

## Congratulations to First McNair Scholar from UW Oshkosh to obtain a PhD

We want to extend congratulations to Dr. Vanessa Ante for becoming the first McNair Scholar from UW-Oshkosh to obtain her PhD. Dr. Ante recently received her PhD in microbiology and molecular virology from the University of Pittsburgh. She was a member of the 2007/2008 McNair Scholars cohort and conducted her research with Dr. Dana Merriman from the Biology Department

Vanessa grew up in the town of Ashland, WI on Lake Superior. She chose to come to UW-Oshkosh because she felt that she would be able to grow as a person. Also the cost of in-state tuition helped make her decision easier. Vanessa did not choose her major right away, but when she decided on biology she stuck with it. She chose to study biology because of its versatility and marketability. It is a major that can be applied to many different career paths.

Involvement with the McNair Scholars program did not come until Vanessa was in her third year of college. After finding out about the McNair Scholars program from various flyers posted around campus, she knew that participating in this research would help her in the long run.

Once Vanessa was accepted into the program, she was paired up with Dr. Dana Merriman of the Biology Department. Dr. Merriman conducts research on the physiology and cell biology of vertebrate central nervous system/retina in health and disease. When asked about how McNair Scholars helped her, Dr. Ante had this to say,



Dr. Vanessa Ante

“The McNair program was fantastic, it's the only reason I got involved in research, which is now my career. It also helped me get accepted into graduate school by paying for application fees and the GRE and by making me more competitive on applications through having research experience. I definitely would not have gotten my doctorate without the McNair program.”

Now that Dr. Ante has earned her PhD she will be finishing up a post doctoral research fellowship. Her main advice to current/future McNair Scholars is that graduate school is nothing like undergraduate. She wants students to know that contacting other students in the desired graduate field is the best way to learn how the graduate program is going to run.

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## McNair Scholars Program Kicks Off the Year with a New Cohort

The McNair Scholars Program welcomed a new cohort of students for the 2015/2016 academic year. These 13 students will be working hard on research projects with a faculty mentor in an effort to enter into a graduate school after they have completed their undergraduate curriculums.

### 2015—2016 McNair Scholars



**Front Row:** Shakura Salahaladyn, Lynn Valencic, Savannah Block, Monica Greco, Cassandra Duncan, Carolyn Butzen

**Back Row:** Jordan Black, David Morser, Marissa Munoz, Andre Wallace, Josh Henkel, Hope MacDonald

**Not Pictured:** Jeff Berger

**Jeff Berger:** Jeff is a senior double majoring in Psychology and Japanese. He will be working with Dr. Aaron Karst from the Psychology department studying human memory and artificial intelligence.

**Jordan Black:** Jordan is a junior from Verona, WI who is studying pharmacological agents with Dr. Eric Matson of the Biology department. He is a Biology major with a Chemistry minor.

**Savannah Block:** Savannah is a junior with an English major and minors in French and Philosophy. Dr. Crystal Mueller from the English Department and Director of the Writing Center is her mentor for her research project. Savannah's research topic is titled "Motivation to Continue Critical Thinking within the Writing Process."

**Carolyn Butzen:** Carolyn is a sophomore majoring in Psychology. She is from Appleton, WI and is working with Dr. Fredi Giesler from the Social Work department. Carolyn will be studying the correlation between Autism and gastrointestinal dysfunction.

**Cassandra Duncan:** Cassandra is a junior is majoring in Biology and is working with Dr. Dana Merriman of the Biology Department. She is studying the blood-gut barrier of 13-lined ground squirrels.

**Monika Greco:** Monika is working with Dr. Evan Williams, from the Philosophy department, studying feminist ethics. She is a sophomore double majoring in Philosophy and Political Science

**Josh Henkel:** Josh is a junior from the Oshkosh area double majoring in Psychology and Criminal Justice. He is working with Dr. Michael Lenza, from the Criminal Justice Department and is researching restorative justice.

**Hope McDonald:** Hope is a senior Anthropology student. She will be conducting her research with Dr. Margaret Hostetler, the Associate Chair of the English Department at UW-Oshkosh. Hope's research topic is titled "Motivations for Language"

**David Morser:** David is a junior majoring in Japanese and Professional Physics. He is studying magnetism and thermodynamics with Dr. Nadejda Kalcheva from the Physics department.

