

Westminster College McNair Scholars Program

Fall 2008 Highlights



As we enter our second grant award cycle, we are proud to highlight the achievements of our scholars, past and present:

- ❖ Two of our 2008 graduates began graduate school this fall, as did two of our 2007 graduates. Nicole Nguyen (University of Utah 2008) begins a research-track PharmD at UCSF this fall, and Raquel Gabbitas (Westminster 2008) has started her doctoral program at the University of Minnesota's prestigious Institute of Child Development. Valerie Gonzales (Westminster 2007) entered pharmacy school at Creighton University and Solomon Awan (Westminster 2007) has begun an MBA at Westminster.
- ❖ Including our new graduate students, we now have 21 former McNair Scholars in graduate programs across the country and one in the Netherlands: 12 new or continuing doctoral students, 3 in Master's programs, 1 in a combined DMD/PhD program, and 5 in professional programs. Students attend schools such as UC Berkeley, Harvard, the University of Washington, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Northwestern, UC San Diego, Texas A & M, UC San Francisco, and the University of Minnesota. All students entering doctoral programs received full funding, with outstanding fellowships or assistantships and tuition waivers.
- ❖ **Congratulations to Mario Demetrios Castillo** (Westminster 2006) on receiving a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship. Mario will receive 3 years of funding at \$30,000 annually.
- ❖ **Dusty Moore** (Westminster 2008) spent the summer in Lausanne, Switzerland, having won a ThinkSwiss Fellowship to perform stem cell research.

***Congratulations!* on receiving graduate degrees in 2007-08 goes to:**

- ❖ **Sarah Janel Jackson** (University of Utah 2005) received her Master's degree in communication from the University of Michigan; her doctoral work continues at the University of Minnesota.
- ❖ **Augustino Mayai** (University of Utah 2006) received his Master's degree in sociology (demographics) from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and continues in the doctoral program.
- ❖ **Jaymes Myers** (University of Utah 2006) received his Master's degree in communication from the University of Utah and has moved on to a doctoral program at Arizona State University.
- ❖ **Laura Richey** (Westminster 2005) received her Master's degree in behavioral neuroscience from SUNY Binghamton.
- ❖ **Kasey Serdar** (Westminster 2006) completed her Master's in counseling psychology and continues in the doctoral program at Virginia Commonwealth University. She especially enjoys her clinical internships.

Previously earned Master's degrees:

- ❖ **Sara Hogan** (University of Utah 2005) was awarded a Master of Health Science in Health Policy with a certificate in Health Disparities and Health Inequalities from the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health. She also served as a student assembly representative, alumni liaison, and the treasurer for the Black Graduate Student Association
- ❖ **James Moreno** (University of Utah 2005) earned his Master's degree in performance studies in June 2006, and continues in his doctoral program at Northwestern University.
- ❖ **Amaita Livoyochi** and **Carla Valencia** earned their MBA degrees in 2007.

Other accomplishments:

- ❖ **Kareen Limansky** (Westminster) was awarded a Gilman Scholarship by the U.S. Department of State for her spring 2008 study abroad in Grenoble, France. **Sadaf Baghbani** and **Kathleen Tedford** (both University of Utah) were afforded wonderful opportunities to study abroad during spring 2007 semester. They traveled to South Africa and India, respectively. Sadaf participated in the COE/ Michigan State University program in Durban, South Africa.

- ❖ 39 scholars have received their baccalaureate degrees: Kon Garang Akoy, Solomon Awan, Natasha Ball, Priscilla Felix Cabral, Mario Castillo, Jesika Chavez, Summer Christiansen, Krystle Cook, Asia Ferrin, Raquel Gabbitas, James Garang, Valerie Gonzales, Joshua Graehl, Anya Gurholt, Moana Hansen, Hassan Hassan, Sara Hogan, Sarah Jackson, Amaita Livoyochi, Augustino Mayai, James Moreno, Dusty Moore, Jaymes Myers, Nicole Nguyen, Reece Peck, Dan Perez, Koa Perlac, Thomas Pham, Josh Plant, Laura Richey, Nissa Roper, Kasey Serdar, Aliesha Shaw, Nakita Swanigan, Kathleen Tedford, Carla Valencia, Ernesto Varela, Stacy VanWinkle, & Tamara Villa.
- ❖ The Westminster McNair program has had **4 UCAMHE scholarship winners** – Mario Castillo, Hassan Hassan, Aliesha Shaw, and August Mayai. In addition, Erica Rojas was a 2008 recipient of the **Utah ASPIRE Scholarship**. These funds helped support her summer study abroad in Chile.

Services to Scholars

- ❖ For each of the past five summers, 14 scholars have engaged in faculty mentored research projects and received stipends of up to \$2800.
- ❖ 51 scholars have presented research at conferences including: the McNair Scholars Symposium at UC Berkeley; the University of Maryland McNair Scholars Conference; the National McNair Conference in Delavan, Wisconsin; the University of Delaware McNair Scholars Conference; AAAS; the National Conference on Undergraduate Research; and the Undergraduate Literature Conference at Weber State University.
- ❖ 51 scholars have visited graduate schools such as: Stanford, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz, New York University, Columbia University, UCSF, Howard University, University of Maryland, College Park, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Johns Hopkins, University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University, and Northwestern University.
- ❖ 51 scholars have received GRE test preparation, with half-price test vouchers available from ETS.
- ❖ 53 scholars have attended a two-day *Summer Institute* on graduate school preparation.
- ❖ 60 scholars have attended workshops on topics including: *Career Success, Time Management & Study Skills, Information Literacy, Fellowships and Financial Aid, Personal Finances, Writing a CV, Writing Personal Statements*.
- ❖ Scholars also receive intake assessments; tutoring as needed; academic planning, tracking, & mentoring; assistance with graduate school admission and financial aid; cultural events.

A few words from recent McNair scholars:

What have you gained from the McNair program?

- ❖ I have gained so much from the McNair Program. I have been able to open and expand my mind to possibilities and realities that I never even dreamed of.
- ❖ The things I have gained have exceeded my expectations. I am thankful and humbled by my experience with this program.
- ❖ Too much to write down in a few sentences. I gained mentors, friends, resources, self-knowledge, and admission into a top-notch institution. This would NOT have been possible without my participation in the McNair Program.
- ❖ McNair greatly influenced my decision in that I now know that I am capable of being accepted to a grad school program and financing a program. Also, the support and encouragement made me realize that I can do so much more with my life, my education, and my career than I had thought.
- ❖ I feel very fortunate to be a McNair Scholar and I know that it will continue to help me in the future. I now look forward to grad school and know I will never forget the assistance and encouragement I received from the McNair program...
- ❖ Being a McNair Scholar has truly changed my life.
- ❖ This program is almost too good to be true.

