

McNair Scholars



Developing Leaders
Through Graduate Education

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

Fall 2014

The Year of The Scholar

Since the 2013 newsletter, twelve additional McNair Alumni completed graduate degrees!

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them and hope that these scholars' accomplishments inspire those who are still in the process of reaching their dream.

*Congratulations, Graduates of
Academic Year 2013-2014!*

Cristian Aguilar—University of California, Irvine, Biological Sciences, PhD

Priscilla Antunez-De Garza—University of Southern California, Chemistry, PhD

Mayra Estrada - La Sierra University, School Psychology, Ed.S

Alexander Gutierrez—University of Michigan, Computer Science & Engineering, Masters

Hannah Krebs-Lucas—Claremont Graduate University, Psychology, Masters

Trang Lu—University of Southern California, Physician Assistant Studies, Masters

Nancy Markos—Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, DVM

Christopher Rios—Claremont Graduate University, Psychology, Masters

Ernest Shen—University of Southern California, Biostatistics, PhD

Jeannette Torres—University of Southern California, Gerontology, Masters

Josefina Wilhelm—Hope International University, Marriage & Family Therapy, Masters

Lisa Williams—Ohio State University, Sociology, PhD

Inside this issue:

Director's Message	2
Introducing Cohort 16	3
McNair Scholars Team	3
Guiding Students on their Path to Graduate School	4
Participating in Summer Activities	5
– UC Berkeley	
– Research Experience	
Faculty Profile: Dr. S. Terri Gomez	6-7
Alumni Profiles	
– Dr. Ernest Shen	
– Dr. Emily Thompson	
McNair Program Information	8

Stay Connected:

www.cpp.edu/~mcnair



(McNairCPP Scholars)



Pictured—Cohort 15 Scholars at the 15th Annual Ronald E. McNair Scholar Undergraduate Research Symposium.



Please save the date for the 16th Annual Research Symposium: **June 5th, 2015**

CPP Faculty
Position Openings:

[http://](http://academic.csupomona.edu/faculty/positions.aspx)

[academic.csupomona.edu/](http://academic.csupomona.edu/faculty/positions.aspx)

[faculty/positions.aspx](http://academic.csupomona.edu/faculty/positions.aspx)

Director's Message

Since 1999, the McNair Scholars Program at Cal Poly Pomona has served over 200 students and 38 of them have completed their doctorates so far, with 29 additional scholars currently in PhD programs! I hope this newsletter will give you a glimpse of the wonderful things current and past scholars are doing.

Our tremendous success is due to the dedicated staff that has served the program over the past 15 years, the brilliant and wonderful students, and the support of the university, the broader community, and the U.S. Department of Education. If you would like to help us continue to thrive, please consider one of these three ways:

Sharing Your Successes

Let your congressional representatives know what the McNair Scholars Program has allowed you to achieve. Congress sets the budget for the McNair Program. By speaking up for McNair, you will help congressional members see the importance in investing in future leaders and prevent future funding cuts to the McNair Scholars Program. To contact your elected officials, start by going to the following webpages:

<http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>

http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

Supporting Scholar Travel

Presenting research results at professional conferences is one of the best ways for a Scholar to get noticed by potential graduate faculty mentors as well as providing invaluable opportunities for networking. Additionally, Scholars are encouraged to visit graduate schools and attend recruitment events. Please help by sending in your donation in the enclosed envelope.

Giving to the McNair Scholarships

With your help, we are instituting a new scholarship, available only to McNair Scholars, ranging between \$500 - \$2,000. To contribute to this scholarship, please use the enclosed donation envelope.

Thank you. I hope you will stop by and say hello the next time you are near Cal Poly Pomona.

