



THE MCNAIR MISSION

Summer 2011 Edition

The McNair Graduate Opportunity Program Official Newsletter
Recognizing outstanding student achievements and accomplishments

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

MENTORING

By: Matt Pearcey, Ph.D.

What does it mean to mentor a student who comes from a first-generation, low-income, or underrepresented background in preparation for the doctorate? This was a question McNair directors were asked last week at a professional development seminar. It's an important question. So, how can students be mentored during undergraduate programs, to direct entrance into graduate school, and continue through a Ph.D.? The consensus is that through a combination of both self-determination on the part of the student and expert support from a whole village of mentors, the student will more likely finish the doctorate.

What causes some students to drop out along the way depends on the time frame in question:

Right after graduation: parental or peer suggestion that a graduate degree is unimportant.

First semester of graduate education: impostorship syndrome, or the idea that one does not legitimately belong in graduate education, or not smart enough.

When a graduate student finishes the master's degree and feels burned out...there may be the desire to call it quits (there is a sense of accomplishment with the master's but the final goal has not been reached). Sometimes the impostorship syndrome rears its head again when a student faces doctoral education.

When a student becomes ABD (all but dissertation), this is the most common dropping out point for doctoral students. The dissertation process can seem intimidating when seen as a whole, but when broken down into parts, it is a very doable process.

If a student has made it into the McNair program, he or she can earn a doctorate. There is no question. The only wild card is how willing one is to delay gratification while working on the degree. Don Asher, author of Graduate Admissions Essays, recently suggested that taking a year off college to save money, or cool one's sense of being "burned out" makes little sense. It's his perception that the little money that one can save in a year is not worth it from an economic standpoint. The difference between an entry-level job and the financial benefits for a new graduate student is negligible (when one accounts for the paid tuition, stipend, and other incentives). He also suggested that being burned out is often code for not really thinking that graduate education is important and an unwillingness to put the effort forth that graduate education requires.

Between the support from the McNair director, one's major faculty advisor at the undergraduate level, one's major advisor and mentor at the graduate level, peer and family network, and one's own desire to earn the doctorate, one can be catapulted to the ultimate goal of achieving the highest degree in a particular discipline. Those sources of emotional and academic support, combined with intellectual curiosity, a love of spending a lot of time alone (library, lab, graduate student office), and an understanding of the clear connection between one's intended doctoral degree and professional opportunities, as well as being engaged in the campus academic activities at the doctoral institution, are all important attributes that will help propel students from disadvantaged backgrounds to the achievement of the doctoral degree.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mentoring	1
Newest Scholar	1
Summer Research	2
Top Ten List	3
Tips for Seniors	4

INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST MCNAIR SCHOLAR!

The McNair Graduate Opportunity Program would like to welcome our newest scholar,
Deborah Boling!

Deborah is a nursing student that will be graduating in December of 2012. Deborah will pursue a doctorate in nursing practice, to ultimately serve as a primary caregiver.

~Welcome, Deborah!~

SUMMER RESEARCH 2011

Each year McNair Scholars conduct research under the guidance of a faculty mentor. Quality research projects provide a realistic picture of graduate school scholarship, while also preparing students for the doctoral school climate. Each student culminates his/her McNair Program experience by presenting his/her research at the McNair Summer Program Research Symposium.

- **Carrielle Cofax** is conducting a content-analysis on the efficacy of risk-reduction training for Big-Brother and Big-Sister mentors in Indiana.
- **Amy DuBois** is researching the use of Greek and Roman symbols in American architecture.
- **Mary Francis** is analyzing data concerning the effects of parental alcohol abuse on college students' academic performance, social and emotional adjustment.
- **Alicia Hicks** is studying the efficacy of hands-on manipulation in nursing students' training.
- **Amanda Hubbard** is conducting research on mating strategies and preferences of highly intelligent males.
- **Jude Owolabi** is studying African American women's attitudes and perception towards physical activity.
- **Matthew Price** is studying the academic and social functioning of veteran students in comparison to traditional students.
- **Shannon Rosser** is conducting a study concerning the impact of network size on altruism.
- **DeMarcus Sneed** is studying the effectiveness of health improvement programs on preventing heart disease.
- **Linda Williams** is studying attitudes towards gender norms of individuals from single-parent versus two-parent households.



