



THE MCNAIR CHRONICLE

Lawrence, Kansas

Inside this issue:

<i>Mentor Accolades</i>	2
<i>Scholar Achievements</i>	2
<i>Puerto Rico Cultural Exchange Program</i>	2
<i>McNair Scholars Abroad: Morocco</i>	3
<i>McNair Scholars Abroad: Japan</i>	3
<i>Scholar Spotlight: Sabrina Gregersen</i>	4

McNair Scholars Program Staff

This program is federally funded by the United States Department of Education in the amount of \$271,392.

Dr. Ngondi Kamatuka
Director, Educational Opportunity Programs

Dr. Robert Rodriguez
Associate Director

Allyson Flaster
Academic Services Coordinator

Linda LaPierre
Office Manager

Clarice Amorim
Student Assistant

Heartland Conference Reflections

Ibari Ezekwe
McNair Scholar

Several McNair Scholars partook in the 12th Annual Ronald E. McNair Heartland Research Conference in Kansas City. The Conference was a venue for enlightenment and encouragement in one's discipline, research, and academic future. It was rewarding to get the opportunity to discuss research and our future aspirations in a formal as well as informal setting. As everyone at the conference expressed interest in different research topics, it created a good atmosphere for each presenter to relay new or unfamiliar information to an attentive audience. Presenting research at this conference was also a chance to sharpen one's research-presentation skills and learn varying approaches to research. I shared my research project, "Suppression in negative autobiographical memories," with Scholars from around the country.

The featured speakers at this conference conveyed how essential it is to become aware of and utilize resources, such as programs like McNair Scholars. It was also refreshing to hear that despite previous pitfalls in one's life, there is still the possibility to advance through discipline, diligence, and education. The Heartland Research Conference was a worthwhile experience that I truly appreciated; Thanks to all who made it happen!



McNair Scholars Ibari Ezekwe (l) and Noy Phimphasone (r) at the 2008 McNair Heartland Research Conference

2008 Fall McNair Graduates Honored

Six McNair Scholars were recognized at the December symposium for their impending fall graduations: **Daniel Barrera, Kasey Cullors, Chris DeLaCruz, Mahalet Misgana, Sarah Neff** and **Vernon Harris**. Each student will receive a light blue honor cord, symbolic of Dr. Ronald McNair's flight suit, to wear at graduation in honor of their participation in the program. Vernon will attend the graduate program in school psychology at Emporia State University beginning in spring 2009—the rest are completing their graduate school applications.

The KU McNair Scholars Program is currently accepting applications

In order to be considered for the 2009 Summer Research Internship, students need to apply right away.

For more information, please email mcnair@ku.edu or call (785)864-3412

Are you a former KU McNair Scholar?

Please visit our website at: www.ku.edu/~mcnair

Check out our "Degrees Earned by Former Scholars" page to ensure your information is correct and contact the McNair Scholars Program at mcnair@ku.edu or (785)864-3412 to update your information.

Scholar Achievements

Chris Reine, current McNair Scholar, has been awarded an Undergraduate Research Award from the KU Honors Program for his research project that examines how culture influences the parenting behaviors of African Americans.

✎

Mahalet Misgana, current McNair Scholar, presented her research project, "The Impact of Hearing Loss on Marital Relationships in Late Life," at the Academy of Rehabilitative Audiology Conference in Portland, Oregon in September 2008.

✎

Joshua Gapetz, current McNair Scholar, has been named an Assistant Coordinator for a 2009 ECM Urban Studies Alternative Spring Break in New York City.

✎

Tim Kochanski, former McNair Scholar, has completed his PhD coursework while volunteering for various educational opportunity programs and non-profits in Portland, Oregon.

✎

Micheal Young, former McNair Scholar, is currently a Graduate Teaching Assistant at Columbia University and Architectural Designer at Bernard Tschumi Architects.

✎

Malik Aziz, former McNair Scholar, has completed his first high definition short film, "Nakupenda," available at www.artfradieu.com.

McNair Mentor Accolades

Matthew Buechner, associate professor of molecular biosciences, was nominated for a 2008-2009 HOPE (Honor for Outstanding Progressive Educator) Award.

✎

Elaine Gerbert, associate professor of Japanese, presented research at the Meeting of the International Society for Humor Studies in July 2008. Her paper was titled "The Humorous, the Bizarre and the Grotesque in Shinseinen Magazine."

✎

Jeffrey Aube, professor of medicinal chemistry, was awarded a \$20.2 million NIH grant. The award will allow Dr. Aube and his research team, through a Specialized Chemistry Center at KU, to conduct health related research.

✎

Four McNair mentors have been awarded 2008 Kemper Fellowships for teaching and advising excellence: **Elizabeth Asiedu**, associate professor of economics, **Marta Caminero-Santangelo**, associate professor of English, **Paul Hanson**, professor of chemistry, and **John Hoopes**, associate professor of anthropology.

✎

Chuck Marsh, associate professor of journalism, has published "Postmodernism, Symmetry, and Cash Value: An Isocratic Model for Practitioners" in the Public Relations Review.

