



# EMU McNair Challenger

**February 2018 Edition:** Eastern Michigan University McNair Scholars Program

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## THE GRADUATE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

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### The Future is McNair!!

#### Upcoming Events:

**Winter Recess**  
February 19-25

**Intern Research Paper Due**  
March 9

**Movie Night: Black Panther at Cinemark Theaters**  
March 9

**EMU Graduate Open House**  
March 10, Student Center

**19<sup>th</sup> Annual National McNair Scholars Research Conference at the University of Maryland**  
March 15 - 18, College Park, MD

**38<sup>th</sup> Annual Undergraduate Symposium at EMU**  
March 23, Student Center

**Graduate School Visit: Michigan State University**  
March 30

**Spring Recess**  
March 30 - April 1

Happy Black History Month! In this month's issue, we interviewed **Gabriel Green**, an EMU McNair Scholar Alumnus, and asked him about his journey to a Ph.D. and what advice he has share. We also spoke with a few graduate students and asked them to share a story about their experiences in graduate school. We are also excited to present the 2018 Graduate School Ticker! Congratulations to our Scholars as they receive those admissions letters!

### *An Interview with Gabriel Green, Ph.D. Candidate*



#### **If you could please tell us a bit about yourself?**

I am currently a Dual-Title Ph.D. Student at the Pennsylvania State University, studying English and African American studies with a focus on Rhetoric and Composition. My research looks at the concept of discourse communities (how they are formed, how they can change given certain conditions) as they relate to poetry slam communities, in addition to the rhetoricity of poetry slam as both a literary genre and subject of rhetorical critique. During my time at Eastern Michigan University, I majored in Written Communications with a minor in Literature.

#### **How has the McNair Scholars Program has benefited you?**

One of things that McNair has prepared me for is the high expectation for scholarly rigor. While this can apply to the academic prestige and cache of one's bibliography (though certainly not always true), it mostly applies to the expectation of producing publishable quality work. Writing is extremely important in my field, and every argument, down to the sentence level, must be both theoretically sound and rhetorically defensible.

#### **So, tell us more about your journey to the Ph.D.?**

At this point, I am finishing my (hopefully) last semester of course work before I begin reading for my comprehensive exams. My plan is to defend my comprehensive exams in the fall, and submit my dissertation proposal by the spring of 2019. The English graduate program at Penn State prides itself on its ability to place their Ph.D. graduates at tenure track positions within the academy. Thus, an ideal landing upon completion of my Doctorate would be a tenure track position at a university. In terms of where and what type of university (geographical location, R1, R2, etc.) I'm not too worried about that at this point in my studies.

#### **What words of wisdom or inspiration would you share with our students?**

The best advice I can offer is to remember to take care of yourself! There will always be a deadline, a paper to submit, grades to make, books to read, etc. There will always be someone telling you about something you should be doing and whether or not you're doing that something correctly. But above all that, remember to take care of yourself. Grad school can become stressful in very unhealthy and toxic ways. So always remember to check-in with yourself from time to time to ensure that you're doing well and that you are working towards your best self. If that means taking a night off, then do so.

## **What advice would you give to students who are currently struggling and dealing with feelings of being isolated and stressed in graduate school? How do you usually cope with impostor syndrome?**

Finding a sense of community is extremely important. I've personally surrounded myself with all types of different communities to help make my time here more manageable. Whether it's through your graduate cohort/department, undergraduate mentees, student organizations, or the campus community writ large, definitely find some folks you can identify with.

The Impostor Syndrome is very real, and something that I still suffer with from time to time. The best advice I can offer on that is, your graduate program admitted you for a reason. They admitted you because they believe you have the potential to be successful. Walk in that truth. There will always be things you don't know and things you'd wish you could be better at. But each day is another opportunity to *learn* and *practice*. For example, being in this program has made me a bit self-conscious about my writing. My advisor, Dr. Keith Gilyard (if you're in English, definitely a MUST know name), told me that the only way to get better at writing is to write. Which is to say, whatever you feel 'impostor-like' about, see it as an opportunity to fervently work at it until you reach the levels you desire to reach.

