TRIO

RONALD E. MCNAIR
POST BACCALAUREATE
ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

Mentor Guide

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CWU | Central Washington University

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McNair Scholars Program
Faculty Mentor Guide

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Preface
Thank you for agreeing to serve as Mentors in the Ronald E. McNair Program. In this short guide we have attempted to provide background on the McNair Program, to list some characteristics of our students, and to discuss some of the responsibilities of the McNair Mentors. We look forward to working with you in the project of helping our students in their development as Scholars.

The Program

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Program Goal:

The explicit goal of the mentoring process is to impart skills that Scholars will need to excel in graduate school, but implicitly, the mentoring process also provides Scholars with a professional role model.

The goal of the program is to assist Scholars to enter doctoral studies by providing the opportunity for seminars regarding entrance into graduate school, assistance with graduate school applications, a research fellowship that exposes them to graduate-level expectations, and a close working relationship with a faculty Mentor. The intent of the federal legislation that authorizes this program is to promote diversity in academia at the professoriate level. The Ronald E. McNair Program is funded under the U.S. Department of Education. The CWU Program is one of 158 across the country, and one of four in Washington, at four-year institutions of higher education.

Applying and getting into graduate school is an extremely competitive and time-consuming process for any undergraduate student. The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program provides training and financial support for Scholars to complete their undergraduate degrees and enter a graduate degree program. Two-thirds of our funding is earmarked for low-income, first generation college students regardless of ethnic background, and one-third is geared toward minority students regardless of their income or parents' education. Often our Scholars meet all criteria.

The Mentors

Specific Requirements of the Mentor

These requirements are modeled on the McNair Research Mentor Agreement. The Teaching Mentor requirements are slightly different as they pertain to teaching experience rather than research experience.

 Attend a **general orientation** meeting with McNair Staff for each year in which you have a new scholar.

 If human or animal subjects are to be used, help scholar complete a **human subjects protocol** or an **animal subjects protocol** as early as possible

 Meet with the Scholar as soon as possible in his/her 1st year of the Program to discuss an internship **topic**, and to direct the Scholar to the appropriate literature.

 Work with the Faculty Coordinator during the proposal phase of the research project (see the guidelines at the end of this handbook). **Help the Scholar to understand the need for multiple input and criticism.**

 Meet with the Scholar regularly during the academic year to discuss academic progress toward the undergraduate degree and progress toward entering graduate school.

 Assist the Scholar in **identifying appropriate graduate programs**.

 During the **summer**, serve as a Mentor to the Scholar during the Research Fellowship, preferably meeting with the Scholar on a weekly basis.

 During the summer research, **sign and assess** the Scholar's **Time and Effort Sheet**, (the Scholar is responsible for submitting the timesheet to the McNair Office).

 When data collection is complete, meet with the Scholar to outline the process of the **final write-up**. Minimum, this will comprise a SOURCE-ready abstract.

 Provide guidance to the Scholar in **preparing a presentation** of the research at SOURCE, **and** at a professional meeting or a national undergraduate conference, including a McNair Conference. While presentation at SOURCE is required, we encourage, and help fund, travel to present at a professional conference.

 Report any concerns to either the director or faculty coordinator. Regularly update McNair staff on your scholar's status.

Research Mentors are strongly encouraged to:

 Attend a professional conference with Scholars (helping them to "network" with other researchers in their discipline).

In addition to the general expectations, experienced CWU McNair Mentors have this advice to add:

1. Understand where your Scholars are in the McNair Scholars Program Schedule (included at the back of this handbook) and encourage and facilitate meeting the deadlines.

2. Help your Scholars to understand the complementary roles that the McNair staff (especially the Faculty Coordinator), the Scholar, and you play – and how to handle multiple sources of constructive criticism.

3. Provide an overview of the planned summer project that is clear and workable, with explicit timelines.

4. Model and expect quality scholarship and professionalism.

5. Meet with the Scholars regularly and "pick their brains" for their level of understanding.

What are The McNair Program's definitions and expectations of Faculty Mentors?

Mentors are an essential part of The McNair Program at Central Washington University. Research Mentors are provided with stipends to help support their mentees on their research and graduate school applications. There are Research Associate mentors who work with scholars on projects that the mentor has in progress. Research Associates commit 135 hours to the project, typically over a six-week period. There are also Research Fellow mentors who work with scholars to develop a 270-hour summer project. The development starts the previous fall when a topic is chosen, and continues in the winter when a detailed proposal is written. Teaching mentorships are an optional feature of the McNair program.

