



“Whether or not you reach your goals in life depends entirely on how well you prepare for them and how badly you want them. You’re eagles! Stretch your wings and fly to the sky.”

– Ronald E. McNair

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Mission: Our UWO McNair Scholars Program seeks to empower high-achieving, first-generation, low-income, and racially minoritized undergraduates to realize their potential by providing opportunities to develop skills and gain the experiences that will prepare them for graduate study. Central to our mission is to build a community of scholarship where participants engage in faculty-mentored research, distinguished by active learning, mutual respect, and collaborative scholarship. Inherent in our mission is to harness the energy of a new and more diverse generation who is committed to scholarly inquiry.

A Note from the Director:



Cordelia Bowlus
M.Ed, MA
Program Director

For the first time in two years, 2022 felt like “back to normal” at least in terms of in-person activities and cohort dynamics. Members of the 2021 cohort finally had the opportunity to participate in several in-person research events, including the WISys Quick Pitch Completion (two scholars); Research in the Rotunda at the Capitol in Madison (two scholars); and the annual UWO Celebration of Scholarship (six scholars). Three were invited to present at the virtual 2022 NCUR conference. The 2022 cohort was small but mighty with ten scholars completing the summer research internship. Among the summer’s highlights were two kayaking trips on the Fox River, presenting virtually at the University of Buffalo Undergraduate Research Conference in late July, driving up to Superior for the first annual Wisconsin McNair Summit at the University of Wisconsin Superior, and flying to Kansas City, Missouri to present at the McNair Heartland Conference.

On Thursday, September 15th, we celebrated in grand style. Not only was our Showcase an in-person event, but it was also sans masks! Chancellor Andrew Leavitt was in attendance to recognize our scholars’ achievements, celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the McNair Program on our campus, and acknowledge our success in securing our fourth consecutive McNair grant from the Department of Education, a major achievement considering that only 189 of these five-year grants were awarded. Our guest speaker, Dr. Denae Powell, a University of Mississippi McNair alumna who joined our faculty this fall as a professor of African American Studies, inspired students, parents, and faculty alike with her personal story and call to carry on the legacy of Dr. Ronald E. McNair.

Fall 2022 heralds a new chapter for the UWO McNair Program. While I will remain the program’s director, I am delighted to share that I was able to hire Dr. Belynda Pinkston for the newly created position of program coordinator. We look forward to working together to strengthen and broaden the impact of the McNair Program on our campus.



Belynda Pinkston
Ed. D.,
Program Coordinator

As the McNair Program’s first program coordinator, Dr. Belynda Pinkston not only brings a wealth of experience and energy to the position, but she also embodies the aspirations of our first-generation and limited income college students. She is keenly aware of the transformative impact of a quality education. The first in her family to complete a bachelor's degree, she has dedicated her entire life to education, becoming an advocate for underserved students. Her professional journey includes experience as a high school history teacher, the transformational principal of a low-performing Florida school, and, most recently, the Executive Director of Human Resources for the Oshkosh Public School District. Dr. Pinkston is civic-minded and a life-long learner.

In 2020 she completed her EdD here at UWO; and although she has only been a member of our community for five years, she is deeply engaged civically and serves on several Oshkosh boards, including the Oshkosh Food Coop, the Oshkosh Grand, Reach Counseling, and the Boys and Girls Club.

"I understand the challenges that students of color and students who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds face. At this point in my career journey, I am seeking an opportunity to ‘pay it forward’ by helping those who are coming behind me." In addition to her duties as McNair Program Coordinator, Dr. Pinkston also teaches as a lecturer in the College of Education and Human Services. Dr. Pinkston enjoys all the beauty that the state of Wisconsin offers, she is a fan of fall and especially winter #snowprincess. – Dr. Belynda Pinkston

Introducing the 2022 McNair Cohort



Back row, left to right: Dan Cummings, Ethan Grohens, Dr. Kedrowski, Yanet Fernandez, Sheiana Taylor, Dr. Merriman, Moriah Weeks, Brittany Dupree, Mahad Osman, Dr. McCabe

Front row, left to right: Dr. Bohr, Jessica Brown, Dr. Kuhl, Gillian Bellman, Lauren Blume, Anise Shipley, Elijah Plonsky, Madyson Majewski, Kaddy Janneh, Cordelia Bowlus



*Lauren
Blume*

Lauren (Waukesha, WI), a psychology major examined with her mentor, Dr. Brian Wallace, the prevention of lower-extremity injuries among high-school dance athletes. Lauren hopes to pursue a graduate degree in Occupational Therapy.



