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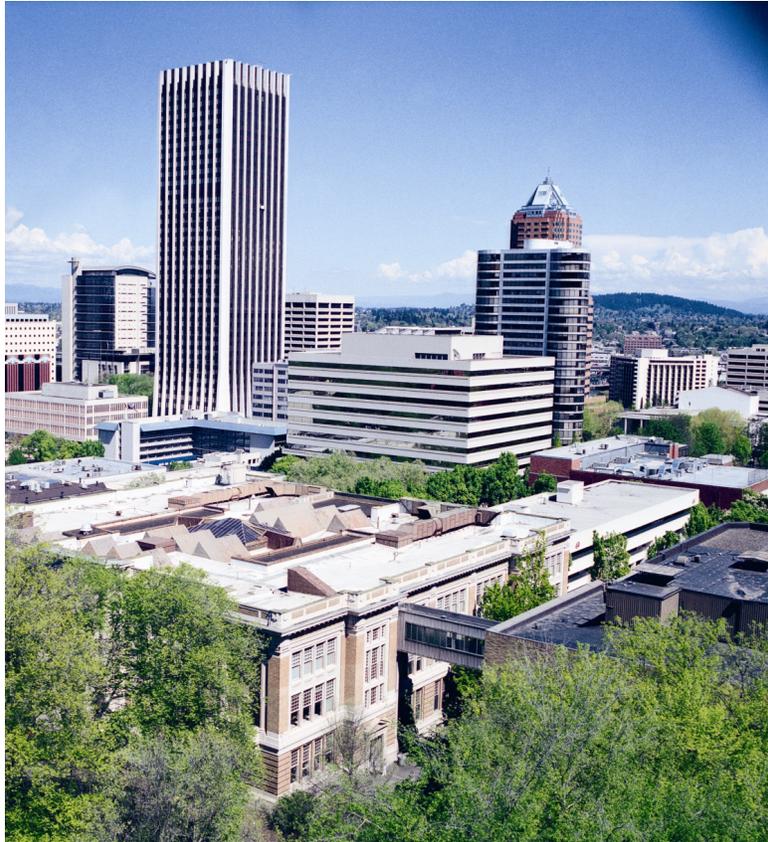
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CHALLENGING PARADIGMS

New Frontiers in Undergraduate Research

2006-2008 McNair Scholars Online Journal



The Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program at Portland State University (PSU) works with motivated and talented undergraduates who want to pursue PhDs. It introduces juniors and seniors who are first-generation and low-income, and/or members of under-represented groups to academic research and to effective strategies for getting into and graduating from PhD programs.

The McNair Scholars Program has academic-year activities and a full-time summer research internship. Scholars take academic and skills-building seminars and workshops during the year, and each scholar works closely with a faculty mentor on original research in the summer. Scholars present their research findings at the McNair Summer Symposium and at other conferences, and are encouraged to publish their papers in the McNair Journal and other scholarly publications.

The Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program was established in 1986 by the U.S. Department of Education and named in honor of Challenger Space Shuttle astronaut Dr. Ronald E. McNair. The program, which is in its seventh year on campus, is funded by a \$924,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education and institutional cost-share funds.

The McNair Scholars Program's student-centered approach relies heavily on faculty and university commitment. Activities and opportunities provided by the program focus on building a positive academic community for the scholars while they are undergraduates at PSU.

RONALD E. MCNAIR



Ronald Erwin McNair was born October 21, 1950 in Lake City, South Carolina. While in junior high school, Dr. McNair was inspired to work hard and persevere in his studies by his family and by a teacher who recognized his scientific potential and believed in him. Dr. McNair graduated as valedictorian from Carver High School in 1967. In 1971, he graduated magna cum laude and received a bachelor of science degree in Physics from North Carolina A&T State University (Greensboro). Dr. McNair then enrolled in the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1976, at the age of 26, he earned his Ph.D. in laser physics. His dissertation was titled, "Energy Absorption and Vibrational Heating in Molecules Following Intense Laser Excitation." Dr. McNair was presented an

honorary doctorate of Laws from North Carolina A&T State University in 1978, an honorary doctorate of Science from Morris College in 1980, and an honorary doctorate of science from the University of South Carolina in 1984.