Sincerely,
Dr. Winny Dong



Introducing McNair Scholars 2014-2015

APRIL AQUINO
Animal Science
Mentor: Dr. S. Murinda

STEPHANIE BANUELOS
Psychology
Mentor: Dr. A. Morales

CHEYENNEDRA BOURNE
Anthropology
Mentor: Dr. C. Garcia –Des Lauriers

ERICA BROWN
Sociology
Mentor: Dr. S. McGoldrick

RENEE ESTEPHAN
Biology
Mentor: Dr. S. Eskandari

NATALIE GARCIA
Biotechnology
Mentor: Dr. A. Steele

CHRISTIAN GARRIDO
Biotechnology
Mentor: Dr. E. Salik

DANIEL GOMEZ
Political Science
Mentor: Dr. D. Loo

DANIEL GRAJEDA
Liberal Studies
Mentor: Dr. J. Aguilar



Not pictured above: Cheyennedra Bourne, Roxane Mehrassa, and Christian Garrido

RYAN HALL
Gender, Ethnic, & Multicultural Studies
Mentor: Dr. A. Jain

JESSENNYA HERNANDEZ
Anthropology
Mentor: Dr. C. Garcia –Des Lauriers

ADRIENNE JAIME
History
Mentor: Dr. E. Wallis

JIMENA JARAMILLO
Psychology
Mentor: Dr. N. Von Glahn

BRITTANY KEMP
English—Education
Mentor: Dr. N. Houck

DOMINIC LOZANO
Psychology
Mentor: Dr. M. Danico

CARLOS McENIRY
Civil Engineering
Mentor: Dr. M. Gershfeld

ROXANE MEHRASSA
Mathematics
Mentor: Dr. I. Mihaila

DAVID VEGA
Physics
Mentor: Dr. E. Salik

KIMBERLY VONGNALITH
Gender, Ethnic, & Multicultural Studies
Mentor: Dr. J. Pacleb

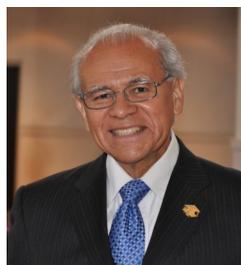
McNair Scholars Program Team



Winnie Dong
Director



Wei Bidlack
Program Faculty Advisor



Frank Torres
Director Emeritus



Elena Alvarez Villegas
Project Coordinator



Katherine Azurin
Assistant Project Coordinator

Guiding Students on their Path to Graduate School

Credit: Xpressions of Xcellence, College of Engineering, 2014 Annual Magazine



For the past four years, Edward B. Guzman has worked diligently toward becoming Dr. Guzman. This fall, the 2014 aerospace engineering graduate will find himself one step closer to achieving that goal when he enters the doctoral program at Harvard University, studying biology and bioengineering.

Guzman was aided in this journey by the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program, a federally funded program that helps prepare underrepresented students for doctoral study and careers in academia through research internships.

McNair Scholars participate in study groups and tutoring, get assistance with graduate school applications and exam preparation, and conduct research with faculty mentors from Cal Poly Pomona and other universities to be exposed to different types of research.

Guzman worked with Dr. Beverly McKeon, a professor in the Graduate Aerospace Laboratories at California Institute of Technology, on low-emissions power generation.

"I want to expand my knowledge as much as possible and utilize it to contribute to the welfare of society," Guzman says. "I knew the McNair program would get me a step closer to that dream. Not only would it give me the opportunity to do research while being a full-time student, which is crucial to being a competitive applicant to graduate school, but it would provide me with the academic advice and preparation for graduate school."

Dr. Winny Dong, director of the McNair program at Cal Poly Pomona, is proud of the fact this program has supported dozens of students, like Guzman, to achieve their dreams through obtaining advanced degrees.

"This is the best program I have been involved with in my 14-year career at Cal Poly Pomona," says Dong. "We've served over 200 students since the program's inception in 1999, and nearly 70percent have completed or are in progress on their master's or Ph.D."

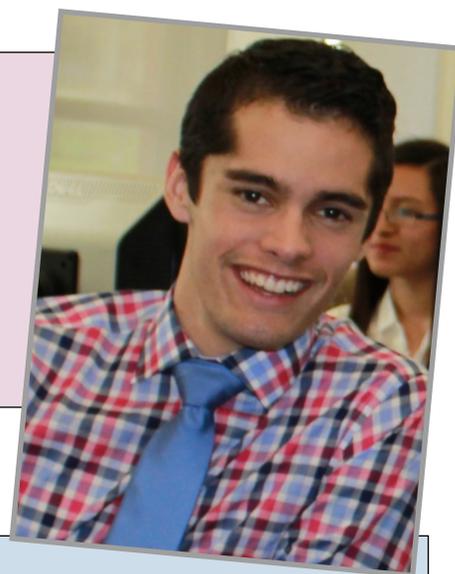


The McNair Experience: In their own words...

