Visit, email or call us to learn more about the McNair Program

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Vision
The TRIO Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program is a graduate school preparatory program funded by the U.S. Department of Education and sponsored by UW-Eau Claire. Named after American astronaut Dr. Ronald McNair, the McNair program aims at leveling the playing field in graduate education and diversify the American research community by class, socio-economic status, and ethnicity.

Nationally there are 158 McNair programs working with over 4,400 students.
The TRIO McNair Program was founded in 1989 and initiated at UW-Eau Claire in 2000. The goal of the McNair Program is to increase attainment of PhD degrees by students from underrepresented segments of society, including first-generation low-income individuals and members from racial and ethnic groups historically underrepresented in graduate programs. At UW-Eau Claire, we prefer working with scholars who are ambitious about entering graduate school immediately after graduating from UWEC. Our hope is that eventually our scholars will go on to earn a Master’s degree and ultimately, a doctoral degree.

Participants
- Annually, up to 26 undergraduates participate in the UW-Eau Claire TRIO McNair Program.
- Two-thirds of participants meet federal income guidelines and are from a family in which neither parent graduated from a four-year postsecondary educational institution.
- One-third of the participants may be from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in graduate studies and the professoriate. (The federal government defines “underrepresented” to include: Black (non-Hispanic); Hispanic; and American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders.)
- Participants have completed at least fifty-nine credits and have a GPA of 2.75 or higher.
On average, Ph.Ds earn $1,500,000 more than baccalaureate degree holders.

Purpose

The purpose of the McNair program at UW-Eau Claire is to provide disadvantaged college students with effective preparation for research based doctoral study. Each year, the McNair program enrolls up to thirteen eligible students, who become "McNair Scholars." Along with a dedicated mentor in the scholar’s primary field of research, over a two-year time period, the McNair program prepares them for graduate level studies, with the ultimate goal of completing a research based doctorate degree. Since the year 2000, 187 UW-Eau Claire students have taken part or are currently engaged in the program. Currently, 40 of our 163 graduated McNair Scholars now hold a doctorate degree and an additional 65 hold masters degrees.

Eligibility

In order to be considered for the McNair program, a student needs to meet (a) Federal TRIO and (b) UW-Eau Claire criteria:

Federal TRIO criteria:
A prospective scholar must be: EITHER - 50% below federal government determined poverty line ("low-income") AND from a family in which neither parent graduated from a four-year postsecondary educational institution OR
From groups that are traditionally underrepresented in graduate studies and the professorate. (The federal government defines "underrepresented" to include: Black (non-Hispanic); Hispanic; and American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders.)

In addition to the federal criteria, a prospective scholar must also be:
- A UW-Eau Claire student
- Have the desire and ability to apply for, enter, and pursue a graduate program leading to a research doctorate
- Be nominated by a UW-Eau Claire faculty or academic staff member
- Have a minimum standing of rising sophomore with a GPA of 2.75 or greater

Program Outcomes

- Support research or other scholarly activities that build research portfolio and provide competitive edge for graduate school admission
- Administer Summer Research Institute
- Administer four McNair seminars
- Provide travel funds for graduate school site visit, annual McNair conference, and other conference related activities
- Provide services designed to assist students in securing admission and financial assistance for enrollment in graduate programs.

Benefits of Being a McNair Scholar

Immediate Enrichments:
- Receive intense mentoring in a nurturing and supportive environment
- Undertake collaborative research with UW-Eau Claire faculty members
- Receive assistance with graduate school selection and application
- Learn about financial aid, fellowships, grant opportunities

Life Long Benefits:
- Ph.Ds enjoy a wide array of research based careers
- Ph.Ds earn on average $1,500,000 more than baccalaureate degree holders.

Why we Need the McNair Program

A doctorate degree bestows monetary and non-monetary benefits that last over a lifetime. These include highest annual median income compared to lower levels of educational attainment, an unemployment rate of close to zero percent, and a life-time earnings curve that is much higher than lower levels of educational attainment, and a wide array of research and academic employment possibilities.

Despite these benefits, American doctoral recipients are heavily skewed by socio-economic class, parental background, and race/ethnicity. Less than 20% of research doctors go to students from first generation background. More than 60% of doctoral degrees are earned by White Americans and Asian Americans. Students from lower socio-economic status, whose parents did not complete college, and those from historically underrepresented background are not receiving the benefits of earning doctoral degree and hence suffering from an unlevel playing field in higher education.

The McNair program is a micro level policy intervention that aims at leveling playing field in graduate level education – one McNair scholar at a time. It derives its purpose and motivation from the goal of leveling the playing field in graduate level education by proposing academically talented students, from lowcome, first generation and underrepresented background for graduate level education, with the goal of completing doctoral studies. Ultimately, as more and more disadvantaged students go on to earn doctoral degrees, they receive the stated benefits of a doctoral degree, and go on to pass these benefits to their future generations.

The inter-generational cycle of benefits of educational attainment begins with each McNair scholar.

Leveling the Playing Field in Graduate Education Since 2000

Application Process
1. Visit www.uwec.edu/mcnair
2. Nomination form ("faculty form")
3. Prospective scholar form ("student form")