



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS MCNAIR SCHOLARS PROGRAM

SCHOLAR HANDBOOK **2020-2021**

UNT McNair Staff

Dr. Kevin Caffrey, Program Director
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Dear McNair Scholar,

Welcome to the McNair Scholars Program at the University of North Texas.

The *McNair Scholar Handbook* is a basic guide that describes the policies, services, benefits, expectations, and resources of the University of North Texas (UNT) McNair Scholars Program. It addresses the value of mentoring as a key component of the program and of preparation for graduate education. The first section gives an overview of the program and describes the policies and procedures. The second section focuses on the mentoring process, including roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees, and the activities you will engage in while in the program.

The *McNair Scholar Handbook* is by no means exhaustive, nor is it designed to include all existing policies, procedures, and rules of the program. Many applicable specific policies and procedures are provided, as needed, in other formats such as correspondence, written announcements, newsletters, bulletin boards, email messages, and telephone calls. The *Handbook* is a living document, subject to modification as needed. As a result, updates will be placed in your mailbox, emailed to you, or given to you during regular meetings. It is important that you keep your handbook up-to-date.

The UNT McNair Scholars Program will provide you a wealth of new opportunities to explore your interests, enhance your academic potential, and reach your academic and professional goals. Your experiences as a McNair Scholar will help guide you through major decisions concerning your career. The quality of those decisions and your success in graduate education will depend, to a great extent, upon your hard work, attitude, desire to learn and accept challenges, willingness to accept guidance and criticism, and commitment throughout your undergraduate years.

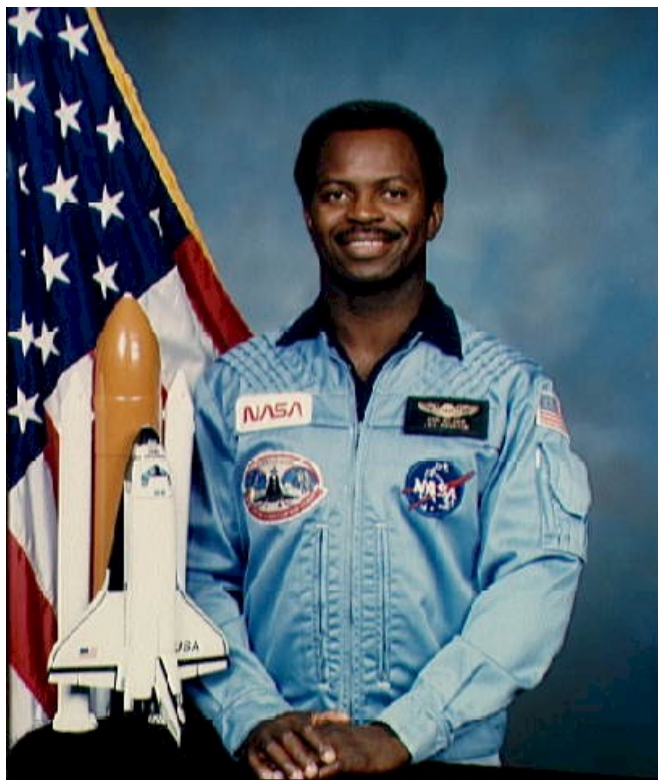
The success of the UNT McNair Scholars Program lies in the collaborative effort of faculty mentors, program staff, the UNT community, and of course you. The *McNair Scholar Handbook* has been written to meet your informational needs. It is the basic tool designed to ensure that your experience as a McNair Scholar is rewarding, enriching, and engaging. We encourage you to take advantage of the many services and benefits the program provides to prepare you for a successful graduate education career.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Caffrey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kevin Caffrey, Ph.D.
Director

Ronald E. McNair, Ph.D.



Whether or not you reach your goals in life depends entirely on how well you prepare for them and how badly you want them. You're eagles! Stretch your wings and fly to the sky.

Dr. Ronald E. McNair
1950-1986

The United States Congress named the U.S. Department of Education's Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program (known as the McNair Scholars Program here at the University of North Texas) in honor of physicist Dr. Ronald E. McNair for his lifetime of accomplishment.

The second black astronaut in space and one of the seven-crew members killed in the space shuttle Challenger explosion on January 28, 1986, Dr. McNair lived a life that exemplified achievement. Born in the south to an elementary school teacher and an automobile mechanic, Dr. McNair overcame racial discrimination in the 1950-60s and excelled both in his academic and professional life.

