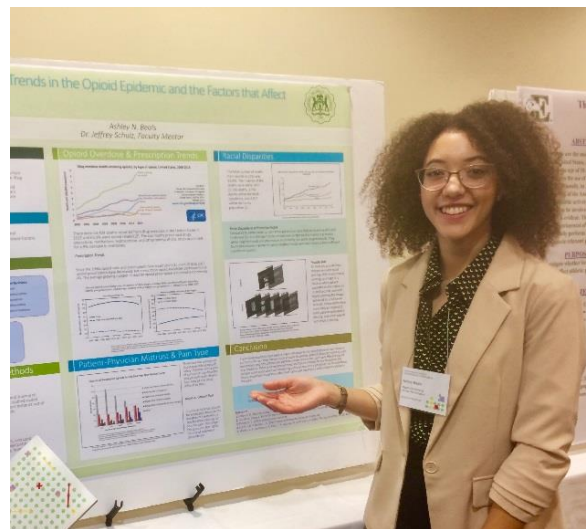


Gwendolyn Dean, Yeliani Valdez, Sam Carano, Nayeli Sanchez, Dr. Jasmine Lee, Ph.D. (graduation speaker and EMU McNair alumna), Amanda Wardin, Demarco Johnson, Alyssia Hence and Faith Williams.

You ARE the Future!
The Future is
McNAIR!

38th EMU Undergraduate Symposium

We are so proud of all of the McNair Scholars who appeared at this year's Undergraduate Symposium. The following McNair Scholars shared their research at this year's event: **Mahogany Anderson, Ashley Beals, Larry Borum III, Nailah Bush, Sam Carano, Desiree Drake, Victoria Fields, Robert Green, Jady Guess, Alyssia Hence, Courtni Montgomery, Fajr Muhammad, Jesse Smith, Kimberly Solomon, Jaylen Taylor, Karess Taylor, Anthony Terry, Yeliani Valdez, Sina Webster, and Faith Williams.** Congratulations to **Kimberly Solomon**, whose project, "Relation Between Anxiety and the Perception of Expressed Emotion" will receive the Marshall/McKeachie award for outstanding poster at the Undergraduate Symposium. She will be recognized at the Psychology Department Honors Ceremony.



Ashley Beals presents "The Role of Prescription Trends in the Opioid Epidemic and the Factors that Affect Physician Prescriptions." Dr. Jeffrey Schultz, mentor.



Robert Green, Faculty mentor Dr. MacArthur Steward, Dr. Connie Ruhl-Smith, and EMU President Dr. James Smith.



Victoria Fields, Desiree Drake, Fajr Muhammad, and Jaydn Guess presented "Examining the Educational Challenges of Children Affected by the Flint Lead Water Crisis." This research proposal also won the EMU McNair Team Challenge.

EMU McNair Awards Ceremony 2018

This year's McNair Award Ceremony was held on Friday, April 6th 2018. Our graduating seniors were spotlighted for their academic excellence, and awards were also given to those who make our program so special!

2018 Award Recipients

Scholars of the Year:

Alyssia Hence
Yeliani Valdez

Research of the Year Award:

Deborah Munganga

Sarah H. Huyvaert Mentor of the Year:

Dr. Celeste Hawkins, Ph.D.,
Professor of Social Work

Special Award:

Dr. Toni Stokes Jones, Ph.D.,
Professor of Learning Technology
and Design (LTEC)

Marcus K. Adams Service Awards:

Anthony Terry (Intern)
Sierra Powdhar (Cadet)

National McNair Research Conference at the University of Maryland

Nine recently attended the 19th annual National McNair Scholars Research Conference at the University of Maryland. The conference included informative panel discussions with university deans, McNair graduates and graduate admissions representatives. The conference also offered a graduate recruitment fair with representatives from over fifty universities. The most exciting event was a keynote by Dr. Chelsea Green, a Professor at Berklee College of Music, who performed an electrifying set of classical jazz interspersed with inspirational advice for the scholars.

McNair Interns presented their research and met scholars from across the country. They also visited the National Mall, with stops at the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, World War II Memorial, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Anthony Terry, whose presentation examined the "Academic, Financial, and Emotional Barriers to Veterans Academic Success," had this to say about his trip: "What surprised me most was how happy and friendly everyone was at the conference. I really enjoyed the atmosphere. Seeing all the scholars who were passionate about their research reaffirmed my belief that continuing my education is what I want to do."



