



“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

2023 McNair Scholars Program Newsletter

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2023 Wisconsin McNair Summit: McNair scholars from five UW System schools (UW Oshkosh, River Falls, Platteville, Stout, and Superior) pay their respects to Chief Oshkosh. UWO graduate student Sarah Schaefer, who researched Chief Oshkosh for her UWO undergraduate honors thesis, lead the group through an interactive activity, discussing the language on the newly inaugurated plaques that place Chief Oshkosh and the Menominee people into the historical context of colonialism.

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 McNair Staff:

2023 was the year of the Dynamic Duo with Ms. Cordelia Bowlus and Dr. Belynda Pinkston at the helm. The year began with an intense three days at the McNair Promising Practices Institute (MPPI) Conference in Orlando, Florida. This trip was made extra special by the fact that we were in Dr. Pinkston's hometown and at her alma mater the University of Central Florida! This trip was followed by a flurry of scholarly activities during which our 2022 cohort participated in many exciting opportunities to present research. These including: the WISys Quick Pitch Completion, Research in the Rotunda at the Capitol in Madison, the National Council on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) Conference at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, and the Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) in Chicago, and, of course, UWO's annual Celebration of Scholarship.

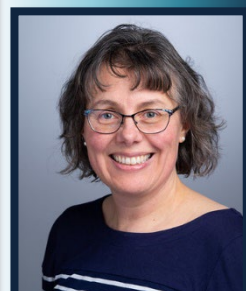
Together, we ushered 12 scholars through the 2023 McNair Spring Seminar Series and Summer Research Internship. Among the summer's highlights were kayaking trips on the Fox River, presenting virtually at the University of Buffalo Undergraduate Research Conference in late July, a trip to Green Bay to visit the Van Gogh Exhibit and dinner in Title Town; a road trip to Minneapolis to visit graduate programs at the University of Minnesota; and last but not least, hosting the Wisconsin McNair Research Summit on our campus. For this two-day event, we welcomed McNair scholars from UW River Falls, Platteville, Stout, and Superior. First and foremost, the Summit provided our Wisconsin scholars with an opportunity to present their research to a larger audience. Scholars also participated in seminars on preparing them for the graduate application process. UW Milwaukee alumna, writing coach, and University of Michigan Ann Arbor PhD student Kristen Leer provided a powerful take on writing a "personal but purposeful" graduate school statement. Three distinguished McNair alumni, Dr. Denae Powell, Paul Perales (MSW), and UWO McNair alum Dr. Ben Sajdak articulated nuanced perspectives on the value of a graduate school perspective. Our keynote speaker Dr. Shelia Knox shared her experience as a member of the Oshkosh 94, emphasizing the vital role we all have in being the change we wish to see in the world. The Summit concluded with a visit to Menominee Park, where we paid our respects to Chief Oshkosh. (See image on cover of newsletter.) The 2023 UWO scholars wrapped up their Summer Research Internship at the Culver Center with the annual McNair Showcase on September 28th, during which they presented their summer research to family, friends, and the greater campus community! This event was made extra special this year as Dr. Belynda Pinkston—a first-generation, underrepresented college student who no doubt would have been a McNair scholar, had she had the opportunity—served as featured guest speaker. Dr. Pinkston shared her personal story and the life skills which have contributed to her professional and personal success. Illustrating the importance of letting your light serve as a beacon for others with her powerful singing voice inherited from her grandmother, she had the entire audience singing along: *"This little light of mine, let it shine, let it shine."*

Both Ms. Bowlus and Dr. Pinkston are immensely proud of the achievements of our scholars and committed to working collaboratively with other key stakeholders within the university to recruit and support future McNair Titans! #TrioWorks #McNairScholars

2023 McNair Promising Practices Institute (MPPI) Conference in Orlando,



Dr. Belynda
Pinkston



Cordelia
Bowlus

Introducing the 2023 McNair Cohort



Left to right: Makaylee Stewart, Danie Lodin, Faith Lee, Lydia Medina, Kailey Freund, Dr. Belynda Pinkston, Dominic Laracuenta, Geryd Steffek, Fatima Muñiz, Elijah Plonsky, Gillian Bellman, Juan Padilla-Mendez, Brittany Dupree.