Puerto Rico Cultural Exchange Program

Joshua Anderson
McNair Scholar

This past July I, along with fellow McNair Scholar Sylvia Niccum, traveled to Puerto Rico as part of the Puerto Rico Cultural Experience and Academic Program. The program, hosted in conjunction with the McNair Scholars Program at the Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico-Recinto San German, featured a whirlwind of cultural festivities, sight-seeing, and educational experiences. After meeting up with our counterparts from Inter San German, dining with them, and exchanging gifts, Scholars quickly began the hard work of getting to know each other. Over the next five days, salsa music and dancing, politics, and the song of the native Coqui frog seemed to be the conversation topics of choice. Throughout the week we visited Rio Camuy Cave Park, the National Astronomy and Ionosphere Center in Arecibo, the City of Caguas Museum and walking tour and Old San Juan. Highlights of the trip included a visit to El Yunque National Rainforest, where Scholars took a dip in paradisiacal La Mina Falls, and a music festival on the coast at Old San Juan, where we were treated not only to an unparalleled performance by the salsa singer Victor Manuelle, but to a rainstorm that swept in, soaking us all to the bone. On the final day we paid a visit to Old San Juan, spending a great deal of time at the 400-plus year-old Spanish Colonial fort, El Morro. Located on a strategic point above San Juan Bay, El Castillo San Felipe del Morro is separated from the town by a wide field, as though it's cut off from modernity, and frozen in time. With the majesty of history, the shining sun, and the blue of the sky and the sea, it was no wonder we had to scramble to make our flight back home.

Baby Announcement!



Diego Andrei Rodriguez

✎

Born November 4 to Associate Director Dr. Robert Rodriguez and wife Irina



McNair Scholars Joshua Anderson (third from left) and Sylvia Niccum (fourth from left) with McNair Scholars from Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico-Recinto San German and KU and Baker University EPSCoR Scholars .

McNair Scholars Abroad—Morocco

Sarah Neff
McNair Scholar

If I've learned anything from a semester abroad, it's not to judge a city by its streets. The time I spent in Fes, Morocco allowed me the opportunity to discover the beauty hidden beneath the veils of one of the oldest cities in the world.

I arrived in Fes during Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting. The experience of Ramadan in a Muslim country gave me a new understanding and appreciation for the tradition. I knew it was haram (forbidden) to eat or drink during the day, and at first as I was hiding in my hotel room eating lunch and drinking my cold water, watching people duck into the shade as they walked down the sidewalks to escape the blistering sun as they went about their day. But as I began to venture out into the daylight, giving up my water, at least while I was out, I noticed the sense of community brought out during Ramadan. Although I was thirsty, there was a comfort in knowing Muslims around the world were experiencing the same thirst.

I think the bigger picture of the community I have grown to love in Fes is best described by the physical characteristics of the old city. The walls are plain and crumbling, the narrow streets are littered with bits of trash and the smell of donkeys lingers in the air. From the outside, it looks dingy and unkept. But behind most of the large wooden doors are ornately beautiful insides. The homes and mosques are hand tiled and hand carved. The people are warm and welcoming in their gracious hospitality that is ingrained into Moroccan culture.



McNair Scholar Sarah Neff in Fes, Morocco

Sarah is a journalism major who participated in the 2008 Summer Research Internship and is a recipient of a Gilman International Scholarship. She plans to apply to graduate programs in journalism or international relations after completing her bachelor's degree.

McNair Scholars Abroad—Japan

Michael Speak
Former McNair Scholar

Last April I was accepted as a participant in the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program, otherwise known as the JET Program. I began teaching at five different high schools last August. I currently live on the northernmost island of Japan called Hokkaido. I live in the biggest city of Hidaka District called Shizunai. Within this district I travel to two regular high schools, one night high school that only has 28 students, an agriculture school, and a school for the handicapped.

Out of all of these schools, I spend the most time at Shizunai High School. It is my home school and I stay there three days out of a normal week. I teach my own class, grade my own papers and have after school meetings with students. I'm a real teacher and it really surprises me. In addition to that I also visit other teachers' classes and help out with native English pronunciation, grammar questions, etc.

I was welcomed in a way that surprised me. For most ALT's or Assistant Language Teachers, our main job is to be a tape recorder and we just repeat what people tell us to. But not in my case, since I have my own class I am given the same kind of responsibilities, respect, and stress as a normal high school teacher. I feel like a part of the team and when I go home everyday I feel I did something worthwhile. My students come to me for everything from English language problems, difficulties at home, to helping them choose which American university is best for them. I sometimes feel like it's the most rewarding thing I've ever done in my life.



Former Scholar Michael Speak (top left) and students at a recent Halloween party.

Michael is a former Scholar who majored in Japanese and participated in the 2006 and 2007 Summer Research Internships. She plans to apply to graduate programs in education or Japanese pedagogy upon completing the JET Program.

University of Kansas
McNair Scholars Program
1122 West Campus Road, Room 305
Lawrence, Kansas 66045-3101



Phone: 785-864-3412
Fax: 785-864-0399
Toll Free: 877-842-5232
Email: mcnair@ku.edu

We're on the Web!

<http://www2.ku.edu/~mcnair/>

Scholar Spotlight: Sabrina Gregersen

By Clarice Amorim
McNair Student Assistant

Sabrina Gregersen was born in LeRoy, a small town in Kansas, to parents that did not have a post-secondary education. "There was no opportunity in my hometown, and my parents always told me and my siblings that we had to go to college. I knew that if I were to get out of LeRoy, I would have to be a good student," Sabrina said.

Sabrina began her post-secondary studies as an engineering major at Kansas State University. She transferred to KU after her first year and was undecided. Sabrina thought about majoring in business until she took a couple of psychology classes. "Then I just decided to do it," she said. "I am interested in many things, and I am really curious about the human brain and how it works." Outside of school, Sabrina enjoys baking, sewing, spending time with friends and family, and developing photos in her darkroom.

Sabrina participated in the Summer Research Internship in 2008 and plans to do research again next summer. "It was a really good experience," Sabrina said. She has also served as a research assistant in various cognitive and social psychology labs. She will graduate in August of 2009, and plans to conduct post-baccalaureate research at KU. She will then apply to graduate programs in neuropsychology for the fall of 2010.



Sabrina Gregersen
McNair Scholar