

EMU McNair Challenger

February 2019 Edition

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McNair Program

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Events:

McNair Seminars

Jan. 25 – Apr. 5
Fridays

Cadets: 12-1:00 p.m.
Interns: 1-2:00 p.m.

EMU Theater Presents: Sweat

Sponberg Theatre
February 16, 7:00 p.m.

Winter Recess

February 25- March 3

Univ. of Maryland National McNair Conference

March 14 – 17, 2019

From the Bachelor's to Professor: This is how you do it!

Meet EMU McNair Scholars who are making their scholarly dreams real! We'll talk with **Dr. Dara Walker** (EMU '09), who has just accepted an Assistant Professorship in African American Studies and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at **Pennsylvania State University**. We'll also hear from **Diamond Jones** (EMU '16), who recently completed her Doctoral qualifying exams in Chemistry at the **University of Iowa**. Linguist **Dominique Canning** (EMU '16) completed her Master's degree and is continuing her doctoral program at the **University of Michigan**, and **Victoria Fields**, who will graduate in April, has received the Aspire Fellowship to study Communication at the **University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign**.

Life as a Postdoc, by Dara Walker, Ph.D.

"On May 11, 2018, I joined hundreds of other scholars, many of whom had spent several years of their lives working towards graduate degrees, as they walked across the stage to commemorate the end of a chapter. Most of us had worked countless hours teaching undergraduate courses, researching and writing original research projects, and heading service committees while leading lives as parents and partners. That day marked the beginning of a new chapter for me, as **Dr. Dara Walker**, historian of African American life and culture. This was the culmination of years of studying and writing a dissertation that examines the history of Black high school student organizing in Detroit during the Black Power Movement. Although I looked forward to going on the academic job market and starting my new chapter with a tenure-track job, I was also aware of the benefits of a postdoctoral fellowship as a bridge between the degree and an assistant professorship: time off from teaching and service to fully commit to revising the dissertation into a book manuscript, an intellectual community that would enrich my thinking as a scholar and educator, and honestly, time to breathe and rebuild myself after spending seven years in graduate school – yes, *seven whole years*.

"I am currently a postdoctoral scholar in both the Richards Civil War Era Center and the Africana Research Center (ARC) at Pennsylvania State University. I have found an incredibly rich and vibrant intellectual community in both the centers and in the departments of African American Studies, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and History. With no teaching responsibilities, I spend much of my time attending seminars and public lectures inside and outside of my fields of study. For example, although my research examines the Black Power Movement in the U.S., I attended an engaging lecture sponsored by the Department of Geography on racial disposability in Mexico City. Later that semester, I participated in a workshop with a phenomenal anthropologist, Deborah Thomas, who explores cultures of resistance in Kingston, Jamaica. While these scholars are not central to my field of study, I found their ideas profoundly useful in my own analysis of black youth resistance. In addition to the seminars, my faculty mentors organized several professional development workshops, including a manuscript workshop with two senior scholars in my field who do not hold an affiliation with Penn State, a workshop on how to publish a peer-reviewed journal article, and meetings with editors of academic presses. These professional development programs are at the heart of the Richards Center and ARC's commitment to mentoring junior scholars.

"Each of these resources work in service of my scholarly productivity, which include revising one of my dissertation chapters into a peer-review journal article for publication, and drafting my book proposal for submission to an academic press. While I do not have any teaching responsibilities, I have had the opportunity to guest lecture in courses related to my research interests. But the resources – which include a salary, health insurance, and funds for research and moving expenses – have provided me with the time I need to present my research at several national conferences, including the American Historical Association (AHA) and the Association for the Study of African American History and Life (ASALH). Additionally, I now have time to enjoy the local theater and music scene, while exploring interesting hobbies such as painting and cooking. For me, the postdoc year was a year of big transitions between chapters. The biggest one of all is that **I recently accepted Penn State's offer to remain here as an Assistant Professor of African American Studies and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.**"



Dr. Dara Walker, Ph.D.



Nanoparticles to Ph.D.

Diamond Jones ('16), who worked with **Dr. Maria Milletti** at EMU, went straight to a Doctoral Program in Chemistry at the University of Iowa after completing her Bachelor's degree.

Diamond does computational chemistry on complex nanoparticles to create effective, sustainable, and environmentally friendly alternatives to current energy storage technology. Diamond writes:

"I am the second author on two publications, 'Dissolution of Complex Metal Oxides from First-Principles and Thermodynamics: Cation Removal from the (001) Surface of $\text{Li}(\text{Ni}_{1/3}\text{Mn}_{1/3}\text{Co}_{1/3})\text{O}_2$ '" (2018, *Environmental Science Technology*), and 'First-Principles and Thermodynamics Study of Compositionally Tuned Complex Metal Oxides: Cation Release from the (001) Surface of Mn-Rich Lithium Nickel Manganese Cobalt Oxide' (2018, *Inorganic Chemistry*). I presented this research at the National American Chemical Society conference, and the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Engineers conference in March and October of 2018, respectively.