*Dan
Cummings*

Dan (Appleton, WI), studied the impacts of class consciousness on political attitudes in the U.S. with his mentor Dr. Jeremiah Bohr. He plans to pursue a PhD in sociology, so he can gain a deeper understanding of the roll class consciousness plays in social inequalities.



*Brittany
Dupree*

Brittany (Fond du Lac, WI) researched, with the help of her mentor Dr. Lucas, drought tolerance in plants. Specifically they examined the role proteins play in resisting drought in *Zea mays* Stomata. Brittany plans to do graduate work in botany or horticulture.



*Yanet
Fernandez*

Yanet (Oshkosh, WI) conducted computational sociology research with Dr. Jeremiah Bohr. They used Big Data from Twitter to examine the sentiments of US Members of Congress. Specifically they analyzed attitudes towards immigration from Latin America. Yanet plans to pursue graduate work in the field of data science.

Introducing the 2022 McNair Cohort



*Ethan
Groshens*

Ethan (Kaukauna, WI) researched the chemical modification of polystyrene waste and subsequent depolymerization to generate new value-added small molecule products with his mentor, Dr. Brant Kedrowski. Ethan plans to pursue a graduate degree in chemistry.



*Madyson
Majewski*

Madyson (De Pere, WI) conducted positive reward training of 13-Lined Ground squirrels with her mentor, Dr. Merriman. She wants to help all kinds of animals and get experience with zoology. She is interested in going to vet school.



*Mahad
Osman*

Mahad (Madison, WI) is interested in pursuing a degree in medicine. For his McNair project, he researched the olfactory genomics in burying beetles with his mentor, Dr. Robert Mitchell.



*Anise
Shipley*

Anise (Oshkosh, WI) investigated and compared recidivism in Wisconsin and Oregon with her mentor Dr. Juyeon Son. She has a wide-range of interests, including work in the area of non-profits.



*Sheiana
Taylor*

Sheiana (St. Thomas, ND) researched, under the mentorship of Dr. Dana Merriman, the prenatal development of the 13-Lined Ground squirrel (13LGS) and compared it to the Theiler Stages of mice. Long-term, she is interested in vet school but plans to first complete a master's in biology.



*Moriah
Weeks*

Moriah (Milwaukee, WI), conducted an interdisciplinary project. Supported by her mentor Dr. Stephanie Spehar, she focused on the campus community gardens, endeavoring to understand what factors motivate individuals to participate in the project. Her dream is complete a master's at NC A&T, Dr. McNair's alma mater.

Scholar Presentations

2021 McNair Cohort:

The 2021 Cohort scholars presented at these following places in the Spring of 2022: WISys Quick Pitch Competition (two scholars); Research in the Rotunda at the Capitol in Madison (two scholars); and the annual UWO Celebration of Scholarship (six scholars). Three were invited to present at the virtual 2022 NCUR conference.

2022 McNair Cohort:

Consisted of 10 scholars that completed the summer internship. Among the conferences, there were also graduate trips taken and group exercise activities for the cohort to take a break from prepping for graduate school and working on their research projects.

The following conferences were:

- University of Buffalo Undergraduate Conference-Virtual (July 21st-22, 2022)
- Wisconsin McNair Summit- University of Wisconsin- Superior (August 11-13, 2022)
- Annual McNair Showcase – UWO (September 15, 2022)
- 2022 Ronald E. McNair Heartland Conference- Kansas City, Missouri (September 23-25, 2022)



Nick Morrissey (2021 Cohort) presenting at the 2022 Research in the Rotunda.

Olivia Mativi (2021 Cohort) presenting at the UWO Celebration of Scholarship, Spring 2022.



Above: Mahad presenting his research to Dr. Merriman at the UWO Showcase.