*Gillian
Bellman*

Alongside her mentor Dr. Christopher Groves, Gillian Bellman (Appleton) spent the summer conducting research on aspects of human aggression, work she hopes to continue in graduate school. Bellman plans to pursue a PhD in psychology, with the goal of becoming a professor who is a role model to students like herself.



*Brittany
Dupree*

Brittany Dupree (Fond du Lac) participated in her second McNair Summer Research Internship, this time under Dr. Laura Ladwig. At the AGM Property, where the Adams family has an ongoing prairie restoration project, Dupree studied drought tolerance in prairie plants. Dupree is interested in pursuing a graduate degree in botany.



*Kailey
Freund*

Alongside her mentor Dr. Shelly Michalski, Kailey Freund (Oshkosh) spent the summer researching the ecology of amphibian parasites. She is passionate about endangered species, symbiotic relationships, and neglected tropical diseases and is interested in pursuing a graduate degree which will prepare her for a career in ecology.



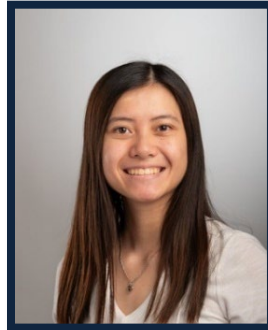
*Dominic
Laracuenta*

Dominic Laracuenta (Menasha) spent the summer on Lake Winnebago, researching Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) for an NSF-funded project. Together with his mentor Dr. Robert Stelzer, Laracuenta has continued his study of HABs by conducting controlled experiments in the laboratory. He plans to pursue a PhD in Biochemistry.



*Faith
Lee*

As a nursing student, Faith Lee (Wausau) is deeply concerned about the mental health crisis. With the support of Dr. Jeremiah Bohr, she examined the intersection of mental health, law enforcement, and crisis intervention training in Wisconsin. Lee is currently focused on completing her BSN by May 2025.



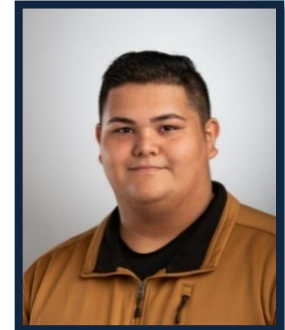
*Danie
Lodin*

Under Dr. Sabrina Mueller-Spitz, Danie Lodin (Beaver Dam) focused on *Deinococcus* in the human gastrointestinal track, conducting a meta-analysis of the literature. Lodin is focused on completing her bachelor's in biomedical science by May 2025. She may pursue a career in research.



*Lydia
Medina*

As a social work major, Lydia Medina is particularly interested in understanding the coping behaviors of at-risk youth. Under Paul Perales (MSW), she examined interventions for multiple adverse childhood experiences. Medina is interested in pursuing an MSW and becoming a licensed social worker.



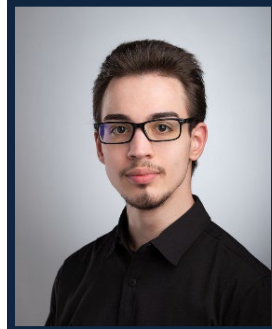
*Juan Padilla-
Mendez*

As a Hispanic, Juan Padilla-Mendez (Milwaukee) is keenly aware of healthcare inequities, a fact that informed his McNair research. Under Dr. Maria Graf, he examined racial & ethnic concordance between Latino patients and their healthcare providers. Padilla looks forward representing Latinos as a physician.



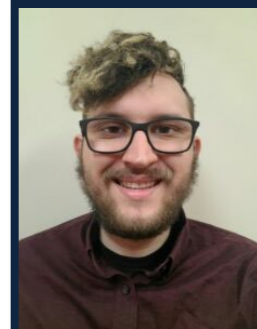
*Fatima
Muñiz*

With a passion for mathematics, Fatima Muniz (Neenah) worked with Dr. Linda Eroh to conduct a research project centered around graph theory and peg solitaire. Muniz enjoys teaching/tutoring math and aspires to become a professor of mathematics, a field where both women and minorities are underrepresented.