Lucas De Buren

UC Berkeley McNair Scholars Symposium

"The McNair Berkeley Symposium was an eye opening experience. To have the privilege to present my research among such bright scholars and see the work being done by fellow McNair scholars across the country was truly astonishing."



Marlena Lopez

Overall McNair Experience

"Joining the McNair Scholars Program was the best academic decision I've ever made. The program broadened my opportunities and opened many doors for me. I now feel well prepared to apply and continue onto graduate school and I know that the connections and friendships I have made in the program will last a lifetime."



Jocelyn Murillo

UC Berkeley McNair Scholars Symposium

"Participating in the Berkeley Symposium was one of the defining moments of my life. I was able to connect with others in the same field as me and witness some fantastic presentations. The bonds I've cultivated with my cohort have only been strengthened further with this exciting experience, as we supported each other and spent time with each other exploring Berkeley. Above all, this experience has inspired a confidence in me that I never knew I had, and I will always be grateful for such an unforgettable time at Berkeley!"



Faculty Mentor Profile



Dr. S. Terri Gomez
Chair, Professor, Ethnic and Women’s Studies at CPP
1988 - B.A. Political Science at University of California, Los Angeles
1992 - MA Political Science at University of California, Los Angeles
2003 - PhD Political Science (Political Theory) at University of California, Los Angeles
PhD Dissertation: “Negotiating the Boundaries, Borders and ‘Brujos’ of Chicana Feminist Discourse”

“I am so incredibly blessed to wake up each day and pursue this as a career. This is my passion.”

Dr. Gomez is a first generation college student who, transferring from San Bernardino Valley College, received her BA, MA, and PhD in Political Science from UCLA. Growing up in a community where it was difficult for her to find a role model who had earned a doctorate proved a challenge for her to see a reflection of who she aspired to be. Originally pursuing law school like her sister, she realized last minute that her calling was to teach and create scholarships and made a last minute decision to pursue a doctorate in Political Theory at UCLA. She credits her survival through graduate school to having good mentors and a wonderful community of graduate students who supported her through the process. Her “pearls of wisdom” for students hoping to pursue research or graduate work are:

- Find something you LOVE, something that you are passionate about, and pursue it. Graduate school can be very difficult, but ultimately, it is about the work. I have a passion for teaching and researching. I am so incredibly blessed to wake up each day and pursue this as a career. This is my passion.
- Build/find community. Remember, although graduate work can seem like a very lonely endeavor, you are not alone. It is critical to find/build community. Those relationships will sustain you during the most challenging times. When I was at UCLA, it was important for me to remain engaged with social justice issues both on campus and in the community. I joined graduate organizations that fostered that important work.
- Find good mentors. This is critical. We all need someone who believes in us and in our potential, and who is willing to work with us to produce our scholarship. Ideally, you want these mentors in your department, but you may need to find support elsewhere.
- Do not give up. If this is your calling, then pursue it.

In the past, she has mentored a number of McNair Scholars. Their topics of research ranged from undocumented college students, feminist strategies in education, Central American parental involvement, community cultural wealth/assets students can use to succeed, indigenous food ways, and a wide variety of important community research based projects.



Dr. Ernest Shen
McNair Scholars Cohort 5: 2003-2004
2005 - B.S. Mathematics at CPP
2013 - PhD, Biostatistics at University of Southern California
PhD Dissertation: “Quantile Mediation Models: Methods for Assessing Mediation across the Outcome Distribution ”

Alumni Profile

What was the process of narrowing down your dissertation topic?

I started out working on three different topics when I started out with my dissertation advisor, and after about a year and a half narrowed it down to one topic as the focus of my dissertation. In the process, I realized that the ideas I initially proposed would best be broken up into three main papers, which eventually morphed into the three middle chapters of my dissertation.

What was the most exciting part of your dissertation and defense?