Research Fellow Mentors engage Scholars in the process of conducting undergraduate research from the literature review or bibliography in the fall, the proposal in the winter, research and data-collection in the summer, then to actually producing a research paper. The paper is then groomed for presentation in some format (e.g., a poster, a panel discussion, or a talk) at a professional conference and SOURCE. The Research Mentors are eligible for an $900 travel stipend.

The Mentor can be a critical bridge between the Scholar and graduate education by guiding the Scholar in the process of **selecting a graduate program** and school. Even a Mentor's telephone call to a colleague at a graduate program to assist a Scholar in visiting a school can open up a new opportunity. Hopefully, the relationship established between Scholar and Mentor will flourish throughout the Scholar's undergraduate career and contact will continue, perhaps even through the doctorate.

Mentor Funding:

This year, Research Mentors may receive up to $900 to finance Mentor travel to **accompany** a Scholar to a professional conference where he or she will present results of McNair-supported summer research. Likewise, with the Mentor's approval, the funds are often reallocated towards Scholar expenses. For example, monies can be used for materials related to the McNair research (e.g., equipment, books, photocopying), for production of presentations such as posters, or for general Scholar travel to visit graduate schools.

Purchasing items for the scholar research projects: Most departments take care of the purchases and utilize charge/credits, initiated by the Department Secretary and sent to the McNair Office. We are able to make some purchases directly for the Scholars using our department ProCard. HSRC and Animal Subject approvals must be included when necessary with the charge/credit before the Grants Office can approve the fund transfer.

Three things to remember:

1. All purchases must be pre-approved by the Director and **remember that our program works on a federal fiscal year (October-September).**

2. Timeline of Funds Availability:
    Mentor Funds are available beginning summer session when scholar begins his or her research and must be spent by the end of spring quarter the following year or when the scholar graduates from Central Washington University, whichever comes first.

3. Travel:
    If you wish to, or plan to, attend a conference/seminar or other event, you MUST submit a Travel Authorization request at least two weeks prior to travel. Contact Andrea for assistance, Andrea.Whitemarsh@cwu.edu.

The Scholar-Mentor Relationship

Some priorities for the mentoring relationship

- ❖ To respect Scholars as students (remember they are advanced undergraduates with high academic potential),

- ❖ To encourage sharing of ideas, experiences, and ethics,

- ❖ To guide Scholars toward professional development by allowing them to define their research and solve their own problems, and by urging them to attend conferences and to publish,

- ❖ To provide opportunities to get to know one another as people and as professionals,

- ❖ To create intellectual challenges and to make standards clear through open, frequent, and consistent communication,

Building the Mentoring Relationship: Some Practical Suggestions for Mentors

 📖 Set a **regular meeting time** and **clarify expectations** regarding your schedule and how much time and guidance you are prepared to offer.

 📖 **Monitor** your Scholars' educational progress. (As faculty, you can access transcripts and credit evaluations that can be immensely helpful to the student who is seriously working toward the goal of a graduate degree.)

 📖 **Be aware of resources for academic referrals**, and know how and when to make them. Try to determine causes for deficits in academic performance and direct the student to an appropriate support service. If possible, have him/her contact the referral service in your presence.

 📖 **Critique** your Scholars' curriculum vitae.

 📖 **Introduce your Scholars** to other faculty members and graduate students in the department. Let them know that your Scholars are interested in doctoral study.

 📖 **Suggest readings** you think will be of interest to your Scholars.

 📖 Talk about graduate school and research experiences.

 📖 Contact potential graduate schools and former colleagues and tell them about your Scholars. **Make formal or informal recommendations for the students** to faculty at other institutions.

 📖 **Assist with graduate school applications**. Help your Scholars define and articulate goals. Read and proofread their personal goal statements.

 📖 Involve your Scholars in research and dissemination of results through publication and presentation.

 📖 Invite your Scholars to social events or after-hours get-togethers.

Issues and challenges mentoring may present

- How close can the mentoring relationship become before the Mentor loses the ability to make objective evaluations of the Scholar's work or before the Scholar confuses the Mentor's role as more of a friend than an academic mentor?

- How can problems in the research project be resolved without damaging the Mentor/Scholar relationship?

- How involved should a Mentor become in a Scholar's personal life?

- How involved should a Mentor become in a Scholar's research project?

- How can Mentors be recognized in their departments and in the university?

- How can I mentor a student who doesn't meet all my expectations?

Such problems are fairly common occurrences. Should you experience any of these or other challenges, please do not hesitate to contact either the Director or Faculty Coordinator. We will be happy to discuss these issues with you or to put you in touch with another mentor who has dealt with similar issues.

The Scholars

Profile of First-generation students

- First-generation students are more likely to be **older**, have lower incomes, be married, and **have dependents** than their non-first-generation peers.