DON ASHER'S TOP TEN LIST

This May, ISU McNair Scholars received valuable information regarding the graduate admissions process and preparing for the GRE from internationally acclaimed author and graduate admissions expert, Don Asher. Here are the top 10 most valuable tips from Mr. Asher, according to ISU McNair Scholars:

1. When preparing for the GRE, one's emotional response may be as important as one's knowledge. The GRE is a test of ability to test, not intelligence, and a lot of people who achieve high scores miss a lot of answers. Therefore, it is important to stay positive. Be aware of the four types of testing errors people make on the GRE:
 - a. they never knew material
 - b. they don't remember material
 - c. they don't strategize during the test to maximize your score
 - e. they suffer emotional failure
2. As one begins to narrow down graduate schools, they should pay particular attention to specific programs. Create a list of 7-10 schools to apply to and divide these schools into three categories based on the likelihood that you will be accepted: "likely", "maybe", and "reach."
3. One should organize deadlines after choosing schools, start gathering material early, and apply to graduate programs two months in advance.
4. The most important factors for the graduate admissions essay is to customize one's essay for each school and to "drop names" (i.e. add specific faculty, mentors, and theorist in your field whose research and theories capture your interest).
5. Ask for *funding* (not *financial aid*) three times during the grad school application process:
 - a. right before applying
 - b. upon admission
 - c. the day you start classes
6. When it comes to letters of recommendation, ask faculty at least six weeks in advance if they would be comfortable writing a *strong letter* of recommendation, and ask what they will say. Also, one should prepare an envelope for faculty including information about what they want the faculty to convey, one's transcripts, and a graded paper. Send faculty a gift for their willingness to help in the application process.
7. The key to the interview process to sell oneself (i.e. "Why should we pick you?") The answer is: "I have *passion* plus *capacity*." Passion is obvious from attitude, but capacity has to be explained. Use the acronym P.A.A.R.L.A. to give a story about a time when you had to face adversity and grew from that experience.
 - a. **Problem**- what was the problem?
 - b. **Analysis**- what was your interpretation of the situation?
 - c. **Action**- what action was taken to resolve the problem?
 - d. **Result**- what was the outcome of your action?
 - e. **Learning**- what was learned from this problem?
 - f. **Applied**- how can what was learned be applied to future situations?
8. Also important for the graduate school interview is to have knowledge of faculty member's online biographies, including recent publications and where they earned their degrees. Be prepared for specific questions, such as 'Did you read my last book or article?'
9. While enrolled as a graduate student, do not work off campus, borrow minimally, seek out scholarships, assistantships, fellowships, and ways to work with faculty for extra cash.
10. The structure of PhD programs consist of:
 - a. two years of classes (which can equal a masters degree in the discipline)
 - b. one to three years of classes that are generally student-led and require a comprehensive test (grades are commonly subjective, implying the need for a cohesive relationship with faculty)
 - c. after successful completion of final testing, students are considered doctoral candidates
 - d. completion of the dissertation, which is began during the first few years

TIPS FOR SENIORS GRADUATING IN THE UPCOMING YEAR

For scholars entering their senior year, here are some key pieces of information to keep in mind regarding graduate school visits and funding graduate school:

1. If you plan to visit a graduate school, McNair can help cover the costs associated with travel, up to \$500 if you have been:
 - a. offered an interview
 - b. accepted for admission
 - c. submit to McNair a request for funds at least 30 days prior to your travel

More information can be found at <http://www.indstate.edu/mcnairsch/handbook/infoletter.pdf>

Unfortunately, we cannot provide funding to students unless they meet the above-mentioned requirements.

2. As you continue to narrow down your list of graduate schools, it is important to actively seek outside resources for graduate school funding. The Truman Scholarship, Jacob K. Javits Fellowship, and the National Institute of Health Fellowships are three strong examples of generous financial awards that, due to your training with McNair, you can be a competitive applicant for.

- The Truman Scholarship

- According to their website, the scholarship “Provides up to \$30,000 in funding to students pursuing graduate degrees in public service fields. Students must be college juniors at the time of selection. The Foundation also provides assistance with career counseling, internship placement, graduate school admissions, and professional development.”

More information can be found at: <http://truman.gov/>

- Jacob K. Javits Fellowship

- According to their website, “This program provides fellowships to students of superior academic ability—selected on the basis of demonstrated achievement, financial need, and exceptional promise—to undertake study at the doctoral and Master of Fine Arts level in selected fields of arts, humanities, and social sciences.”

More information can be found at: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/jacobjavits/index.html>

- National Institutes for Health (NIH) Fellowships

- NIH has numerous fellowships available for individuals pursuing doctorates in research and health-related professions.

More information can be found at http://grants1.nih.gov/training/F_files_nrsa.htm

If you are interested in applying for one of these scholarships or fellowships, please contact Dr. Pearcey at matthew.pearcey@indstate.edu or Taushia Brooks at tbrooks10@indstate.edu or (812) 237-8161.

Scholars will receive more information about funding graduate school at the graduate school launch in August.