The most exciting part of my dissertation was getting my first dissertation paper accepted, though that happened after my defense. As for that, the most exciting part of my defense was the Q and A session from the committee and audience members. It was great fun to banter back and forth with them, as they had been stewing over my dissertation for a couple of weeks leading up to my defense, and the Q and A was their chance to unleash their thoughts upon me. While the audience members did not always have relevant questions or suggestions, the discussion was nevertheless fun

(Alumni Profile continued...)

and stimulating.

What career options are you considering?

I am currently working for the Department of Research and Evaluation of Kaiser Permanente, as a senior-level Statistician. Although most of the projects with which I am involved have operational objectives, much of my work still involves basic methodological research. In fact, I continue to work on publishing papers in peer-reviewed journals, and present work at scientific conferences.

Please share an experience as a McNair Scholar that was particularly helpful to finishing your doctorate.

The singular experience I can recall from my time as a McNair scholar that was most helpful to me in graduate school was the former scholar graduate school panels. The stories they told and advice they gave echoed in my mind time and time again during my graduate studies, and were always a comforting reminder to me that others had gone through it before and survived.

What advice do you have for current McNair Scholars?

Learning to prioritize your life (research, classes, relationships, health, not necessarily in this order!!!) is perhaps the most important skill to develop before and during graduate school, the operative word being *develop*. Although you will never perfect this skill, to which my wife can attest when I was preparing for my defense, you always have to work on improving it if you want to survive to the end of your graduate studies. Balancing all aspects of your life will not only help you maintain your sanity (and humanity?) during the arduous years of graduate school, but it will also help you be more productive in your research.



Alumni Profile

Dr. Emily Thompson**McNair Scholars Cohort 4: 2002-2003****1999 - B.S. Physics at CPP****2011 - PhD, Physics at University of Massachusetts at Amherst****PhD Dissertation: "Search for Contact Interactions with Dimuons at the ATLAS Detector"***What was the process of narrowing down your dissertation topic?*

It's a long story actually. I started out in the field of condensed matter theoretical physics, but ended up in experimental high energy particle physics! The person I went to UMass to work for ended up leaving the university not too long after I arrived. There weren't any other available advisers at the time working in condensed matter theory, so I did a semester in Heidelberg, Germany, working with the theoretical institute there. After coming back to UMass, I decided I wanted a change. I switched topics completely, to be an experimentalist on the ATLAS detector at CERN, in order to work with the person who eventually became my thesis adviser. He really took me under his wing; by that time I was already beginning my third year of grad school and felt like I was starting from scratch! At the time, the experiment hadn't started yet, so the choice of the final dissertation topic was a fluid one until we finally started taking data. This was especially compounded by the LHC incident in September 2008, which delayed data-taking by over a year. In the end, my thesis topic was an early ATLAS analysis with the first year data.

What career options are you considering?

I've been a postdoc for 3 years now, and it's been really fun being in academia. I'm considering options outside the field of particle physics, especially in public policy research or working for a tech company. My background in analyzing large datasets puts me in a good position to do data science research, which is a new emerging field that many companies find very valuable.

What advice do you have for current McNair Scholars?

If you choose to go to grad school, I think the most important thing is finding an adviser with whom you can work well. It's a good idea to know what mentoring style you work best with when choosing the person who will be in control of your academic career.

About TRIO and the McNair Scholars Program

The Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) are Federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes eight programs targeted to serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to post-baccalaureate programs.

Designed to assist first-generation, low-income students and those who are underrepresented at the graduate and doctoral level, the program at Cal Poly Pomona was first funded in 1999. The Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program is named for Dr. Ronald E. McNair, one of those who perished aboard the space shuttle Challenger in January 1986.

The McNair Scholars Program at Cal Poly Pomona is a one- or two-year program designed to improve students' research skills and prepare them for entering graduate schools and advanced study. This education grant provides an internship opportunity for students to learn how to do research, present their findings at a summer symposium and at national conferences, and successfully apply for and enter graduate school. Through the efforts of the students themselves, the faculty mentors, and the program staff, these students can achieve their goals.



Dr. Ronald E. McNair



mcnair@csupomona.edu

(909) 869-3381

www.csupomona.edu/~mcnair

Return Service Requested

Pomona, CA 91768

3801 West Temple Avenue

Building 8, Room 306

Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program

**Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Cal Poly Pomona**