- First-generation students are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education **part-time**, and to attend public 2-year institutions; private, for-profit institutions; and other less-than-4-year institutions than their non-first-generation counterparts.

- First-generation students are equally as likely to be taking remedial classes as non-first-generation students when they began their postsecondary education. However, there are differences by sector on this measure. At private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions, first-generation students were more likely to be taking remedial courses than their counterparts whose parents had more than a high school education. At the same time, the proportions of first-generation and non-first-generation students at public 4-year and public 2-year institutions taking remedial coursework did not differ significantly.

- First-generation students are **more likely than non-first-generation students to say that being very well off financially** and providing their children with better opportunities than they had were **very important to them personally**.

- First-generation students are also more likely to say that obtaining the amount of financial aid they needed, being able to complete coursework more quickly, being able to live at home, and being able to work while attending the school were very important influences in their decision to attend their particular postsecondary institution.

- First-generation students **persisted in postsecondary education and attained credentials at lower rates** than their non-first-generation counterparts. This finding held for students at 4-year institutions and public 2-year institutions.

- **Participating in a Mentor relationship mitigates many of these factors.**

Recruitment

Scholars are recruited in various ways. Information is disseminated to campus departments, to individual classes, to faculty functions, and via email, to name only a few. Qualified students then apply on a rolling basis. The Advisory Board interviews the applicants. The Advisory Board and the McNair staff select the new cohort after these interviews.

Qualifications for Scholar Selection:
  Scholars may be selected from **one of two federally-legislated groups:**

1. ***First-generation, low-income students.***
   No less than two-thirds of our Scholars must come from this group. (First generation is defined as students whose parents or guardians have not obtained a four-year undergraduate degree, and low-income is defined by annual levels set by the U.S. Department of Education.)

2. ***Minorities underrepresented in doctoral programs.***
   No more than one-third of the Scholars will qualify for the program based on their status as ethnic minority students underrepresented in doctoral studies (Black or African-American, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander).

Criteria for Scholar Selection:
  The U.S. Department of Education sets the parameters for selection of McNair Scholars. All candidates must meet the following criteria:

1. Be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident
2. Have a major G.P.A. of 3.1 or higher and cumulative G.P.A. of 2.9
3. Have a commitment to obtain a doctoral degree (Ph.D.). The program does not support students who desire a professional degree (J.D., M.D., etc.), unless it is part of a Ph.D. joint-degree program.
4. Have completed 90 credits *before the summer research fellowship* and not graduate until after completion of the final write-up of their McNair research project. A student may be selected as a Scholar and participate in activities/seminars etc. with fewer than 90 credits, and a student may complete all the requirements for the degree and participate in the summer research project by deferring graduation until Summer session.

How does The McNair Program support Scholars?

The McNair Program works with Scholars in cohort groups. These cohorts can vary in size, but are usually between 12-20 students. Each year the federal grant allots sufficient funds to sponsor Scholars in an **undergraduate research project**. These funds provide training, experience, and living stipends for the Scholars.

The McNair Staff works with Scholars by providing them with general research methodology training, portfolio development, GRE preparation, financial assistance for travel to visit graduate schools and to participate in conferences, and other resources. These benefits are available from the time Scholars enter our program until they graduate from an undergraduate institution. We are then responsible for tracking these Scholars until they obtain a doctoral degree. Annually renewed federal funding depends upon the number of Scholars enrolled in doctoral programs, and other objectives stated in the grant.

If Scholars enter the McNair Program in the fall, they are guided through how to find an appropriate mentor in McNair 301. During MCNA 395, taken the winter quarter before the summer research fellowship, scholars compose their research proposal. This is 6-8 pages

typically and formatted per our guidelines. Students will also take the McNair Seminars (MCNA 302 & 303) in the spring of their first year and the fall of their second year. The first (302) is designed to introduce students to the process of selecting graduate school programs, the kind of commitment graduate study entails and how to discern resources for success at their chosen graduate institution. The second (303) is geared toward finalizing their grad school applications.

Scholars' funding for travel and research is contingent upon their successful completion of the courses.

Getting Your Scholar into Graduate School

School Choice
Several factors are involved in helping Scholars to choose potential graduate schools. The McNair Scholars Program can provide arrangements for Scholars to visit schools, but Mentors should help scholars with their decision about which schools to visit and programs to which they might apply. Here are some points to consider when helping Scholars make these decisions:

1. What type of atmosphere will be most conducive to your Scholar's success: a small or a large school; a rural or urban school; a school close by or far away?