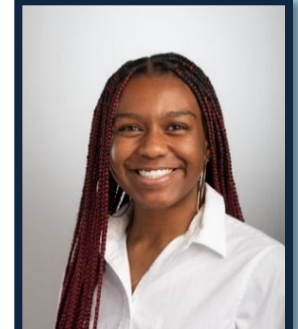
*Elijah
Plonsky*

Under the mentorship of Dr. Margaret Hostetler, Elijah Plonsky (Fond du Lac) examined the development of pragmatic politeness in familial relationships. An English major with a minor in journalism, Plonsky loves to write, study communication, and has a desire to become a investigative journalist.



*Geryd
Steffek*

Geryd Steffek (New London) spent the summer writing a scholarly paper based on his 2022 research on beetle pheromones and their implications for forest conservation. His completed manuscript has been accepted for publication. Steffek plans to pursue a PhD in herpetology, specializing in the cognitive ecology, of reptiles.



*Makaylee
Stewart*

With her mentor Dr. Durmus Camlibel, Makaylee Stewart (Champaign, IL) examined stress and copying behaviors among social service workers who support at-risk youth. Passionate about raising awareness of mental health in law enforcement, Stewart plans to affect change by pursuing a PhD in criminal justice.

Introducing the 2023 McNair Cohort



Celebrating the completion of Presentation Week at the Fox River Brewing Company in Oshkosh!



Scholars participating in a McNair graduate school visit at the University of Minnesota!



Scholars building community at the Beyond Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience show in Green Bay!



Scholars getting ready to present at the 2023 Wisconsin McNair Research Summit, hosted at UW-Oshkosh!

Scholar Presentations: 2022 Cohort

2022 McNair Cohort:

The 2022 McNair cohort scholars Spring of 2023 presentations included:

- Research in the Rotunda in Madison (one scholar) (March 8, 2023)
- The 2023 National Council for Undergraduate Research (NCUR) Conference hosted at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. (April 12-15, 2023. Six scholars)
- WiSys Quick Pitch Competition: Lauren Blume (placed first) and Madyson Majewski (April 13 – 15, 2023)
- The annual Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Conference in Chicago (April 13 – 16, 2023. Two scholars)
- UWO's Celebration of Scholarship (April 27, 2023. Eleven scholars)

2023 McNair Cohort:

Twelve scholars completed the summer research internship and presented at the following conferences:

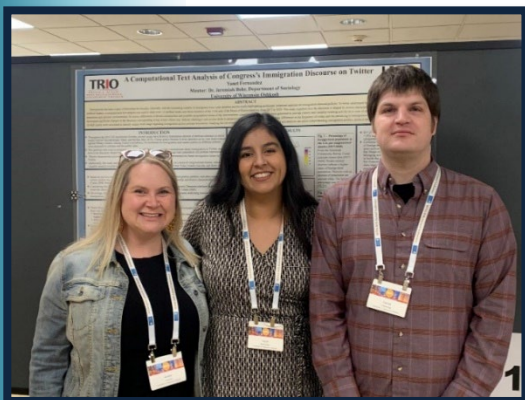
- University of Buffalo Undergraduate Conference – Virtual (July 19 – July 21, 2023)
- McNair Research Summit – University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh (August 10 – August 11, 2023)
- Annual McNair Showcase – UWO (September 26, 2023)



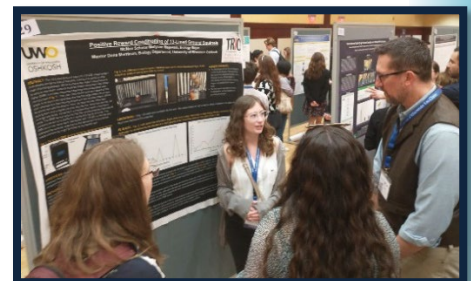
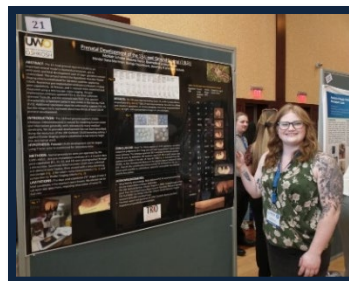
Yanet Fernandez at Research in the Rotunda with Dr. Jeremiah Bohr & Chancellor Leavitt