Graduating as valedictorian of his high school class, he went on to attend North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, where he graduated *magna cum laude*. At the age of 26, he earned his Ph.D. in physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he was a Providential Scholar and a Ford Foundation Fellow. Dr. McNair's other accomplishments include Omega Psi Phi Scholar of the Year and the National Society of Black Professional Engineers Distinguished National Scientist. His scientific expertise focused on laser physics, which he developed while working at the Hughes Research Laboratory in Malibu, California. His career as an astronaut began when NASA selected him for their corps in 1978.

The McNair Program selects scholars who represent the same desire for professional academic excellence that Dr. McNair possessed, and honors his memory through offering service to other worthy achievers.

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A. Program Overview

Program History

The UNT McNair Scholars Program is one of five TRIO Programs at the University of North Texas (UNT). Since October 1, 1992, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) has funded the UNT McNair Scholars Program to serve talented UNT undergraduate students who are interested in pursuing graduate education. Along with other TRIO Programs (Talent Search, Upward Bound, HEB Upward Bound, and Student Support Services), the UNT McNair Scholars Program serves a diverse population of students who meet specific federal guidelines. As of December 2020, the DOE is funding 187 McNair Scholars Programs around the nation (21 are in Texas), serving approximately 5,242 students.

Program Purpose

The UNT McNair Scholars Program provides enriching scholastic experiences that prepare our scholars for graduate school, and specifically, doctoral education. To accomplish this, the program gives participating scholars the unique opportunity to develop the highest level of academic and research skills needed for admission to and completion of a Ph.D. program. McNair Scholars are eligible for program services until they complete their baccalaureate degrees, but the McNair staff continues to support scholars by providing moral support, advice, and guidance to all McNair Alumni throughout their graduate years and into their professional endeavors.

That the McNair Program at UNT is located in the Honors College attests to the fact that it is an *academic* program. It is *not* an extra-curricular or student services program charged with enhancing student social life or wellness. There are so many opportunities at UNT for that kind of support that to add to it would be a poor use of our funds and our efforts when we have so much to do. Should you need wellness assistance or student services of any kind, we will be happy to direct you to the appropriate locations on campus, but we are explicitly charged with promoting academic excellence and research opportunity in preparation for graduate training.

Research engagement is fundamental for McNair Scholars. At its core, research is the systematic inquiry into a problem or phenomenon to create understanding, discover new knowledge, or to confirm or question existing knowledge and theories. Intensive research experience as an undergraduate is a vital pathway to graduate school. These experiences are increasingly integrated into undergraduate education curricula, and the UNT McNair Program provides enriching and intensive mentor-guided research experiences to its participants. McNair Scholars conduct research 10 hours a week during the fall and spring semesters and a minimum of 400 hours* during the period between the end of the spring semester and the beginning of the fall semester— all under the direction of a UNT faculty mentor.

**In addition to research, Scholars are expected to engage in other scholarly activities, such as finding and applying to graduate programs, preparing to take the GRE, looking for and applying to modular funding opportunities for graduate school, etc. One hundred (100) of these hours can be dedicated to these activities. If unsure which kind of activities qualify as research or scholarly activities, check with the staff.*

The UNT McNair Program currently serves 34 Scholars who have completed at least 60 credits, are typically entering their Junior year, and will spend their whole Junior year and their Senior year in the program before graduating.

Program participants benefit from a variety of services and activities, including:

- Research experiences
- Faculty mentoring
- Academic, career, and financial aid counseling
- GRE preparation
- Graduate admission requirements advising
- Tutoring and research skills
- Summer research internships and experiences funded by the DOE and UNT
- Graduate fellowship/scholarship preparation

Program Guidelines

McNair staff operates the program under a set of regulations established by the DOE and UNT. Under these regulations, McNair staff monitors the progress of each scholar to ensure compliance with the following objectives:

<p>Objective 1</p> <p>McNair participants will complete research and other scholarly activities while in the program and will receive a bachelor's degree.</p>	<p>Objective 2</p> <p>Bachelor's degree recipients will be accepted and enrolled in a post baccalaureate program in the fall term of the academic year immediately following the completion of a bachelor's degree.</p>
<p>Objective 3</p> <p>McNair Scholars who are first year graduate students, will continue their enrollment in graduate school at the beginning of the next</p>	<p>Objective 4</p> <p>McNair participants will attain a doctoral degree within ten (10) years of the attainment of their bachelor's degree.</p>

In addition to complying with the DOE and UNT rules and regulations, McNair Scholars also agree to comply with a set of responsibilities and commitments. During the orientation, Scholars (Continuing and New) will complete and sign the *Responsibilities and Commitments of a McNair Scholar*. *Failure to comply with these responsibilities and commitments will affect your eligibility to continue in the program.*

