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Introduction

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Introduction

Dr. Heather Neff, Ph.D.
*Director, Eastern Michigan University
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Every year the students in the EMU McNair Scholars Program fill me with hope for a more inclusive nation, a greater focus on sustainability, and a better, safer world. As nascent scholars, McNair participants grapple with the challenges of reading peer-reviewed articles, developing an original research question, and writing complex papers for publication—while working, engaging in campus activities, and taking a full load of classes.

Indeed, the participants in Eastern Michigan University’s McNair Scholars Program embody the best qualities in our future leaders: intellectual curiosity, perseverance, active participation in their communities, and an extraordinary commitment to affect positive change. It is these qualities that continue to motivate the McNair staff to serve as advisors, mentors, and guides to these fine students.

A North African proverb states that *courage is fear that has said its prayers*. If I were asked to name one distinguishing characteristic of all McNair Scholars, it would be exactly that: “courage.” Our students come from first-generation, low-income, and diverse homes. Many have faced truly daunting social and economic challenges on their road to higher education. Most come from under-resourced educational backgrounds, and many must work in multiple low-wage positions while pursuing their studies. Some of our participants experience pressure to complete a Bachelor’s degree and immediately return home to contribute financially to their families. Most are uncertain about whether they will be welcome in the larger scholarly community, which lacks diversity as a whole.

Courage is a foundational requirement for anyone who attempts to enter a world in which discipline-specific terminology, typically arcane rhetorical styles, and incredibly competitive selection processes are at work. The world of graduate education seems insular, secretive, and exclusionary.

Students from underrepresented backgrounds are often unsure that the sacrifices necessary to obtain graduate degrees will be rewarded, or that they will find acceptance in a largely privileged and sometimes unwelcoming environment.

And yet, they persist.

EMU McNair Scholars ideally enter our program early in their sophomore year. They are grouped with other students in their academic discipline and learn the basic principles of research. By the end of their sophomore, or “Cadet” year, they have found faculty mentors and begun working on research projects that may form the basis of their future academic and professional lives. All are encouraged to seek admission to summer research programs at other institutions, or to seek research funding from EMU and continue their work over the summer. We hope to ignite a spark that will lead them enthusiastically into the “Intern” experience.

As McNair Interns, our juniors conduct year-long research projects culminating in a publication-worthy paper, presentation of their findings at EMU’s selective Undergraduate Symposium, and participation in several national McNair conferences. During this process our Interns learn to interact productively with faculty, experience the process of revising their work, and begin the difficult undertaking of selecting and applying to appropriate graduate programs. Our students have mastered the challenges of writing research proposals, effective personal statements, and have the confidence gained from completing a thesis-quality paper.

During the summer of the Intern year, EMU McNair Scholars participate in a Graduate Admissions Retreat, where they attend seminars on financial literacy, financing post-bachelor’s studies, and even dining etiquette. They also attend a seven-week professional Graduate Record Examination preparation course, followed by the examination.

The McNair senior experience begins with publication in the *McNair Scholars Research Journal*, both in paper and, globally, in electronic formats (<http://commons.emich.edu/mcnair>). Our seniors, now formally known as “Scholars,” present their research at the fall McNair Colloquium, and national McNair conferences, while participating in targeted campus visits. The McNair Scholars who prepare for graduation

typically receive offers of admissions from multiple graduate programs, and are well-prepared for the rigorous intellectual challenges that lie ahead.

Volume 12 of the EMU *McNair Scholars Research Journal* includes articles addressing subjects as diverse as the positive benefits of mentoring programs in schools that serve underrepresented populations; the threats of cyber-war and our nation's online security; a study of critical factors in conflicts in several African states; sustainability practices in the international cruise industry; best practices in assisting returning veterans, and the employment of peptides in the fight against cancer.

Courageous, indeed!

Such research proves the validity of our slogan: *The future is McNair!*

I wish to extend my deepest thanks to the administrators, faculty and staff whose support promises the success of EMU McNair, including Dr. James Smith, Dr. Rhonda Longworth, Dr. Toni Stokes-Jones, Dr. Arnold Fleishmann, Dr. Ellen Koch, Dr. Sarah Huyvaert, Professor Julia Nims, Professor Bill Marino, Dr. Calvin McFarland, Dr. Harriet Lindsay, Dr. Doris Fields, Dr. Christine Deacons, Dr. Sonia Chawla-Wright, Dr. Eric Reed, Colonel Wayne Doyle, Josiah Pankewicz, Dar Mayweather, LaMarcus Howard, Roderick Wallace, Amanda Wardin, and Caryn Charter. We owe much of our success to your continued kindness and generosity.