**Marissa Munoz:** Marissa is a junior majoring in Chemistry with an emphasis in biochemistry. Her research will be facilitated by Dr. Brant Kedrowski of the Chemistry Department. She will be studying the synthesis of amino acids.

**Shakura Salahaladyn:** Shakura is a Business major in her Junior year. She is working with Dr. Norlisha Crawford from the English Department and who is also the director of the African American Studies program. Her research topic is the prevalence of black women in business.

**Lynn Valencic:** Lynn is a senior majoring in Anthropology. She is researching the ceramic heads of the Mesoamerican culture with Dr. Stephanie de Montigny from the Anthropology department.

**André Wallace:** Andre is majoring in Human Services Leadership and is in his senior year. His research will be done with Dr. Paul Van Auken from the Sociology Department where he will be studying the benefits of team building.

### 2015—2016 McNair Mentors



**Front Row:** Michael Lenza, Fredi Giesler, Evan Williams, Margaret Hostetler, Stephanie de Montigny

**Back Row:** Dana Merriman, Aaron Karst, Eric Matson, Crystal Mueller, Brant Kedrowski:

**Not pictured:** Norlisha Crawford, Nadejda Kaltcheva, Paul Van Auken

## Conferences Around The Country

Every year many of the McNair scholars attend and present at conferences around the country. Senior student Kathryn Proctor attended and presented at the 18th Annual Texas National McNair Scholars Research Conference in February in Denton, Texas. Alexis Brown, also a senior, attended the National McNair Conference in Maryland at the University of Maryland College Park.

At the 18th Annual Texas National McNair Scholars Research Conference Kathryn Proctor presented her research on *THE OTHERNESS ILLUSTRATED: News-Media Analysis of the Representation of American Female Professional Athletes*. Kathryn stated that she had a great time and experienced great learning opportunities while in attendance at the conference.

At the University of Maryland at College Park Alexis Brown presented her research on *How do universities and other interested parties get and retain African American women in a PhD Program?* During her visit to Maryland, Alexis was able to explore the College Park Campus, which is her top choice for graduate school, and meet new students from around the country.

Attending conferences around the country is a great way to not only present the research these scholars worked so hard on, but to also meet other students who are also interested in research. We are proud of our scholars who attend and present at these conferences because they not only represent UW Oshkosh in a good light, but also the McNair Scholars program.

### 30th Anniversary National Conference on Undergraduate Research

From April 7 through April 9, 2016 2 McNair Scholars, 4 students and 2 staff members from UW-Oshkosh attended the 30th Anniversary of the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) at the University of North Carolina Asheville. NCUR is the organizer of an annual conference of student presenters each spring, which has become a national celebration of undergraduate scholarly activity involving all academic disciplines and all institutions of higher education. NCUR's annual conferences also includes sessions for faculty members and administrators to discuss starting, supporting, or maintaining departmental or institutional undergraduate research programs. The mission of the Council on Undergraduate Research is to support and promote high-quality undergraduate student-faculty collaborative research and scholarship.



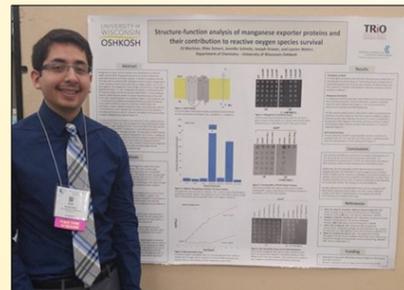
Front Row: McNair Scholars; Samantha Reztloff, and Alyssa Valentyne; Back Row: Shanna Geier, Elle Moore, Yuqi She, Nicholas Grosskopf)

I was recently afforded the pleasure of attending and presenting at the Experimental Biology (EB) conference in San Diego. EB is a national conference with over 14,000 attendees from a wide array of disciplines. By attending this scientific meeting, I was able to publicly defend and share the research I conducted at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.



Additionally, I attended oral presentations that were given by leaders in their respective fields, one of which included a recent Nobel Prize winner. My experience was one filled with personal growth and achievement, as this event reminded me that I was a part of the scientific community and those that attended the meeting were my peers. I would like to thank the Ronald E. McNair program for giving me the opportunity to attend the meeting. I would also like to thank Mary Seaman and Dr. Lauren Waters for their continued guidance and support in my research endeavors.