NCUR 2023: Dr. Belynda Pinkston, Anise Madeline Shipley, Lauren Blume, Sheiana Taylor, Madyson Majewski, Brittany Dupree, Moriah Weeks, and Cordelia Bowlus



Dr. Amber Lusvardi, UWO professor of political science) and McNair Scholars Yanet Fernandez and Daniel Cummings at the annual Midwest Political Association Conference in Chicago.



Sheiana Taylor (center) and Madyson Majewski (right), both mentees of Dr. Dana Merriman, presenting on research centered on ground squirrels at NCUR.

Scholar Presentations: 2023 Cohort

2023 McNair Cohort:

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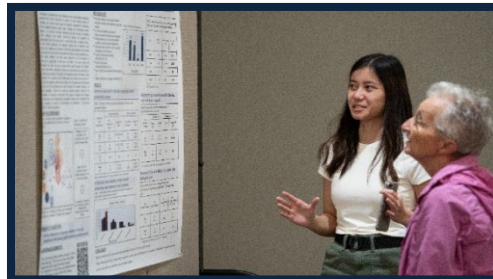
- University of Buffalo Undergraduate Conference – Virtual (July 19 – July 21, 2023)
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Kailey Freund at the McNair Research Summit.



Faith Lee at McNair Research Summit.



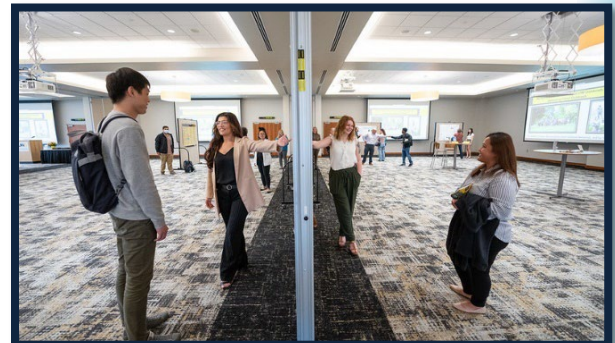
Danie Lodin at the McNair Showcase.



Fatima Muñoz at the McNair Showcase.



Juan Padilla and Dr. Carlos Salazar at the McNair Showcase.



Lydia Martinez (left) and Gillian Bellman (right) at the McNair Showcase.

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POST-BACCALAUREATE
ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

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#McNairScholars

Impact Statements

"If you're not comfortable with public speaking – and nobody starts out comfortable; you have to learn how to be comfortable – practice." Hillary Clinton

One of the great strengths of the McNair Program is that scholars are not only trained to conduct research and organize their thoughts on paper, but they learn, through numerous opportunities to present, how to articulate their research in a clear and concise manner. Each summer in late July, UWO McNair scholars participate in "Presentation Week." The first half of the week they present to and receive feedback from members of their cohort and faculty mentors. The second half of the week is spent attending the annual virtual SUNY Buffalo Undergraduate Research Conference, a "low-stakes" opportunity to practice presenting to a larger audience. Below are a few of the 2023 scholars' reflections on "Presentation Week."

"...I felt really good about 'Presentation Week' because it reminded me that my work is being applied towards something. There is a reason that this work is so important, and someone has to do it." – Geryd Steffek

"Now that this is over, I feel relieved and proud of myself and the cohort. It feels great to see where we all started and where we all are right now. I just need to remind myself to take a step back and breathe." – Faith Lee



"When I was done, I felt as if I grew 10 inches taller. In other words, I know that I am doing something right in this new path I am taking in my life as an undergrad." – Fatima Muñiz



"Overall, this conference squashed any concerns I had about my research and my abilities to present... My confidence has increased, and I have grown in my ability to internalize and apply feedback I receive." – Gillian Bellman

Scholars showing each other support virtually!