Pictured to the left: Five scholars (2022 cohort) that presented at the 2022 MKN Research Conference. Brittany, Sheiana, Moriah, Ethan, Mahad and Cordelia.

2022 Scholar Impact Statements

“With the McNair Scholars Program, I was able to pursue research that I never thought was possible in something that I am so passionate about. Creating a professional relationship with a faculty mentor was an excellent opportunity to learn from someone with knowledge in the subject and helped me when I needed it.”

-Lauren Blume

“I am extremely grateful for the opportunities made available to me and for programs like McNair that provided the avenue and tools for me to be able to navigate my way to graduate school.”

– Dan Cummings



Community building with the 2022 Scholars by kayaking on the Fox River in Oshkosh, WI- Back Left: Gillian, Brittany, Moriah, Lauren
Front left: Dan and Yanet, Anise, Sheiana, and Cordelia.

“Not only has this program allowed me the connections I need for research mentorship, but also given me valuable lab experience in the biology field. I was able to apply what I have learned in my undergraduate coursework to real life problems and solutions while meeting like-minded peers.”

“This program has equipped me with the tools to continue my education and allowed me to understand what it takes to create a research project of my own and learn how to present my work to other scholars. The lessons from my summerlong internship will continue to fuel the pursuit of my bachelor's degree and everything else I plan to do onward. I can confidently say that I no longer feel alone in my undergraduate education, nor will I ever be alone in pursuing my graduate degree because of the amazing support this program gives to its scholars.”

– Anise Shipley

Alumni Spotlight:

Tom Kenote



Tom Kenote, a 2015 graduate of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh and the Director of the College of Menominee Nation (CMN) Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), won the 2022 UW Oshkosh Outstanding Young Alumni Award. In the seven short years since he graduated from UWO, he has leveraged his educational experience as an environmental studies major, McNair scholar, and the president of ITSO to complete a master's at the University of Minnesota in Natural Resource Management and go on to become a leader in the field of sustainability and educational outreach at CMN. The research he conducted under the mentorship of Dr. Paul Van Auken through the UWO Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Program taught him how to design and execute a successful research project, a skill that served him well in graduate school where he explored the impacts of climate change on the phenology of forest understory plants on the Menominee Indian Reservation. Since returning to the Menominee Nation, he has built a reputation as a researcher, teacher, listener, and collaborator who is driven by his commitment to the protection of tribal natural resources, the sustainable management of tribal forestry, and the elevation of indigenous ways of knowing. Mr. Kenote worked his way up to his current position, starting as an intern at the institute he now directs. Even in his most recent position as CMN Director of the Geoscience Project, he regularly collaborated with SDI. Mr. Kenote believes deeply that in order to address, mitigate, and adapt to climate change, the Menominee Nation must build upon indigenous nations' long history of sustainable development. Together with his staff, he looks forward to promoting the indigenous sustainable model through education and intern/externships while fostering collaborations, with CMN, the tribal community and numerous external entities such as UW System schools, the Midwest Climate Adaption Science Center, and the Nature Conservancy.

Benjamin Sadjak graduated from UWO in 2013 with a bachelor's degree in Biology. He completed undergraduate research in Dr. Dana Merriman's lab as a 2012 McNair Scholar. Merriman's research lab involves the retinal visual system of the 13-Lined Ground Squirrel species. Not only did he go on to complete a doctorate at the Medical College of Wisconsin, but he has returned to our campus to research and teach.

Today, Dr. Sadjak is the director of emerging animal models of Fauna Bio, a biomedical research company based out of California called Fauna Bio. Together with Dr. Merriman, he conducts Fauna Bio research in Halsey. Fauna Bio has provided a \$500,000 sponsorship to increase UWO's biomedical collaborations in research to study emerging animal models, 13- Lined Ground Squirrels.



Benjamin Sadjak

“Going into my undergraduate studies at UWO, I never thought I would pursue a PhD, and by my junior year I didn't think I had the grades to get into a graduate program. But that's when Dana Merriman introduced me to the McNair Scholars program at UW-Oshkosh. I absolutely fell in love with research during the summer of 2011 when I received research support funds through the McNair Scholars Program to study central nervous system scarring resistance in the hibernating 13-lined ground squirrels. I loved the whole research process: formulating a scientific question based on what's known; troubleshooting a tricky assay until you crack it; the reward of generating images and data like the ones published in scientific journals; and writing—I have always loved writing. . . During my postdoc at the Morgridge Institute for Research . . . an opportunity emerged to join a company, Fauna Bio, that focuses on developing disease treatments from disease resistance strategies found in the 13-lined ground squirrel while directly supporting the UWO ground squirrel colony where my research interests started over a decade prior.”