## **Once Upon a Time.. in Graduate School**

*Many of our McNair Scholars are curious about what life is like in graduate school. We reached out to a few graduate students to share a story they would share with about their time in graduate school. They were asked about what their experience in grad school was like, and what some of the lessons they learned in their struggles. These are their stories.*

### **Creating My Story by Anonymous**

You ask me about life in graduate school as an African American woman. I am one of the only Black women in my master's program. I am beyond exhausted and I frequently have thoughts that I am going to fail. I am extremely afraid of failure. I want to succeed. I'm so afraid in fact that at night it feels as though I can't breathe. The anxiety is like a weight on my chest. I have this beautiful fantasy of myself, of who I am, of who I could be. This fantasy is beyond the limits that this system has placed on me. Yet, it feels as though I cannot escape the confounds of this system. I find myself trying to prove that I am better than what I seem, and as a result, I fear I am sacrificing who I am at my core. When others around me are managing to get by unharmed by the stress of school, I question if I am supposed to be here. The doubt seems to overcome all my God given talent. Each day is a struggle, but I am determined to persevere and pave the way so that others will not have to experience the struggles I have endured. This is only the beginning of my story, and although gloomy, I can assure you I will come out a winner in the end!

### **By Anonymous**

When I arrived to begin my Ph.D., I expected to be greeted by open minded and humble students who were excited to learn from one another. In some cases, this was true, but in others I was shocked by how intense the jealousy in my program was. From the very first week, I felt that my classmates were constantly engaging in one-upsmanship, trying to assert their own intelligence rather than work collaboratively with others. Things came to a boil fairly early in my first semester, when, after a heated discussion with a classmate, they swore at me, instead of engaging in respectful debate. This was a wake-up call: not everyone in my department felt that a classroom was a space for risks and failures. Some saw it as an environment for competition. I tried to engage in these gladiator style intellectual matches, but found myself so exhausted by it, that I ended up reverting back to my OWN style of learning. An ethic of "messiness" informs my work as a grad student at a large university where the pressure to produce results often frightens students away from taking risks. I believe that learning should be a natural process of risk, fail, risk again. I have learned to avoid those who are driven to compete, and instead foster relationships with people, both inside and outside of my program, who do not feel the pressure to "defeat" others. In short, do not focus on what others are doing, as progress is nonlinear. As the vivacious Ms. Frizzle (of Magic School Bus fame) says, "Take chances, make mistakes, and get messy!"

**CPR: Consistence, Persistence, Resilience by Anonymous**

Once upon a time not long ago,  
Trials and tribulations I had to undergo.  
It was much harder than I anticipated initially,  
And I dealt with setbacks and disappointments additionally.  
After getting accepted into a master's program,  
a first-year grad student didn't do well in his first exam.  
He had to work hard to pass a core class with a B,  
And once he did, he was filled with relief and glee.  
This did not come easy and he had to work hard to improve,  
Being able to learn from mistakes will your future behoove.  
Your value and self-worth is not defined by your grades,  
Even when negative thoughts try to otherwise persuade.  
Do not make your goals become a dream deferred  
Regardless of whatever hardships occurred.  
I can't turn back now, I've made it this far,  
Maybe my motivation just needed CPR!  
Consistence, Persistence and Resilience are key.  
I learned this the hard way, so listen to me.  
While you may struggle at times with motivation,  
Never give into self-doubt and procrastination.  
I say onto you the old adage that everyone makes mistakes,  
And at times you may doubt whether you have what it takes.  
Just because something's difficult does not mean it's impossible,  
Once you realize that you will be unstoppable.  
You may feel stressed at times, but it's okay,  
you're going to make it anyway!  
Believe in yourself and work hard in all that you do,  
and in the end, all of the rest will come through!