Congratulations to our 2023 UWO McNair Baccalaureate

Gillian Bellman
December 2023 Graduate
Major: Psychology
2022 and 2023 Cohorts



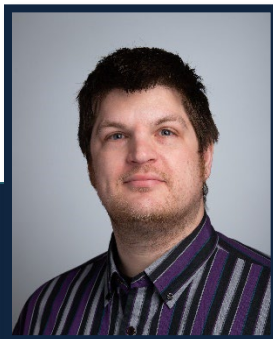
Bellman plans to pursue a PhD in social psychology. She has applied to multiple graduate programs and hopes to commence her studies in fall 2024.

Lauren Blume
May 2023 Graduate
Major: Psychology
2022 Cohort



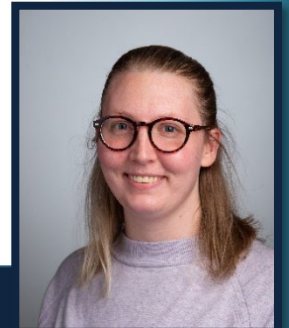
Congratulations to Blume who began pursuing a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy at Brenau in Gainesville, Georgia.

Daniel Cummings
May 2023 Graduate
Major: Sociology
2022 Cohort



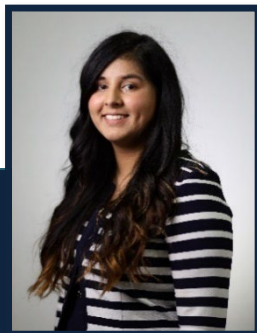
Congratulations to Cummings who began pursuing a PhD in sociology at the University at Buffalo SUNY in the fall of 2023. Daniel is the recipient of a five-year teaching assistantship that includes tuition remission for each academic year.

Brittany Dupree
December 2023 Graduate
Major: Biology with a focus on botany
2022 & 2023 Cohorts



Brittany Dupree will be taking a gap year in preparation to pursue a graduate degree in botany or horticulture.

Yanet Fernandez
December 2023 Graduate
Major: Mathematics
Minor: Sociology Certificate:
2022 Cohort



Yanet Fernandez is interested in pursuing a career in data science and is researching various graduate programs.

Kirandeep Kaur
May 2023 Graduate
Major: Biology
2021 Cohort



Kirandeep Kaur is taking a gap year to prepare to apply for medical school.

Madyson Majewski
December 2023 Graduate
Major: Biology
2022 Cohort

Madyson will take a gap year to explore various options including medical school.



Hector Ortega
May 2023 Graduate
Majors: Political Science & Philosophy
2021 Cohort

Hector Ortega has returned to the Madison area to gain some valuable work experience with RISE Wisconsin.



Mahad Osman
May 2023 Graduate
Major: Biology (Healthcare Emphasis)
2022 Cohort

Mahad Osman is taking a gap year to prepare to apply for medical school.



Anise Madeline Shipley
May 2023 Graduate
Major: Sociology
Minor: Certificate in Social Justice
Anise Madeline Shipley is taking time to gain valuable experience working in the non-profit sector for Christine Ann Domestic Abuse.

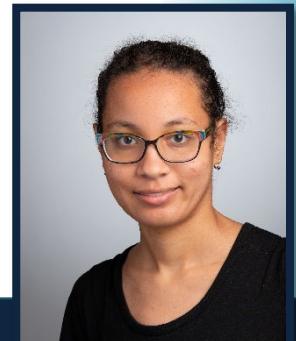


Sheiana Taylor
December 2023 Graduate
Major: Biology
2022 Cohort

Taylor is gaining valuable work experience as a laboratory tech at Options Lab in Appleton.



Moriah Weeks
May 2023 Graduate
Major: Environmental Science and Anthropology
2022 Cohort
Weeks is excited to be spending 2024 interning with the National Civilian Community Corps AmeriCorps!