Program Criteria

The UNT McNair Scholars Program is competitive. To qualify, an applicant must meet the following criteria established by the DOE and the UNT McNair Program. An applicant must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident
- Have completed a minimum of 60 hours (or complete that number of hours before being accepted as a Full Scholar)
- Have an acceptable GPA that indicates academic performance appropriate to for the program

- Be a first-generation college student and have a low-income level, as established by the DOE, or belong to a group traditionally under-represented in graduate education. Note: First generation means that neither parent has earned a four-year college degree

B. Mentoring, Research, and Program Activities

Program Participants' Roles

The success of every McNair Scholars Program begins with the strength of its foundation – the program staff, faculty mentors, and cohort of Scholars – and it thrives especially because of the strength of the mentor/scholar relationships. These mutually beneficial relationships should foster talent, maturity, academic strength, motivation, commitment, a strong desire to learn, creativity, and a willingness to accept and overcome challenges.

Scholars, staff, and mentors each have specific roles and responsibilities. All will work to meet program, research, and personal expectations throughout the McNair experience. Each scholar's situation and personality are unique, but the following roles give the minimum responsibilities of the Scholar, the mentor, and the program staff. We all build upon these to ensure the success of each scholar.

Scholar's Responsibilities	Mentor's Responsibilities	Program Staff's Responsibilities
Select a faculty mentor	Commit to the progress and success of the scholar	Oversee the mentor/scholar relationship
Conduct ongoing research under the guidance of a faculty mentor	Guide the scholar through the research process	Provide resources for scholars to conduct research
Present research at professional conferences	Assist the scholar with the dissemination of the research	Provide travel assistance to professional conferences
Present research at the annual recognition luncheon and the annual McNair conference	Assist the scholar with developing oral and poster presentations	Provide fora for scholars to present research
Seek academic and career counseling when needed	Encourage the scholar to seek academic and career counseling when appropriate	Provide resources for academic and career counseling
Prepare for the GRE	Promote the importance of the GRE in maximizing opportunities for the scholar	Offer GRE tutoring
Research potential graduate programs	Assist the scholar with selecting an appropriate and realistic graduate program	Provide logistical support in the graduate program selection process
Apply to graduate school	Support the scholar through the graduate application process	Provide assistance and support in the graduate school application process

Undergo reviews throughout the semesters you are in the program	Evaluate scholar's progress throughout the year	Monitor individual scholar's progress throughout the year
Accept and adhere to staff and mentor directions and guidance	Work with staff to facilitate scholar's professional growth and development	Provide direction for scholars' professional growth and development

Program Activities

To nurture the intellectual and research development of the Scholars, and to achieve the objectives listed previously, the UNT McNair Program provides a set of activities in which all Scholars must participate. There are several forms / documents that must be signed and agreed to by each Scholar. The following sections describe each of the activities, tasks, responsibilities, events, etc. of the UNT McNair Scholars Program.

Mentor Selection

The initial and most important step of the McNair research experience is the selection of a faculty mentor. Ideally, you will work with a faculty mentor in your major or discipline conducting research you are interested in, but you may choose to find a mentor conducting research in the field in which you wish to pursue your Ph.D. even if that work does not coincide exactly with your research interests. The McNair staff can provide guidance on selecting a mentor. We encourage you to discuss the progress of your selection with either the McNair Director or Program Coordinator and seek their direction before you make the final decision. Your first step is to identify one or more faculty members in your major who is doing the kind of research in which you want to engage. You want to carefully select your mentor so that his/her own research interests coincide with yours, and one whose personality and approach to research is compatible with your own. Sometimes, a team of two mentors is warranted and acceptable. Remember, you are entering into a long-term relationship with a mentor that may well last into your post-baccalaureate years.

McNair mentors are required to complete the *Mentor Selection* form, and it is the Scholar's responsibility to ensure the form is completed, signed, and submitted to the McNair Director or Program Coordinator.

Meetings with Your Mentor

You are responsible for working with your mentor to set up regular meetings to discuss research progress and to review your research log. The schedule of such meetings may vary from each Scholar/Mentor relationship. We encourage you to meet at least twice a month with your mentor since such meetings will help strengthen the Scholar/Mentor relationship.

Research Action Plan

After you select your mentor, you will work together to set long- and short-term research goals, determine a research action plan, and set a timeline for completion and dissemination. Together, you and your mentor will complete the *Research Action Plan* form. You are responsible for submitting to the McNair staff this original plan and an updated plan (if the project changes) for each continuing semester and summer you remain an active scholar. This is due in March at a specific date to be announced.