McNair Alumni News

Shakura Salahaladyn



Shakura graduated from UWO in 2017 with a BBA in interactive web management. Since entering the workforce in field of information technology, she has focused on digital technology and creating seamless digital experiences. She has been employed by Kohler Company since 2018, where she is now the IoT Platform Product Manager. While at UWO, Shakura took full advantage of opportunities to learn and develop her leadership skills: Business Scholars Program, Honors Program, Multicultural Education Coalition – President, Marketing Club, Women in Technology, Black Student Union, and Inclusive Excellence Council – Diversity Coordinator

On February 2, 2022, as part of our UWO Black History Month Celebration "More than Words," Shakura inspired over 25 business students with what she has done to address challenges encountered as an employee in a predominate white corporation.

Undergraduate Degrees Awarded



Raiden Montero

May 2022 Graduate

Major: History & Japanese Studies

2020 Cohort

Congratulations to Raiden Montero! He is continuing his studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he will be pursuing a master's degree in Asian Languages and Cultures with a focus on Southeast Asian Studies. Raiden jumpstarted graduate studies in the summer by participating in an 8-week intensive Thai language course. Raiden will receive over \$25,000 in fellowships, having been awarded both the Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) and the federal Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS)



Kacey Henning

December 2021 Graduate

Major: Nursing

2021 Cohort

Congratulations to Kaycey Henning, who completed her bachelor's in nursing in December of 2021. She is taking a gap year and obtaining valuable professional experience as an RN in northern Wisconsin before applying to MSN programs.



Joshua Roberts

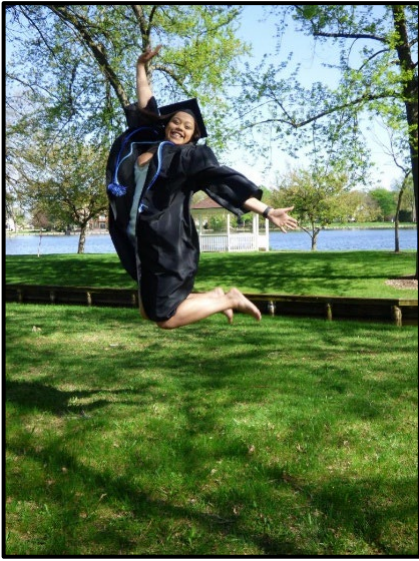
May 2022 Graduate

Major: Music Performance

2021 Cohort

Congratulations to Joshua Roberts—the first UWO McNair student to major in music! He is pursuing a master's degree at Oklahoma City University, where he was awarded a full assistantship, covering his entire tuition! Josh credits the UWO music department and his McNair mentor Professor Drew Whiting with helping him build a tremendous range of experiences that has opened many opportunities for him.

You did it!
Congratulations



Mia Van Hooreweghe

May 2022 Graduate

Major: Kinesiology

Minor: Chemistry

2021 Cohort

Congratulations to Mia Van Hooreweghe! She is currently working to gain experience in the medical field prior to applying to physician assistant programs. She was our first UWO McNair scholar to have been mentored by Professor John Chan, a McNair alum from the University of Minnesota.



Nick Morrissey

May 2022 Graduate

Major: Philosophy

Certificate: Applied Ethics

2020 & 2021 Cohort

Congratulations to Nick Morrissey! Nick is a life-long learner, who has a wide array of interests in the fields of philosophy and art. He plans to take some time to explore his interests in music, before determining what his future academic path will be.



Anissa Garcia

May 2022 Graduate

Major: Women and Gender Studies

Minor: Spanish

2021 Cohort

Congratulations to Anissa Garcia! She was not only accepted into Marquette University's law school but was also awarded \$46,000 in scholarships over two years of study. She excited to be pursuing a law degree.