You did it!
Congratulations



Alumni Spotlight: Amanda



We are proud to announce that 2019-2020 UWO McNair alumna Amanda Martinez has been recognized as one of Wisconsin's 40 Most Influential Latino Leaders. To quote Madison 365, the nonprofit that has recognized Ms. Martinez's work, "As a first-generation and proud daughter of immigrant parents, she was the first in her family to navigate various systems, learning firsthand how those systems often work against allowing communities of color and immigrant communities to thrive. These experiences inspired her to enter the field of social work. Amanda holds a Bachelor of Social Work from the UW-Oshkosh and Master of Social Work from the UW-Madison with a focus on child, youth, and family policy." Ms. Martinez is currently working for Kids Forward, a statewide "antiracist policy center that inspires action and advocates for children and families of color and those furthest from opportunity in Wisconsin." In her position as Policy and Engagement Coordinator for Northeast Wisconsin, she works to build meaningful relationships with community members, leaders, and organizations and to better understand the policy priorities of the community. In the future, Ms. Martinez hopes to continue to contribute to making Wisconsin a more equitable place to live for children and families of color.



KIDS FORWARD

Every Kid. Every Family. Every Community.

McNair Alumni News



Congratulations to 2016 McNair scholar Jordan Black (right center) who completed his Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) at Mississippi State Meridian. Once he has passed Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE), he will be a practicing physician's assistant.



Congratulations to 2021/22 McNair scholar Afton Greco (far right), who, together with her University of Pennsylvania cohort, passed her comprehensive exams and is a now PhD candidate. Best of luck to these students as they spend the next couple of years writing their dissertations.

McNair Alumni News



Congratulations to 2019 McNair scholar Malykee Hall for completing his Bachelor of Nursing at Arizona State in the fall of 2023. After completing a bachelor's in biology at UWO in 2020, Hall decided his passion lies in the field of nursing, so he enrolled in an accelerated, second baccalaureate program. He is excited to now be working as a registered nurse.



Congratulations to 2020 McNair scholar Dorothy Mitchell for completing her Master of Public Health at Louisiana State University in New Orleans in the fall of 2023.

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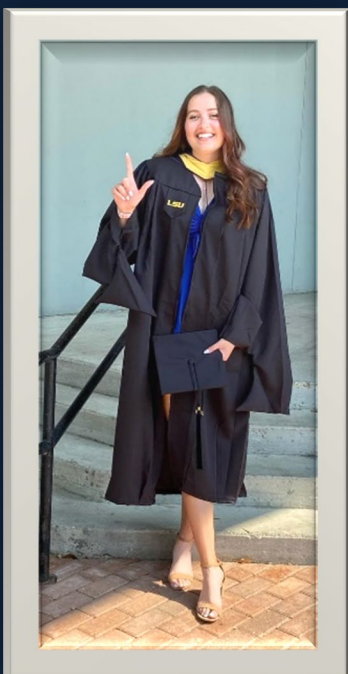
#TRIOworks
#McNairScholars

You did it!
Congratulations

McNair Alumni News



Congratulations to 2020-21 McNair scholar Jessica Plascencia who completed her master's in social work at the University of Wisconsin Green Bay in May of 2023! Plascencia is passionate about helping immigrants navigate the complex legal system. She is currently working at Luca L. Fagundes, Attorney & Counselor at Law, preparing clients' applications for work permits/visas.



Congratulations to 2019-2020 McNair scholar Brianna Roberts who completed her Master of Science in Athletic Training at the University of Louisiana in Baton Rouge.

Straight out graduate school, Roberts landed a job as an athletic trainer at Manhattanville College in New York. Part of her responsibility is to accompany men's basketball and lacrosse and women's volleyball and rugby teams as they compete up and down the East Coast. Roberts, who grew up in a single parent household in Beaver Dam, reflects: *"It's insane thinking about how far I've come and everything I've experienced so far. Very excited to see how far I'll be able to go and what opportunities I'll be able to experience in the future!"*

McNair Alumni News



Congratulations to Laura Sullivan 2014/15 McNair scholar who completed her Master of Public Health at UW Milwaukee in December 2023! She currently works for the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District as an environmental laboratory analyst. and chemical hygiene officer.

