The Beginning of a Happy End

The end of the semester is quickly approaching, and with it we wish a warm farewell to three of our McNair Scholars. This month’s edition of the McNair Challenger shares two of these scholars’ reflections on their time at Eastern Michigan University. Lao Tzu once said, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Join us as we follow these scholars on their journey across the stage, taking their first real steps towards graduate school! — Kryn Ambs, McNair Challenger Guest Editor, Aviation Technology major and December, 2014 graduate!

Who Runs the World? Women Do!
by Jazmin Rodgers

At the beginning of my college career I knew I wanted to go to grad school and have great experiences. During my first two years at EMU I began to do well in my classes, but I still yearned to get to the next stage. The only problem was that I didn’t have the tools, or the knowledge to get there! In the fall of 2012, an advisor I worked with told me about the McNair Scholars Program. I thought it would be a great way to prepare me for my graduate studies and to gain research experience, though I never dreamed how much knowledge and self-understanding I would gain in the following two years! My McNair research on how one’s childhood home environment impacts women in the workplace, conducted with Professor Natalie Dove, led to professional presentations in both Atlanta and Chicago. I was forced to step out of my comfort zone and really start meeting new people and traveling to new places. In the summer of 2014, I attended Summer Research programs at both the University of North Carolina, Charlotte and the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. During my weeklong visit in the Organizational Science Program at the University of North Carolina, my experiences included GRE preparation, lectures by professors and admissions officers, and conducting research in preparation for a presentation on team dynamics in relation to positive behavior.

Though challenging, I found that my research experience at EMU has greatly assisted me when I attended the summer program at the University of Chicago Booth School Of Business. This program was extremely intense, with classes in Accounting, Finance, and Marketing. We also went on visits to corporate offices of firms such as Grub Hub, the Chicago Market Exchange, and the Teach for America headquarters. While there, I experienced Chicago by bus, boat, and even a Sears Tower tour! I thoroughly enjoyed both summer programs while ultimately learning a great deal about my future program of studies.

I plan to pursue a graduate degree in the fields of Business and Organizational Science. I am grateful I am grateful for the opportunities offered to me by the McNair Program. I know I’m prepared for graduate school, and any opportunities that the academic world may throw at me along the way!
Home Stretch (at long last!!)
by Christopher Haskin

I have been at EMU for around four years, but I always felt a little distant, being an older returning student. Joining McNair has been one of the best experiences of my life. It made me feel welcome on campus, like I had somewhere that I belonged. It was also nice to have someone else who advocated for me. My education and direction have evolved over the years, as I started with a Dietetics intent, went through pre-med, pre-pharmacy, and pre-everything else that struck my fancy. By the time I came across the McNair program I was working on a Chemistry degree, and picking up the pieces of a long and fragmented education. Through my research project McNair gave me focus on my education, introduced me to my mentor and friend Dr. Gavin Edwards, and truly opened the doors to graduate school!

My time at Eastern has been, at times, chaotic. I have taken many advanced math and science classes, while buying a house, then selling it, buying another house, and moving a total of three times. I married the love of my life, Sarah. I had a wedding reception, remodeled an old house, and presented research at three separate national and regional conferences. I published a paper and worked on research that was published by others. Stress does not even begin to express the difficulties of getting an advanced education while juggling a very full life! In the end, Dr. Neff, Dr. Edwards, Kimberly Freeman, and Cindy Rodrigues, along with my cohort, were always supportive and easy to talk to.

For now I am content to be finally finishing my bachelor’s degree in Chemistry, with a minor in Biology. I am moving on to the graduate school at Eastern to work on a master’s degree in Chemistry, with a concentration in Analytical Chemistry. I have been offered a full scholarship, a GA position in the chemistry department and will be joining the atmospheric chemistry group under Dr. Edwards! I am working towards applying to Michigan State University to join the Food Science program and acquire a Ph.D. in Food Science once I’ve competed my Master’s in Science at EMU.

In the end, my time at Eastern has been tough, but more times than not, enjoyable. If it was easy to get a degree in Chemistry, everybody would do it. Eastern has the benefits of many larger schools, while still feeling like home. I am glad to be staying for my Master’s degree, because as my education has come to an end and I look towards moving on, I find myself sad. I would miss the familiar campus, the secret study spots I’ve found over the years, the friendly faculty and my friends.
Motown: The Musical, by Dominique Canning

On November 11, a group of McNair scholars participated in an Eastern Excursion to Motown: The Musical at the beautiful Fisher Theatre in Detroit. With bright, colorful costumes and a soundtrack the entire audience could sing along to, Motown: The Musical told the (admittedly romanticized) story of Motown Records. While the performers were incredible—Reed L. Shannon, (the boy playing Michael Jackson pretty much stole the show), if the cheers he got during curtain call were anything to go by—the performance felt a bit more like a Greatest Hits concert than a musical. That being said, it was a very, very enjoyable Greatest Hits concert, so thank you to Campus Life and the McNair Program for giving us this opportunity!

New Scholars Watch!

Kayla Boyd grew up in Taylor, Michigan, and is a double major in journalism and apparel and textile merchandising, with a minor in marketing. As an Honors College junior at EMU, Kayla balances school work with a job as a staff writer for the Eastern Echo. She also volunteers as an Honors mentor and a Kid Konnection pen pal. In the future, she hopes to become a magazine writer and a career in fashion marketing or online media. A self-proclaimed fashion blogger, Kayla spends her free updating her blog, kaylachaos.com, and documenting her life. Welcome to McNair, Kayla!

Brandie Bentley calls Detroit, MI her home and is a sophomore, majoring in Social Work. Brandie hopes to develop a non-profit organization that will cater to and fulfill the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the members in her community. She is a member of the Honors College, an Honors College Recruiting Student Fellow, and is associated with the on-campus Christian Organization, University Christian Fellowship. In her spare time, Brandie enjoys arm knitting scarves and catching up on exciting new television shows, such as “Scandal” and “How to Get Away with Murder.” Welcome, Brandie!

Mariah Brito is a junior from Aurora, Illinois, majoring in Biochemistry, with a possible Computer Science minor. Along with schoolwork, Mariah keeps herself busy as a member of the Chemistry Club, Biology Club, and as secretary of the Secular Freethinkers Club. She hopes to have a career in academia, while researching in her chosen topics. However, she has noticed that with a Chemistry degree, many doors are open to her. In her spare time, Mariah loves to bake, watch “Cosmos” and “Breaking Bad,” and hopes to start a ballet club this winter semester. Welcome to the McNair family, Mariah!

End-of-Semester Party at Dr. Neff’s house on Saturday, December 13, at 6:00 p.m.!
Come and help us celebrate Chris, Jazmin and Kryn, our December graduates!
Please bring a gift of cookies for dessert! Car pools available! Friends and partners welcome!
RSVP by December 5th!