"Additionally, I finished my doctoral coursework and passed my comprehensive exam last May. My final step before joining the ranks of our other doctoral scholars is completing and defending my dissertation. I have really enjoyed my studies!"

The Language behind a Doctorate



After leaving EMU, **Dominique Canning** ('16), who was mentored by **Dr. Eric Acton**, continued her Linguistic studies at the University of Michigan. Dominique writes:

"During my graduate studies I've focused my research on intersecting marginalized identities

and the use of specific language in media to "perform" these identities. I'm working on a specific case study on the character of Titus Andromedon, a character who is identified as both black and gay in the Netflix series *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*. I analyze the scripts for language that can be identified as either Gay-Sounding Speech (GSS) or African American Language (AAL). I then compare Titus' performance to the natural speech of the actor, Tituss Burgess,

which I take from interviews. Using an analysis of media can be difficult because it works under the assumption that creators and persons working on the script would use stereotypical features and linguistics, such as AAL and GSL, to portray the identities to the viewers, which is a supported assumption. Due to the relevance of these identities to the storyline, I expected that the character's dialect would differ from the actor's. Within the course of my research I discovered that while Tituss Burgess does show GSL and AAL in his normal dialect, he shows a marked increase in GSS while in character.

"I'm focusing on this topic specifically because although the concept of intersectionality is accepted in academics, there is a lack of research involving GSS and ALL. I'm really excited by this topic and intend to expand it beyond the media, while continuing to approach several identities in an intersectional manner instead of in an additive fashion. The Linguistics Department and my advisors have been supportive throughout my academic journey, even when our research interests do not perfectly line up.

"While graduate school has been one of the most challenging experiences in my life so far, I've found it both enjoyable and incredibly fulfilling."

Crossing that Finish Line!

Victoria Fields (April, '19), who is mentored by **Dr. Dennis O'Grady**, is looking forward to beginning graduate studies in the fall. Her research project, "The Rhetorical Discourse surrounding Female Intersex Athletes" was published in Volume 11 of *The McNair Scholars Research Journal* (2018). Victoria writes:



"My research focuses on how the media portrays intersex athletes, as compared to cis- and trans-gender athletes. This research is critical to the current state of affairs, considering the marginalization these individuals face. While we would like to think of sports as all-inclusive, these athletes do face issues within professional sport organizations due to their identities. Additionally, looking at and addressing these issues now can set a precedent for individuals who are not only within professional sports, but also those engaging in amateur competition.

"I also spent the summer of 2018 in a Summer Research Opportunity Program at The Ohio State University. At OSU I worked with Dr. Chris Knoester, a professor of Sociology, studying how sports and other

outdoor activities can have an impact on mother-child relationships. A paper derived from this project, "Mother-Child Engagement in Sport and Outdoor Activities: Implications and Patterns", has been submitted to the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*.

"I really enjoy immersing myself in articles on the topics I feel passionate about, and hope to contribute to the body of knowledge. I also enjoy being able to share my research with the general public, who may have various levels of familiarity with the topic.

"I plan to continue researching both the portrayals and stereotypes of racial and gender minorities within the views of the public and media outlet portrayal. I am also examining how this rhetoric functions within society as a whole. I hope to graduate summa cum laude in April, as a member of the Honors College, and begin my graduate studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in the summer."

2019 Graduate School Ticker!

Join us in celebrating our seniors, who (so far) have been admitted to...

Mahogany Anderson, *Psychology*, Dr. Charles Graham, Mentor
Case Western Reserve University's Mandel School of Social Work, *Master of Social Work*

Ashley Beals, *Public Health*, Dr. Jeffrey Guthrie, Mentor
Emory University, *Master of Public Health in Behavioral Sciences & Health Education*,
The Ohio State University, *Master of Public Health in Health Behavior & Health Promotion*
The University of Toledo, *Master of Public Health in Health Behavior & Health Promotion*

Larry Borum, *Physics*, Dr. John Thomsen, Mentor
Arizona State University, *Master of Environmental, Civil and Sustainable Engineering*
Kansas State University, *Master of Mechanical Engineering*
The University of Michigan, *Master of Science in Environment and Sustainability/Environmental Policy and Planning*

Victoria Fields, *Sport Management*, Dr. Dennis O'Grady, Mentor
The University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, *Master of Communication Program*,
 ASPIRE Fellow

Robert Green, *Mechanical Engineering*, Dr. MacArthur Stewart, Mentor
Rutgers University, *Doctoral Program in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering*

Courtnei Montgomery, *Psychology*, Dr. Karen Saules, Mentor
Emory University, *Master of Public Health in Behavioral Sciences & Health Education*,
The Ohio State University, *Master of Public Health in Health Behavior & Health Promotion*
The University of Michigan, *Master of Public Health in Health Behavior and Health Education*

Karess Taylor, *Psychology*, Dr. Chong Man Chow, Mentor
The Ohio State University, *Master of Public Health in Health Behavior & Health Promotion*
The University of Michigan, *Master of Public Health in Health Behavior and Health Education*