While working as a staff physicist with Hughes Research Laboratory, Dr. McNair soon became a recognized expert in laser physics. His many distinctions include being a Presidential Scholar (1971-74), a Ford Foundation Fellow (1971-74), a National Fellowship Fund Fellow (1974-75), and a NATO Fellow (1975). He was also a sixth degree black belt in karate and an accomplished saxophonist. Because of his many accomplishments, he was selected by NASA for the space shuttle program in 1978. His first space shuttle mission launched successfully from Kennedy Space Center on February 3, 1984. Dr. Ronald E. McNair was the second African American to fly in space. Two years later he was selected to serve as mission specialist aboard the ill-fated U.S. Challenger space shuttle. He was killed instantly when the Challenger exploded one minute, thirteen seconds after it was launched. Dr. McNair was posthumously awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor. After his death in the Challenger Space Shuttle accident on January 28, 1986, members of Congress provided funding for the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program. Their goal was to encourage low-income and first-generation college students, and students from historically underrepresented ethnic groups to expand their educational opportunities by enrolling in a Ph.D. program and ultimately pursue an academic career. This program is dedicated to the high standards of achievement inspired by Dr. McNair's life.

Source: mcnairscholars.com

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Acknowledgements

SHAWN SMALLMAN, PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR



The Vice Provost for Instruction and Dean of Undergraduate Education, Shawn Smallman oversees the nationally acclaimed University Studies program, University Honors, the military GOLD program, the Center for Academic Excellence, and is a professor of International Studies. He is the institutional accreditation liaison officer and has expertise in institutional assessment and learning outcomes.

He received his PhD. in history from Yale University. He has published numerous articles on military corruption and political terror in Latin America, as well as undergraduate education and energy security. His first book, *Fear and Memory in the Brazilian Army and Society, 1889-1954*, received many positive reviews. His second book, *A History of AIDS in Latin America*, was recently published by the University of North Carolina Press.

Vice Provost Smallman's areas of interest are the global AIDS epidemic, human rights issues, modern Canada, modern Brazil, the Amazon Rainforest, U.S.-Latin American Relations, and indigenous language preservation. Vice Provost Smallman is a board member of the Security and Defense Studies Review.

2006 - 2008 MCNAIR PROGRAM STAFF

Toeutu Faaleava

Director

Dr. Faaleava specializes in community mobilization and capacity building. His research interests are in reclaiming indigenous voices, spaces, scholarship and resistance. He teaches in University Studies and works with Pacific Islander communities in Portland. He holds a PhD in Ethnic Studies, JD, MA, and BA from the University of California, Berkeley, an MPA from Harvard University and a BS from Southern Illinois University.

Jolina Kwong

Program Coordinator

Jolina is a Doctor of Education student in the Educational Leadership Program at Portland State University. Her research interests include first generation college students' experiences at large metropolitan universities, as well as student development and leadership. Outside of the office and the classroom, she enjoys jogging around her Southeast Portland neighborhood with her dog, Hooligan.

Amrina Sugaipova

2006 Graduate Assistant

Amrina received her BA in Business and English from Lithuania College in Klaipeda, Lithuania. She is working on an MA in international Conflict Resolution at Portland State University. She enjoys studying languages and learning about other cultures.

Tyanne Conner

2008 Graduate Assistant

Tyanne Conner received her BS from PSU after a five-year break in her education. In 2006 she completed the McNair program and that experience convinced her graduate school was a possibility. Her thesis focuses on the experiences of former McNair scholars. She hopes to add to the body of knowledge in the area of student retention and to enhance programs that assist first-generation and under-represented students. In her free time she does photography, and likes to cross-country ski, hike in the mountains, knit hats and scarves for friends and family, and create original masterpieces in the kitchen.

Foday Darboe

2008 Graduate Assistant

Foday Darboe received his BA in Political Science and International Studies (Cum Laude) from Portland State University. He is currently a graduate student in MA in Conflict Resolution with emphasis on International Conflict Resolution. His research interests include contemporary African politics, the African Union (AU) and international relations and cooperation. He plans to

pursue a PhD in International Relations and Politics. He enjoys blogging, politics, current events, traveling and soccer.

Holly Hernandez
2008 Graduate Assistant

Holly Hernandez received her BS in Child and Family Studies from Portland State University. She is working on her Masters degree in Social Work at Portland State. Holly intends to pursue a PhD in social work. She plans on attending UC Berkeley or the University of Washington. Current research interests include the prison industrial complex, maternal incarceration, recidivism rates among mothers, reunification programs, and children with incarcerated parents. In her spare time she enjoys spending time with friends and family, reading, traveling and dancing.

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