

Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program



University of South Carolina TRiO Programs

Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program

Student Handbook



TRIO Programs

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Philosophy and Goal

The University of South Carolina's Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program (TRIO McNair) accepts the following mission statement adopted by the Council for the Advancement of Standards for TRIO and other educational opportunity programs.

The mission of TRIO and other educational opportunity programs is to encourage and assist people who are traditionally under-represented in postsecondary education because of income, family educational background, disability, or other relevant federal, state, provincial or institutional criteria, in the preparation for, entry to, and completion of a post-secondary education.

To accomplish this mission, TRIO programs must:

- serve as advocates for access to higher education;
- provide services to assist individuals to achieve their educational goals;
- facilitate the educational development of individuals served;
- provide an environment that recognizes the diversity of backgrounds and learning styles of the individuals served;
- develop collaborative relationships with institutions, organizations, and communities to promote an environment conducive to the completion of a post-secondary education.



Organization and Administration

The TRIO McNair Program is one of several programs under the University's Office of TRIO Programs, an administrative unit reporting to the Vice President for Student Affairs and Vice Provost for Academic Support. The goal of the program is to prepare its participants for graduate education through their involvement in research and other scholarly activities. The TRIO McNair staff includes a coordinator, a graduate assistant, eight part-time faculty research advisors, and an instructor for the Fundamentals of Inquiry in the Humanities.

In addition to the McNair project, TRIO Programs include the Opportunity Scholars Program, Upward Bound, the Educational Opportunity Center, and Educational Talent Search. The TRIO Director coordinates all programs in operational, staffing, and fiscal functioning. Coordinators share responsibility for supervising, hiring, and training staff and ensuring that program activities are implemented in accordance with funded proposals. Programs also share secretarial and counseling resource personnel, as well as office space, equipment, and supplies.

Program Description

The Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement program prepares promising undergraduates for graduate education by involving them in research and other scholarly activities. The goal of the program is to increase the number of Ph.D. recipients among individuals who are first-generation/low-income students and who are from groups underrepresented in graduate education.

The Program is named in honor of Ronald E. McNair, who died on board the space shuttle *Challenger* in 1986. A native of Lake City, South Carolina, Dr. McNair received his Ph.D. in Physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He entered NASA's space shuttle program in 1978 and was a mission specialist on his first flight in 1984 when he became the second African American in Space.

Established by Congress in 1989 as one of the national TRIO Programs, the Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program currently serves approximately 5,400 students on 200 campuses across the United States. Participants are commonly referred to as "TRIO McNair Scholars," not to be confused with the Robert C. McNair Scholars at the University of South Carolina.



Eligibility Criteria

- All participants in the TRIO McNair Program must be undergraduates who have completed at least 60 credit hours with a 3.0 overall GPA, by the summer he/she is to participate in the program
- All participants must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents (resident aliens)
- Must be enrolled in an accredited four-year college in South Carolina
- At least two-thirds of each incoming class must also be first-generation college students (parents or custodian did not receive a baccalaureate degree) who qualify as low income according to federal income guidelines.
- The remaining one-third of participants can include members of groups underrepresented in graduate school.
- College seniors are not eligible to participant unless you became McNair Scholar prior to your senior year.

Program Benefits

The benefits of the TRIO McNair Program include:

- · Close relationships with faculty research advisors and mentors
- · Opportunities to publish research papers in various journals
- · Opportunities to present research findings at various symposia and conferences
- · Advisement on graduate school enrollment
- · Summer orientation to graduate school and academic careers
- · GRE Preparation
- · \$2,700 stipend for summer research and academic year activities

Program Structure

The TRIO McNair Program consists of summer and academic year activities that direct students toward graduate school enrollment. Students enter the Program during the spring, participate in the Summer Research Component (SRC), and, during the following academic year, continue their research projects, enroll in a one-credit hour online Senior Capstone class (UNIV 401) and complete the requirements for graduate school enrollment.

During the spring, new students receive an orientation to the program from the TRIO McNair coordinator and faculty. Additionally, scholars attend a one-day state-wide orientation hosted by Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC. Prior to reporting for the summer research component, *each student must recruit at least one professor at his or her home institution (or major field) who will guide the development of a research proposal that will serve as the focus of summer research activity.*

Students must receive approval for their summer research project from the TRIO McNair faculty.



