McNair Scholars: Where Are They Now?

The journey of an EMU McNair Scholar doesn’t stop with graduation from their undergraduate program! Here’s an update from a McNair Scholar who continues to do great things in the world. Aissa Laouan Wandarma, who was born in Niger, graduated from the EMU Political Science Program in December, 2011. Here are a few excerpts from an email she sent to Dr. Neff over the summer:

“My journey as a graduate of EMU started with the fundraiser I organized along with the members of the Nigerian Association of Michigan for the Food Crisis and flood in Niger in June 2012. The funds we raised were used to help a village called Hunday Koura Zeno with 48 bags of rice (2204 pounds, or 1 ton). I was in charge of delivering the supplies to the village.

In my journey prior to becoming a UNWOMEN intern, I was selected as a MILEAD 2012 Fellow to attend a three-week summer institute…After a life changing training in Ghana, I started the internship in Niamey, Niger. During the internship, I received an invitation to participate in a strategic meeting as a “Girls, Not Brides” advocate in Johannesburg, South Africa under the patronage of Graca Machel and Desmond Tutu. I accepted the offer…because of the sensitivity of the issue [child marriage].

After meeting in South Africa, I was also selected to attend ten-day training as a Young Women Leadership Institute fellow. The Institute was organized by African Women Millennium Initiative (AWOMI) in Dakar, Senegal. Later on, I was registered by AWOMI to attend the Commission on the Status Women conference in New York. I was already in the sixth month of my internship! Time passed by very quickly…

One day before leaving Niger for the United States, I received an email from an organization called Indonesian Young Leaders, with an invitation to serve as a youth delegate to the United Nations High Level Panel Meeting on the Post-2015 Agenda, in Bali, Indonesia. I accepted the offer! All delegates, we presented our recommendations to the UNHLP members and strategized on a post-Bali agenda. After Bali, I attended climate change training in Istanbul, Turkey. The course was called “Global Power Shift,” and was organized by “350.org.”

Recently, the organization I co-founded with Nigerians in Michigan received an approval letter from a request we submitted for medical supplies to World Medical Relief. The medical supplies will include a 40-foot container destined to the National Center of Reference for Sickle Cell Disease in Niamey. Lastly, I have also been selected to represent Niger in Johannesburg, South Africa as a “One Young World” delegate in October, 2013.”

Aissa is currently planning to return to the United States to work in a non-profit organization and undertake her graduate studies. We congratulate Aissa on her many accomplishments.

This is just the experience of one McNair Alumna! We all look forward to hearing about the successes of current scholars after their graduation from EMU and the McNair Scholars Program!
This summer, senior Marcia Molett participated in the prestigious Future Public Health Leaders Program (FPHLP) at the University of Michigan. She was placed at the University of Michigan Health System Program for Multicultural Health. Marcia, along with five other interns, had the opportunity to work with a group of people from childhood to adulthood, to promote and implement health education for minority groups. She personally worked with children at Peace Neighborhood in Ann Arbor, assisting with nutritional education and healthy cooking, and also worked with middle-age to older adults at Grace Fellowship Church in Ypsilanti, where she assisted with physical activities, cooking demonstrations and grocery store tours.

In Mid-July EMU McNair travelled down to Atlanta, GA for the SAEOPP McNair / SSS Research Conference. Eight students attended the conference, with two presenting posters and four giving oral presentations. Brunette Robinson writes that “I felt like our group was very prepared for the conference presentations and I gained a lot of insight to what the life of being a grad student will be like.” The conference attendees participated in many informational sessions about graduate school, along with a grad school fair. A highlight for many was also the trip to the Georgia Aquarium after conference activities one day. The four-day conference left our McNair scholars with great information, many new contacts and memories of a fantastic trip.

From Ypsilanti, MI to across the pond in Derby, England, our scholars take advantage of every opportunity they are presented with. Senior Courtney Raymond spent a year studying at Derby. She explained that the classes in England were more challenging than she expected and also more condensed than classes and lectures here in the States. Despite the difficulty of her classes, Courtney gained study skills and new learning styles that will help her later in her academic career. She plans on looking into graduate programs in England and would love to live there again someday.

Shahana Ahmed
Shahana is from Warren, MI but she was born in Bangladesh. She is the oldest of three children. Shahana is a sophomore majoring in Biology and Chemistry, and wants to do research in diabetics and retinopathy. She is an EMU Presidential Scholar.

Tiffany Browne
Tiffany is from Garden City, MI. She is a sophomore majoring in Language, Literature and Writing and hopes to do research with multicultural and/or children’s literature. She is an EMU Presidential Scholar, and plans to become a university professor.

Carly Evich
A senior from Wyandotte majoring in Spanish and Psychology, Carly studied in Spain this summer and is now a Psychology Lab research assistant under Dr. Steven Huprich. Carly is an active member of the Psychology Club, Psi Chi and the Honors College.

Mikki Smith
Mikki is a transfer student majoring in Psychology, with a minor in Social Work. Mikki is also a new member of the Honors College. Mikki works as a chef in her free time and is looking forward to conducting research in Psychology.