Westminster College McNair Scholars Program
Fall 2016 Highlights

Now in our 14th year of services, we are proud to highlight the achievements of our scholars, past and present:

Congratulations 2015 - 2016 graduates! From Westminster College: Abby Steven Arellanes, Karissa Killian, Kevin Martinez, Katie McLean, Lisa Molina, Stephen Tahan, and Tashelle Wright. From the University of Utah: Brianda De Leon, Elizabeth Gamarra, Quan Le, Melissa Puga, and Giulia Soto.

We also extend our congratulations to the nine new grads who are entering graduate school in fall 2016. The degrees they seek, departments, and institutions are:

**Brianda De Leon:** M.Ed. in Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of Utah
**Elizabeth Gamarra:** MSW at the University of Utah
**Quan Le:** MS in Civil Engineering at the University of Utah
**Kevin Martinez:** M.Ed. in Education, Culture, and Society at the University of Utah
**Katie McLean:** PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Michigan
**Lisa Molina:** M.Ed. in Education, Culture, and Society at the University of Utah
**Giulia Soto:** MS.Ed. in International Educational Development at the University of Pennsylvania
**Stephen Tahan:** PhD in immunology at Washington University in St. Louis
**Tashelle Wright:** PhD in public health at the University of California, Merced

Additionally, Abby Steven Arellanes and Melissa Puga have deferred their offers of graduate admission until the 2017-18 academic year. Steven will earn a PhD in sociology at the North Carolina State University, and Melissa will earn a PhD in the department of Materials Science & Engineering at Northwestern University.

Several students received prestigious fellowships for graduate school. Lisa Molina was awarded the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship from the University of Utah Center for Latin American Studies. Katie McLean and Melissa Puga were both awarded Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) Fellowships from the National Science Foundation (NSF); Katie was also awarded the Rackham Merit Fellowship from her graduate institution, the University of Michigan. Finally, Stephen Tahan received an Honorable Mention in the GRFP competition.

77% (96/124) of our graduates have attained an advanced degree and/or are currently in graduate programs.

Congratulations! To those who earned graduate degrees in the 2015 - 2016 academic year:

**Merima Beganović (Westminster 2014)** earned her MSEng in Energy, Environmental, and Chemical Engineering from Washington University in St. Louis.
**Jessica Bustamante (Westminster 2015)** earned her MAT from Westminster College and is now teaching at Clayton Middle School in Salt Lake City.
**Duke Cruz (Westminster 2013)** received his MA in philosophy at Ohio University this summer. He is now beginning doctoral study at the University of Missouri, where he was awarded the McNair Fellowship as well as the Kline Fellowship.
**Yvonne Clark (Westminster 2013)** completed her MS in communication at the University of Utah (critical/cultural studies emphasis), and has begun an accelerated MFA in creative writing at National University.
**Melissa Dalton (Suy) (University of Utah 2011)** completed her MA in communication and continues in the doctoral program at the University of Texas at Austin.
**Asia Ferrin (Westminster 2007)** earned her PhD in philosophy from the University of Washington in May 2016. Asia is a Visiting Assistant Professor at Kansas State University for the 2016-17 academic year.
**Nicole Francisco (University of Utah 2012)** earned a master’s degree in political science from the University of Oregon where they continue in the doctoral program.
**Nicholas Gailey (Westminster 2013)** received his master’s in experimental psychology (industrial and organizational psychology emphasis) from Washington State University, where he continues in the PhD program.
Nichole Garcia (University of Utah 2010) earned her PhD in Social Sciences and Comparative Education at UCLA and has now started a three-year postdoctoral fellowship at the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education.

Fayce (Courtney) Hammond (Westminster 2014) earned her master’s degree from The Ohio State University Department of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

Moana Hansen (University of Utah 2008) received her MPA from the University of Utah.

Helen Makhdoumian (Westminster 2014) earned her MA in English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she continues in the doctoral program.

Paige Martínez (Westminster 2014) earned her MS in social psychology from the University of Connecticut.

Domingo Madrigal (Westminster 2014) earned his MFA in creative writing from the University of Texas at Austin.

Eduardo Reyes Chavez (University of Utah 2012) achieved his dream by earning his JD from Northwestern University School of Law.

Wendolens Ruano Zazueta (University of Utah 2014) received her M.Ed. from the University of Utah Department of Educational Leadership and Policy.

Seleste Sanchez (Weber State 2009) received her MA in anthropology from Indiana University.

Faith Martinez Smith (Westminster 2013) completed her dual degree program at the University of Texas at Austin, earning master’s degrees in Earth and Energy Resources and Global Policy Studies.

Jayci Robb (Westminster 2010) earned her PhD in rehabilitation counseling from the University of Arizona.

Carla Suarez Pickett (University of Utah 2011) earned her DO from Rowan University (The Medical College of New Jersey) and is now working on her medical residency in Ohio.

Congratulations! to alumni for the following accomplishments:

Helen Makhdoumian (Westminster 2014) has had an article accepted for publication in the journal *Studies in American Indian Literatures* (SAIL).

Chrono Nu (Westminster 2015) received both an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship and the Department of Defense National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate Fellowship. He will use these to continue his doctoral work in the Biomedical Engineering department at the University of Michigan.

Dr. Reece Peck (Westminster 2004) was recently awarded a contract with Cambridge University Press for his book on Fox News.

Erica Rojas (University of Utah 2009, Dec. 2013 for MPA) is beginning her PhD in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of Utah.


Robin Renée Smith (Westminster 2013) has published an article in collaboration with her McNair mentor, Dr. Marilee Coles-Ritchie. “Taking the Risk to Engage in Race Talk: Professional Development in Elementary Schools” appeared in the June 2016 issue of *International Journal of Inclusive Education*; it is based on Robin’s summer 2012 research in the McNair Scholars Program.

Ethel Tackie-Yarboi (Westminster College, Dec. 2013) has received four years’ of funding through the Northern Ohio AGEP Alliance to continue her PhD in medicinal chemistry at the University of Toledo.

McNair Scholars answer: What have you gained from the McNair program?

“My life was totally changed by this program. My family’s lives have been changed. I have gained access to a career path I didn’t know existed.”

“Support, knowledge, confidence. Without McNair I would not be going to grad school.”

“Incredible opportunities, preparation for success in graduate school, lifelong friends, support, a family away from home, confidence, guidance, and wonderful memories. McNair services always exceeded my imagination.”

*In FY 2016-17, the Westminster College McNair Scholars Program is funded at approximately $341,000. Of this amount, $231,000 (68%) is an annual grant from the U. S. Department of Education. Westminster College provides the remaining 32% by contributing over $110,000 of support each year, with assistance from the Henry W. and Leslie M. Eskuche Foundation.*