The Summer Research Component

Scholars participate in the six-week residential Summer Research Component (SRC), which includes completion of the students' research projects; enrollment in a three-hour research-oriented course; advice and guidance on applying to graduate programs; support activities such as GRE preparation and workshops and seminars that help students prepare to succeed in the graduate school environment.



- **Student Summer Research**

During the six weeks on campus, individual research projects are the main focus of students' efforts. Each week the students meet with their summer research faculty advisers for guidance and feedback on their research projects. All student projects must focus on research that addresses some aspect of sustainability. This is a current and important area of research that is broad, interdisciplinary and, as a basis for learning the fundamentals of research, useful to students in all disciplines.

- **Summer Mentoring**

During the SRC, students will also meet with the program coordinator and faculty mentors to work on the items required for graduate application packets and/or Internship applications as well as to adopt plans of action for the academic year.

By the end of the summer component, students will have prepared a personal statement and a curriculum vita (an academic resume). In addition, they will have identified persons to write letters of recommendation and five graduate programs to which they plan to apply. During the academic year, students will continue their mentoring process to complete application materials through a one-hour credit online course, UNIV 401. The McNair Coordinator will register students for the class.

- **Fundamentals of Inquiry in the Humanities (COLA 398)**

This course is an introductory course into the fundamentals of critical inquiry in the humanities. It is also intended to give students a picture of what research is like as it is being pursued by faculty and advanced graduate students in the various areas of the university. Although many students will not conduct research in the humanities nor pursue careers in the humanities, a liberal arts tradition helps form a solid foundation for graduate studies in other disciplines. The course, therefore, will begin by asking, “what are the liberal arts and why they have been recommended as a course of study necessary for a general education?” Students will then examine views about the best kind of university education as well as the relationship of the humanities to science and the role of Europe in the history of the humanities.

Course instructor, Dr. Jerry Wallulis, explains his concept of the course this way:

As I considered the prospect of teaching this general class in the humanities, I considered my present condition of knowledge to be particularly inadequate in regard to three questions: (1) what are the liberal arts? (2) what are the humanities? and (3) what is the relationship, if any, between the humanities and humanism? In seeking answers to these questions, I have had to do research, primarily of a historical nature and in regard to crucial terms in English, Greek, Latin, and German. I have related this research to the work of a philosopher with whom I am quite conversant; namely, Hans-Georg Gadamer. However, I have not stopped there, but rather have extended my search to include recent advocates of multiculturalism and cultural studies. These inclusions have prompted me to ask further questions about the nature of historical writing and the role of critical methods of explanation in regard to decoding popular culture. They have also certainly served to take me beyond my own discipline and my own normal patterns of specialized research.

My hope is that in presenting the research which underlies my own learning in preparing for this class that you will not only learn answers to my initial questions but strategies and methods for doing research yourself. In other words, insofar as I have sought to minimize the distinction between teaching and research in my efforts, you will also have the opportunity to bridge the distinction between learning and research in yours. As you should strive to become self-learners (a goal which consider to be the most important in your education), so will you also have the opportunity to become self-researchers as well.

- **Registering for COLA 398**

The McNair Coordinator registers students for the Fundamentals of Inquiry in the Humanities class (COLA 398). Non-USC-Columbia students, including USC regional campus students, need to fill need to submit the following items:

- ⇒ A transient student application to take the course
- ⇒ proof of immunization, and
- ⇒ proof of residency

- **Room and Board**

The dormitory for TRIO McNair Scholars has apartment-style rooms. Each student will have his or her own room and will share a bathroom, kitchen, and living room with others of the same sex. The program provides no linens, towels, or maid service. Each room comes equipped with Internet access. Additionally, students will have access to the Internet in the TRIO computer lab (BTW, Room 207) during business hours (8:00-5:00, weekdays) . Printing will be available in the lab and at the University library.



Students are responsible for damages to their dorm rooms. The university imposes a \$75 fee for a lost key. Students are also responsible for their personal items. The University of South Carolina and the TRIO program are not responsible for lost or stolen belongings.

The use of illegal drugs, underage drinking, or drinking on campus will result in immediate dismissal from the program. Any form of dishonesty--theft, cheating, etc.--will result in immediate dismissal.