Eli Martinez  
McNair Scholar  
2014-2015 Cohort



## Marine Biology in South Africa

Laura Sullivan, a McNair Scholar from the 2014/2015 cohort, traveled to South Africa through a private study abroad program. She spent the whole month of January doing marine biology research. During this research Laura did intertidal surveys, research on Great White Shark populations, seal surveying, and acoustic tagging among many other things.

Through this opportunity Laura was able to earn credit and have an experience of a lifetime. Laura would recommend that anyone who has the opportunity to do any kind of internship should take it. She said she learned so much and got to see new and exciting things. Even though many people think they can not afford to do an internship over seas, there are always ways to work towards that goal.

This summer Laura will be doing another internship through the Environmental Research and Innovation Center (ERIC) lab. She will be traveling to Germany to study with the Viessmann Group. During this internship she will be testing the methane produced by biodigesters and seeing how different organic materials affect the biodigesters. After this internship Laura will graduate from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh with a degree in biology.



## A Scholars Road to Grad School

I have always considered continuing my education after receiving my Bachelor's degree, but I did not have the slightest idea of where to start. I decided in my sophomore year at UW-Oshkosh that I wanted to pursue a career in the field of public health, which requires a Master's degree. The process of looking at, applying to, and going to graduate school is an extremely lengthy and difficult one, and I would not be where I am today without the Ronald E. McNair Scholars program. The McNair program helped guide me along the way in getting research experience, finding the right graduate programs, attending a research conference, and preparing to apply to schools. I applied to six schools for their Master's of Public Health in Epidemiology programs, and was accepted to five of them. Ultimately, I decided to attend Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health in Atlanta, Georgia.



Samantha Retzloff  
2014—2015 McNair Scholar  
Emory College - Atlanta, GA

The most valuable things that I have learned throughout the process is to do research on the schools you want to be admitted to, and to emphasize your strengths on school applications. In my personal statements, I mentioned my interest in working with specific professors with research interests that matched mine at each school. Personalizing your application to each school is essential in letting the school know why you are a good fit for their program. I did not necessarily think that my GPA was as strong as others in the applicant pool, so I chose to highlight other things in my applications. For example, I knew that my public health experience from working at the Winnebago County Health Department could set me apart from other applicants, so I emphasized that throughout my applications. Overall, these things that I learned from being in the McNair program have aided me in more ways than I can count, and I am very thankful to have been a part of it on my journey to graduate school.

## Congratulations to the following McNair Scholars Recipients of the 2016 Chancellor Award for Excellence



Alyssa Valentyne



Aaron Jackson



Monica Greco



Stevan Mazibrada

## Scholar Update

- Grant O'Connell - PhD program in Biomedical Sciences at West Virginia University, Fall 2014
- Adrian Landreth - PhD program at the University of Michigan - Ann Arbor , Fall 2015
- Lupearly Wright - Masters program at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Fall 2016
- Thomas Kenote - Masters program at the University of Minnesota, Fall 2016
- Wilson Lee - Masters program at the University of Minnesota. Fall 2016
- Brooke Wollner - Masters program at the University of Wisconsin Madison , Fall 2016
- Samantha Retzloff , Masters program at Emory University, Fall 2016
- Joshua Hill, PhD program at the University of Wyoming, Fall 2016
- Aaron Jackson, Masters program, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Fall 2016

Congratulations to the McNair Scholar Graduates of Fall 2015 and Spring 2016	
Fall 2015	Spring 2016
Thomas Kenote	Joshua Hill
Wilson Lee	Aaron Jackson
Eli Martinez	Samantha Retzloff
Franki Mayer	Laura Sullivan (summer)
Kathryn Proctor	Jonathan Toepfer
Brooke Wollner	

**Jessie Hernandez**  
UWO McNair  
Scholars STEP  
Student

Jessie is a senior Biology student here at UW Oshkosh. She is originally from California, but now calls Platteville, WI home. Alongside her studies she is also a member of the sorority Gamma Alpha Omega Sorority, Inc., and also a member of the Student Organization of Latinos. Jessie plans on graduating with her BS and working in Madison, WI.

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