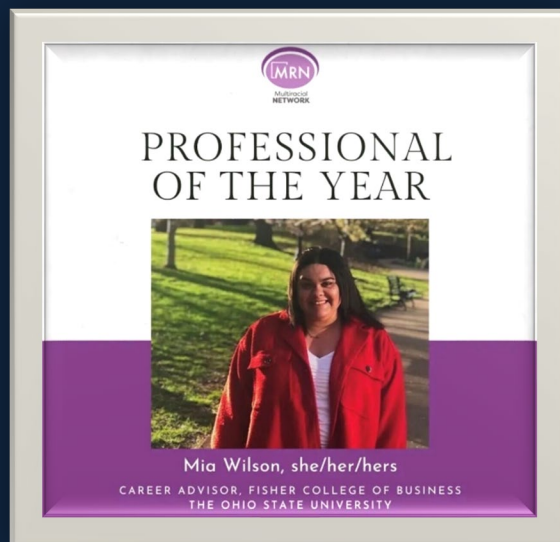


Congratulations to 2017/18 McNair scholar Sarah Reed Thryselius, who, as of the fall of 2023, has embarked on her journey to earn a PhD in public health at the Medical College of Wisconsin! After completing her Master of Public Health (MPH) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 2020, Reed took a couple of gap years to gain valuable experience working for the Ho-Chunk Nation as an epidemiologist. We wish her the best of luck in her new endeavor!

McNair Alumni News



Congratulations to 2015 McNair scholar Chelsea Vosters, who not only completed her Master of Social Work at Aurora University in 2023 but was hired right away at Rogers Behavioral Health, where she facilitates patient care within the Adult Partial Hospitalization Program, Depression Recovery. She is currently studying to become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.



Congratulations to 2019 McNair scholar Mia Wilson who was selected by the Multiracial Network within ACPA–College Student Educators International for their Professional of the Year award. Only two years out from having completed her Master of Higher Education & Student Affairs at Ohio State, Wilson recently accepted the position of Residence Life Coordinator at UW Milwaukee.

You did it!
Congratulations

Graduate Degrees Attained McNair Alumni

Completed Graduate School in 2023

1. **Jordan Black**
2016 McNair Cohort
2017 UWO Graduate
2023 MS Colorado State University
2023 Master of Physician's Assistant Studies, Mississippi State
2. **Dianna Luttenberger**
2017 McNair Cohort
2018 UWO Graduate
2023 Master of Health Care Administration, Colorado State University Global
3. **Jessica Placencia**
2020 McNair Cohort
2021 UWO Graduate
2023 (spring) MSW, UW-Green Bay
4. **Brianna Robert**
2020 McNair Cohort
2021 UWO Graduate
2023 (spring) MS Athletic Training, Louisiana State University
5. **Laura Sullivan**
2015 Cohort
2017 UWO Graduate
2023 (spring) MPH UW-Milwaukee
6. **Chelsea Vosters**
2015 McNair Cohort
2020 (fall) UWO Graduate
2023 MSW Aurora University

Thank You!

**Thank you to the 2023
McNair research
mentors and
support/instructional
staff!**

Support/Instructional Staff

Laura Jean Baker, PhD, *English*

McNair Writing Support

Jeremiah Bohr, PhD, *Sociology*

McNair Methods Instructor

Chelsy Cegielski, MBA,

Career and Professional Development

Theodore Mulvey, MLIS

Information Literacy Librarian

Faculty Mentors

Jeremiah Bohr, PhD, *Sociology*

Alper Camlibel, PhD, *Criminal Justice*

Linda Eroh, PhD, *Mathematics*

Maria Graf, PhD, *Nursing*

Christopher Groves, PhD, *Psychology*

Margaret Hostetler, PhD, *English*

Laura Ludwig, PhD, *Botany*

Shelly Michalski, PhD, *Molecular Microbiology*

Robert Mitchell, PhD, *Entomology*

Paul Perales, MSW, LCSW

Robert Stelzer, PhD, *Ecology*

Sabrina Mueller-Spitz, PhD, *Microbiology*

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 2023/2024, the UW Oshkosh McNair Scholars Program received \$272,364 in federal funds.

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