The faculty who serve as mentors dedicate many hours and much wisdom, without remuneration, to our scholars. As role models, success coaches, academic guides and often unofficial family members, their contribution is essential to the growth and perseverance of our students! The faculty who mentored the articles published in this volume include Dr. Hedeel Evans, Dr. Jeffrey Guthrie, Dr. Celeste Hawkins, Dr. Deborah Heyl-Clegg, Dr. Ellen Koch, Dr. Paul Majeske, Dr. Richard Stahler-Sholk, and Dr. David Victor.

The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program is named for the late physicist and astronaut, Dr. Ronald E. McNair. The EMU McNair Program annually serves thirty-six high-achieving sophomores, juniors, and seniors from first-generation, low income, or under-represented groups (African

American, Native American, Hispanic or Alaskan Native / Pacific Islander). The program prepares its participants for admission to graduate programs and the successful completion of doctoral studies.

Congratulations to the eight McNair Scholars published in Volume 12 of the *McNair Scholars Research Journal*. We are exceedingly proud of you!

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Professor of English,
EMU Distinguished Faculty,
Michigan Distinguished Professor



Dr. Julie Krupa, Ph.D.
EMU McNair Scholar,
Class of 2013

I am honored to write an introduction for Volume 12 of the *EMU McNair Scholars Research Journal*. When I first entered the McNair Program I was somewhat naïve about what it meant to pursue a graduate degree, much less a doctoral degree. EMU McNair instilled me with the confidence and knowledge I needed to pursue my educational and professional goals. I also worked with an extraordinary faculty mentor, Dr. Donna Selman, to produce a research paper, “Innocent Until Proven Guilty: A Representation of Wrongfully Convicted Women,” (Vol. 5, 2012) which set the direction of my future scholarly and professional life.

As the first person in my family to earn a college degree, I must express my gratitude for the support I received from the McNair community. My journey was shaped by my upbringing in Flint, MI. Deeply aware of the struggles of many residents’ troubled interactions with the criminal justice system, these

challenges inspired me to work on community-engaged research throughout my graduate and academic careers. My work with community agencies began in my Master's program at the University of Central Florida, where I assisted local schools in evaluating an educational program that taught youth about the criminal justice system. As a doctoral student at the University of South Florida, I was fortunate to have worked on a large initiative funded by the National Institutes of Health, focusing on reducing unmet substance use need among justice-involved youth. While working on this translational study, I gained experience with agency collaboration, complex research methodologies, and insight into the juvenile justice system. This experience was particularly rewarding because I was able to bring change within my community by working with local juvenile probation agencies.

I earned my Ph.D. in August, 2018 in Criminology, and accepted the first Post-Doctoral Scholar position ever offered in the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University. My time as a Post-Doctoral Scholar has been extremely rewarding, allowing me to work in the Flint and Detroit communities on a variety of federally funded crime-reduction initiatives as a Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-PI. Of particular interest to me is an opioid diversion program in Detroit, which links individuals in the criminal justice system with substance use issues to appropriate treatment and services. I strongly support community-engaged research and the implementation of evidence-based practices in helping to address the unique needs of this community. I have accepted a tenure-track Assistant Professor position at Michigan State University, and look forward to continuing my work in Flint and Detroit. Since starting my Post-Doctoral Scholar position I have also published scholarly articles, presented at national conferences, and was recently awarded the Outstanding Criminology Ambassador Award from my alma mater, the University of South Florida. Although my journey was long and sometimes challenging, I hope it inspires others to pursue their own passions.

Publishing your research in this journal is a tremendous accomplishment, and likely one of many more in the years to come. It is my hope that each of you takes this time to question

and reflect on what motivates you, and how it impacts your research and long-term professional goals.

As you move forward with your academic and professional pursuits, I encourage you to follow your passions and never, ever count yourself out. I hope that learning about my journey will inspire you to work hard and stay true to yourself. I would not be where I am today without the support and encouragement from my family, friends, mentors, and programs such as McNair. I wish you continued success in your future endeavors.

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