2. Should your Scholar attempt a master's degree at a smaller institution before going on to their doctoral studies?

3. Do you have colleagues at institutions with whom you would like your Scholar to work?

5. Do you know particular departments that are working on research similar to your Scholar's?

6. What types of funding are available?

Characteristics of Successful Graduate Students
Descutner and Thelen (1989) asked 79 faculty members from 9 graduate programs to rate (6 point scale) the characteristics of successful graduate students. Here are some of the characteristics and their average ratings listed in decreasing order of importance (most important at the top):

Working hard	**5.60**
Getting along with other people	**5.17**
Writing ability	**4.83**
Research skills/experience	**4.74**
Handling stress	**4.72**
Discipline	**4.64**
Good grades	**4.61**
High intelligence	**4.53**
Empathy	**4.48**
Mentor relationship	**4.39**
Creativity	**3.69**

Herbstrith, Mauer, & Appleby (1990) did a similar study with 143 graduate programs and found very similar results.

> **Motivated and hardworking**
> **Scholarly ability**
> **Research skills**
> **Emotional stability**
> **Writing skills**
> **Speaking skills**
> **Teaching potential**
> **Works well with others**

These are the characteristics you want to instill in your Scholars. As you know, a 9-5 day and a 9-5 work ethic will not cut it in graduate school. We need to emphasize that fact.

Writing Letters of Recommendation

As a Mentor, you will be asked to write letters of recommendation for your Scholars. Surveys of graduate school faculty reveal that what these individuals want in a letter is perhaps counterintuitive. Many letters of recommendation contain information about the student's relative intellectual ability, their class performance, and their potential for success. However, according to Drew Appleby, graduate programs want to hear about the **personal characteristics of the applicant first**, then about the **applicants acquired skills**, and that they are **less interested in hearing about intellectual abilities and grades**. This makes sense given that the graduate programs already have access to measures of intellectual ability. In addition to being useful tools in providing guidance to graduate students, the previous lists of characteristics of graduate school students may be helpful as well in constructing letters of recommendation.

Some Final Thoughts and Guidelines for Mentoring

Mentoring is an evolving relationship that may one day change from Mentor/Scholar to colleague/colleague. Personality, ethnicity, gender, knowledge, and many other factors affect this relationship. There are no standard rules about how mentoring is established or flourishes. The following quote, however, suggests some characteristics of Mentors that can be helpful to Scholars:

> "Mentors are:
> **Advisors**: people with career experience willing to share their knowledge;
> **Supporters**: people who give emotional and moral encouragement;
> **Tutors**: people who give specific feedback on one's performance;
> **Masters**: in the sense of employers to whom one is apprenticed;
> **Sponsors**: sources of information about and aid in obtaining opportunities;
> **Models**: of identity, of the kind of person one should be to be an academic."
> <div align="right">(Zelditch, 1990)</div>

First Year	Second Year	Second Year Dual Science Honors
Fall Quarter • MCNA 301 • GRE Pre Test • Individualized Action Plan • Entrance interview with the Director • Attend the Orientation Conference • Set up meeting with mentor to discuss research ideas • Meet with faculty coordinator	**Fall Quarter** • Take GRE (if not yet done) • MCNA 303 • Arrange and participate in graduate school visit(s) • Apply to graduate schools and for scholarships/fellowships • Prepare research for presentation • Meet with faculty coordinator	**Fall Quarter** • MCNA 303 • Continue or edit summer research for conference(s) and/or publication • Take the GRE, if not already taken • Independent Study credits for SHRP • Murdoch Conference
Winter Quarter • MCNA 395 • Weekly meeting with mentor • Prepare substantive research proposal • Meet with faculty coordinator	**Winter Quarter** • Prepare abstract for SOURCE (Discuss with research mentor) • Follow-up on graduate school applications • Meet with faculty coordinator	**Winter Quarter** • SHRP 401: Capstone Course • Workshops on choosing a graduate program , back up planning & academic publishing
Spring Quarter • MCNA 302 • Edit and re-submit final research proposal for review • Meet with faculty coordinator • Attend the McNair Recognition & Graduation Picnic	**Spring Quarter** • Submit abstract and prepare presentation/poster/performance • Participate in SOURCE and attend SOURCE banquet • Attend the McNair Recognition & Graduation Picnic • Exit interview • Graduate and get ready for graduate school	**Spring Quarter** • SHRP 497: Thesis • Workshops on planning the next steps • Present at source • Attend McNair Spring Luncheon • CWU Etiquette Dinner • Honors Convocation
Summer Quarter • GRE Bootcamp • Participate in Internship and complete final research • Take the GRE • Participate in Intensive Grad School Preparation Retreat • Arrange and participate in graduate school visit(s)	**GRADUATION!!**	**GRADUATION!!**