McNair Interns at the University of Maryland

Top row: Kimberly Solomon, Robert Green, Karess Taylor, Anthony Terry, Jaylen Taylor. Bottom row: Victoria Fields, Mahogany Anderson, Courtney Montgomery and Ashley Beals.



Our Interns had the distinct honor of meeting Ms. Carmen Gordon (center, in red), national Director of the McNair Pro-gram, and Dr. Katie Blanding, Director of the Graduate and Special Focus Programs Division in the federal Department of Education (second from right).

The Interns' research will lead to publication in Volume 11 of the *EMU McNair Scholars Research Journal*, and will be presented to the EMU community at the McNair Research Colloquium on September 14th, 2018. During the summer our In-terns will attend the McNair Research Retreat and a GRE course, sponsored by EMU Student Government and taught by the Princeton Review.



Victoria Fields, Dr. Heather Neff, EMU McNair Director and Kimberly Brown, M.A., EMU McNair Assistant Director, enjoying dinner at the conference.

McNair Stars!

Brandie Bentley, MSW., University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

I graduated with my Bachelor's of Social Work (BSW) from EMU in April 2017. I am completing an Advanced Standing Master of Social Work degree with a concentration in Mental Health.



EMU McNair provided me with numerous benefits as both an undergrad, and now graduate student. From research experience, GRE prep, financial assistance, workshops, etc., McNair provided a solid foundation for me to continue building my personal and professional skill sets.

Entering my grad program, I felt as if I hit the ground running. I already knew how to contact and engage with faculty, and I made connections prior to even stepping on campus. McNair also holds weight, nationally. I have been able to expand my network and connect with many students and professionals simply by mentioning my involvement with McNair. It has opened doors and helped me gain connections across the board.

Through my academic coursework, internship experiences, and community engagement, I have refined my understanding of the need for scholarship within marginalized communities. A Ph.D. is a professional stepping stone that will allow me to facilitate systemic change through research and education. My area of interest is on issues that affect mental health education, care, and access for racial-ethnic minority populations. I am interested in investigating the unique mental health related experiences and needs of the Black community. The sub-populations I would like to focus on are wide-ranging, but include youth involved with the juvenile justice system and transition-aged- youth. I currently serve as a Graduate Research Assistant on the Identifying Depression through Early Assessment (IDEA) Research Team. As an RA, I work on a multi-disciplinary team under the leadership of Dr. Karen Tabb Dina, conducting research focused on perinatal mental health. I am excited about the journey to the Ph.D. I know it will be tough, but the rewards outweigh the struggle. Therefore, I am ready to face the challenges ahead.

What advice would you like to share with our McNair Scholars?

1. Get help understanding your financial package. You may be responsible for additional fees that are not covered by your tuition waiver or fellowship award.

2. Take time to enjoy the graduate school experience! Explore the area, connect with others from diverse fields, try new foods, go have fun!

3. Take time to care for yourself! Feed your interests and passions. Listen to your mind, body, and spirit and always do what feels right to you! There is no timeline on success. Do NOT let your identity as a graduate student consume your entire being! You are more than *INSERT NAME HERE*, the grad student. Be kind to yourself.

4. Grad school is hard. Do not be afraid to reach out and ask for help as needed! Do not struggle ALONE! There are always resources and people who can help. Find a grad student, or two, who can help guide the way! One of my greatest resources has been a current Doctoral Student of color who also got their MSW from UIUC. They can relate to the struggles I face as an underrepresented student in the program and offer some of the greatest advice.

5. You got this! If nothing else, believe in yourself and know that you have the knowledge, strength, and tools to survive.

Courtney Williams, M.A. in Clinical Psychology, Pepperdine University

I feel very fortunate right now. I have recently completed the 3000 hours required towards licensure, so I only need to take my clinical exam to become a licensed marriage and family therapist. I am preparing to start a new position working with adults with severe and persistent mental illness. My personal life has also been a blessing. I have now been married to my incredible wife, Christina Williams, for 1 year. We have been celebrating our marriage and the completion of our hours by traveling around California, and look forward to visiting EMU McNair this summer!



Christina and Courtney Williams.