Jaida Newman
May 2022 Graduate
Major: Philosophy
2021 Cohort

Congratulations to Jayda Newman! She is pursuing a master's in bioethics at the New York School of Global Public Health where she was awarded \$13,500 in scholarships. She is excited to be studying in the Big Apple.



Olivia Mativi
June 2022 Graduate
Major: Physics
2021 Cohort

Olivia will be taking a gap year before applying to a physics master's program.

Congratulations to McNair Alumni:

Completed Graduate school:

- **Amanda Martinez**
2020 McNair Cohort
2021 UWO Graduate
2021 M.S. Social Work, UW-Madison
 - Amanda currently does policy advocacy work for children and families in the state of Wisconsin at Kids Forward, a non-profit, non-partisan statewide organization.
- **Mia Wilson**
2019 McNair Cohort
2020 UWO Graduate
2022 M.S Higher education & Student Affairs, University of Ohio
 - Mia currently is a career advisor at Ohio state University Fisher College of Business.
- **Joy Evans**
2019 McNair Cohort
2020 UWO Graduate
2022 M.S. Public Health, UW-Madison
 - Joy works for a non-profit organization called Elevate Inc. based out of ?? wi.
- **Braini McKenzie**
2019 McNair Cohort
2020 UWO Graduate
2021 M.S. Higher Education & Administration, University of Michigan- Ann Harbor
 - Braini is a program manager for Multi Ethnic Student Affairs at the University of Michigan.
- **Joshua Hill**
2015 Cohort
2016 Graduate
2021 PhD Chemistry University of Wyoming
 - Joshua is currently working as a Post-Doc at the University of Arizona.
- **Alyssa Valentyne**
2015 McNair Cohort
2016 Graduate
2022 MD University of Wisconsin- Madison
 - Alyssa currently doing her residency in emergency medicine.

“I DREAM A WORLD”

A crowd-sourced poem by the UW-Oshkosh 2022
McNair Cohort



I dream a world where women have autonomy,
women bear what they will,
no longer hushed and silent,
bodies free and all can see

I dream a world
where we say we stand for equality
just to turn around and be shot again,
so don't turn your back again.
To see the world change in its acceptance of others,
a unified front
where differences are celebrated
and don't pull us apart,
where connection never disconnects us and
where strangers make eye contact on the bus.

Inertia of history is stubborn,
often cruel.
I would like to see a world
intact and whole
that is treasured like a pearl,
to have equal rights,
men and women,
where the choice is really hers
a world without pesticides and plastic islands.

The voice of a child
Shouldn't be seen as just wild,
more respect for nature,
communities built on nurture,
a world where the healthcare system is not broken,
a world where there is peace and stability.

I dream a world.



2022 Cohort Scholars received their McNair certificates of completion after presenting their research at the UWO Annual McNair Showcase on September 15, 2022.

Thank You!

Thank you to the 2022 McNair research mentors and instructional faculty!

Jeremiah Bohr, PhD, *Sociology*

John Chan, PhD, *Chemistry*

Brian Wallace, PhD, *Kinesiology*

Brant Kedrowski, PhD, *Chemistry*

Robert Mitchell, PhD, *Biology*

Jessica Lucas, PhD, *Biology*

Dana Merriman, PhD, *Biology*

Juyeon Son, PhD, *Sociology*

Stephanie Spehar, PhD, *Anthropology*

Michelle Kuhl, PhD, *History*

Stephen McCabe, PhD, *English*

Chelsy Cegielski, MBA, *Career and Professional Development*

Alex Siebers, UWO Math Education
Grad student

The McNair Scholar Program is a federally funded TRIO program designed to increase graduate degree attainment for students from underrepresented groups. McNair participants are high achieving undergraduates, who are first-generation college students with financial need and/or members of a group that is traditionally underrepresented in graduate education.

To learn more about McNair and what our program has to offer, please visit us at <https://uwosh.edu/mcnairscholars/>

Acknowledgement: The UW Oshkosh McNair Scholars Program is 100% funded through a TRIO grant from the United States Department of Education PR/Award Number P217A220180. For 2022/2023, the UW Oshkosh McNair Scholars Program received \$261,888 in federal funds.

Follow us on our socials!