- **Dress Code**

Appropriate dress is required at all times. On a daily basis, students can dress casually, as long as they avoid clothing that reveals too much cleavage, back, chest, stomach, or underwear. On occasion, students are required to dress more professionally. For lunches, awards, photos, and the Research Symposium, The Text -That -Matters Presentation, and the entire SAEOPP conference, students are expected to wear business or business casual attire, which, depending on the situation, can range from dress shirts and ties to collared T-shirts (Polos) and from suits to Khaki pants or Dockers, dressy capris, dresses, and skirts. Please do not wear flip-flops on any dressy occasion.

- **Summer Research Symposium**

Each summer, the University of South Carolina TRiO McNair program hosts Winthrop University for the South Carolina TRiO McNair Research Symposium. This is an all day event where students from both programs will present their research. This symposium takes place the same week as the SAEOPP conference, and is designed to give students the opportunity to present their research work under similar conditions as the conference.

Your McNair Coordinator will inform you of the exact dates for this event.



- **Graduate School Workshops**

In addition to the critical inquiry course, individual research project, and mentoring sessions, students will also attend a variety of seminars, lectures, group discussions, and workshops designed to help improve their chances of getting into the graduate programs of their choice and to increase their overall skill levels. Such events include, but are not limited to, a panel of current graduate students, a seminar on improving personal statements, a workshop on PowerPoint presentations, and a seminar on public speaking.

The SRC also includes a variety of social events, including lunches and dinners with faculty members. These activities are an important aspect of the TRIO McNair Program. They complement the mentoring sessions so that students become not only successful graduate school applicants, but also successful graduate students.

- **Intensive GRE Test Preparations**

The Summer Research Component also consists of an intensive 30-plus hours of GRE-test preparation. The test-prep materials are to be used during the class, as well as taken home and studied after the program. By the end of the course, students will have a written plan of action and a scheduled test date. Students may also qualify for a reduced fee waiver for the GRE test.

- **Stipends**

The program provides students with stipends for their time, commitment, and hard work over the six-week summer component.

- ⇒ The program will provide you with \$600 for food money, half of which will be awarded on the official start date and the other half at the mid-point of the summer program . The McNair coordinator will inform you of the exact dates.
- ⇒ There will also be some events in which the program provides food.
- ⇒ In addition, you will be given per diem food money for the SAEOPP conference trip.
- ⇒ A stipend of \$2100 will be dispersed on the last day of the Summer Research Component. To receive the full stipend, students must fully participate in the entire summer program.
- ⇒ During the academic year, an additional stipend of \$600 will be given upon the successful completion of UNIV 401, the Senior Capstone course.

- **SAEOPP Conference**

Scholars will travel to Atlanta, Georgia, to participate in the annual Southeastern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel (SAEOPP) McNair undergraduate research conference. Students will travel in program-provided transportation to Atlanta where they will participate in the four-day event. All students are required to create and facilitate a PowerPoint presentation of their research. The TRIO McNair program takes care of the cost of conference registration, hotel, and transportation, as well as provides money for food.

Academic Year Activities

Academic-year activities will vary for students following the Summer Research Component. Both juniors and seniors are encouraged to develop their summer research projects into an independent study for academic credit. Ideally, these projects would be completed under the direction of a student’s home campus mentor. Students are also encouraged to apply for other undergraduate research awards, such as the Magellan Scholars Program.



Academic year activities also include the opportunity to travel to a number of McNair Scholar National conferences, traditionally one in the Midwest in the fall and one in the Mid-Atlantic region in the spring. The opportunity to travel to these conferences is competitive and is offered to those scholars whose research projects are the most impressive.

Students will remain active McNair Scholars until they graduate. For some, this will be within the year of initial program participation. For others, who are juniors, or taking five years to complete a degree, this will mean an additional year of McNair activity.

While full participation in the SRC is limited to first-time participants, students who do not graduate are expected to persist on the path toward graduate school. This means a continuation of the regular meetings with the McNair coordinator and participation in graduate school application workshops throughout the academic year. Returning students are also expected to take the GRE and apply to a minimum of three post-baccalaureate programs. These students are also invited to participate in selected summer events and apply to travel to McNair research conferences.



TRIO McNair Staff

Althea Counts, MEd, Trio Director

Dr. Sharon Lee White, McNair Coordinator