***Here's our EMU McNair Graduate School Ticker for 2018 so far!  
We're sure that more admissions are to come!***

**Alyssia Hence**, Master's of Social Work, **University of Michigan**, Advanced Standing Master's of Social Work, **Wayne State University**

**Demarco Johnson**, Master of Arts, Criminology, **Eastern Michigan University**

**Deborah Munganga**, Doctoral Program in Political Science, **Pennsylvania State University**

**Nyambura Njee**, Master of Arts in African American Studies, **New York University**

**Nayeli Sanchez**: Master of Science in Environmental and Natural Resources, **Ohio State University**, M.S. in Biology, Aquatic Sciences, at **Grand Valley State University**

**Jesse Smith**: Doctoral Program in Chemistry, **the Ohio State University** and **Texas A & M**

**Yeliani Valdez**, Doctoral Program in Social Work, **the Ohio State University**

**Sina Webster**, Master of Science in Occupational Therapy, **Howard University**, M.A. in Women and Gender Studies, **Georgia State University**

**Faith Williams**, Master of Arts in Women and Gender Studies, **University of Texas, Austin**

Congratulations to the class of 2018!

## **Current McNair Scholars' Research-in-Progress**

### **Relation between Anxiety and the Perception of Expressed Emotion**

*Kimberly A. Solomon*

*Dr. Angela Staples & Dr. Ellen Koch, Mentors*

This study investigated the relation between anxiety, expressed emotion, and perceived emotion in a face-to-face interaction task. Students ( $N= 56$ ) participated in a dyadic three-phase laboratory task that involved: (1) writing about a remembered event (either anxious or serene; randomly assigned); (2) engaging in a face-to-face interaction task, and (3) completing personality and mood questionnaires. Preliminary findings suggest experimentally induced anxiety may not play a role in listener-speaker agreement about expressed/perceived affective information during face-to-face interactions. Further analysis will consider the role of context and personality on listener-speaker agreement.

### **The Role of Prescription Trends in the Opioid Epidemic and the Factors that Affect Physician Prescriptions**

*Ashley Beals*

*Dr. Jeffrey Schulz, Mentor*

Every day more than 90 Americans die as a result from opioid overdose (NIH, 2017b), and opioid overdoses have quadrupled since 1999 (CDC, 2016). Opioids are best described as a class of drug that includes synthetic versions, such as fentanyl, the commonly known illegal drug, heroin, and prescribed medications like oxycodone (OxyContin®) and hydrocodone (Vicodin®) (NIH, 2017a). Opioids directly activate the analgesia, or pain relieving, portion of our brain as well as the reward region (Volkow, McLellan 2016). This makes the drug effective for reduction in pain as well as giving our body a sense of reward. However, the drug manipulates our reward system by building a learned association between taking the drug, and the satisfactory effect from the drug (Volkow, McLellan, 2016). This learned association puts the patient or user at risk for misuse of the drug. This risk makes prescribing opioids difficult for physicians. Other factors affecting opioid prescription are racial disparities, patient-physician mistrust, pain perception, and difference between acute and chronic pain (Mathur et al., 2014) (Volkow, McLellan, 2016). The purpose of this article is to explore the factors that affect the physician's decision to prescribe opioids, and how prescription trends contribute to the opioid epidemic.

### **Human Taste Perception**

*Kala Sherman*

*Dr. Silvia Von Kluge, Mentor*

Human taste perception can be viewed through the lens of different areas of study. Physiology and psychology work together to construct the way we taste; our sense of taste is not obtained merely from the tongue. Taste interacts with vision and olfaction in our overall perception of taste. Data collection for this study involves participants tasting multiple samples of flavored gelatin, however some of the gelatin samples will be unlikely color/flavor and flavor/scent combinations. Responses to the flavors as perceived will be presented. These data will be used to further interpret the interactions among sight, smell and taste perception.