Research Proposal

Your *Research Action Plan* will include the development of a research proposal. Proposals may vary depending on your discipline and your Mentor's expectations. For McNair purposes, your proposal will include a well-developed idea of what you think your project will involve. Your first versions of the proposal may be relatively short, since you are being introduced to the research enterprise. A useful resource to get you thinking about writing a research proposal is *How to Write a Research Proposal* http://www.meaning.ca/archives/archive/art_how_to_write_P_Wong.htm.

We will provide a proposal general template that can guide you in proposal development. Typical components of a proposal include:

- Title
- Abstract (200 words max) – written after the proposal is completed
- Statement of the problem to be investigated or the purpose of the research
- Discuss the context of the study and why it is an important problem to address
- List some of the literature you have read that relates to your research study
- Describe the methods you will use in your research, such as data collection, data analysis, etc.
- Anticipated results and findings

During the spring semester all Scholars, in collaboration with their mentors, will develop a first research proposal or refine their existing research proposal. The proposal is a written document, and it becomes the basis for a public presentation at the McNair Annual Research Forum (see below).

Annual Research Forum

An important milestone in your McNair experience is the Annual Research Forum, typically held in April of each year. At this public meeting, you will present your research proposal to McNair staff, other Scholars, and potentially your and others' mentors. Your mentor should guide you in preparing the presentation. The McNair Director uses the written Research Proposal and the oral presentation of the proposal to determine who receives summer funding. You may invite family, friends, mentors, the UNT community, and the public to the Forum. Presentations are 15 minutes (12 minutes of presentation and 3 minutes of Q&A).

Research Log

An important part of your research activities is documenting on a regular basis what you are doing. You need to record your research activities on a weekly basis, submit your research log online at least twice a month during the fall and spring semester, and weekly during the summer session. McNair staff will review and track your research progress. Your log may also be made available to your mentor, who may automatically receive a copy once per month.

Scholar's Semester Review

Each Scholar will meet with McNair staff every semester to discuss your research progress and any other relevant information concerning your success in the program. The timing of the review will depend on your status in the program. For example, new Scholars will likely have a review in the middle of the semester, while continuing Scholars may have reviews near the end of the semester. The review is approximately 30 minutes. Your mentor does not need to attend this review, but he/she does need to submit, via email response, a progress report (see below). You will need to complete the *Mid-Semester Review* (PDF posted online) at least 24 hours in advance of your semester review.

Mentor's Progress Report

As part of the Semester Review, we will send your mentor an email asking him/her to evaluate your progress.

Summer Research and Review

Scholars engage in mentor-guided research throughout the academic year. In the summer, Scholars engage in 400 hours of research and other scholarly work. By the end of the summer, Scholars should have completed sufficient research to develop a presentation to disseminate preliminary or final results. One popular form of the presentation is a poster to be presented at the Annual Fall Research Assembly in the fall semester.

You and your mentor should not lose sight of this requirement during the summer research experience. You will submit a draft of your poster by the end of the summer. You will then work with the McNair staff to finalize the poster by early September. Before we print your poster, we must receive an email from your mentor stating that the final version is approved and ready for printing. The McNair Program will pay for the printing of all posters submitted by the established deadline.

During the summer session, a McNair staff member will meet with you and your mentor for a 30-minute, on-site progress review. These visits open the door of communication between staff, mentors, and scholars, clarify their expectations and responsibilities, and assess scholars' needs. At this meeting, we also will take a picture of you and your mentor for sharing at the Annual Fall Research Assembly.

Research Methods Course

McNair Scholars will be expected to enroll in and complete a course that meets our methods requirement for your chosen discipline. Confirm with staff that the course meets these requirements before enrolling.

Annual Fall Research Assembly and Presentations

Each fall, the McNair Scholars Program hosts the Annual Fall Research Assembly and Presentations to honor the scholars and their mentors. We invite your mentors, UNT administrators, and selected faculty, but Scholars will lead the program. It includes a keynote speaker, students' acknowledgment of their individual mentors, and presentation of the Outstanding Service and Friend of McNair awards. You introduce your mentor, explain your research, and present your mentor with a framed picture (the one we take during the Summer Research Review). This is a professional event, and you must dress accordingly. You must prepare a 100-word biographical sketch to be included in the printed luncheon program. You will also present a poster at this event that represents the culmination of the research you began in the spring and continued through the summer.

Publications/Research Paper

All scholars should take their research very seriously and participate in scholarly activities such as paper submissions and professional conferences. You should make every effort to develop, together you and your mentor, plans to co-author professional articles or posters. Throughout the research experience, you should keep in mind that you must submit at least one publication-quality research paper before you graduate. We strongly recommend that mentors and scholars discuss these requirements at the beginning of their research experience, and that they address this requirement in the *Research Action*

Plan. Every scholar must submit a quality research paper to the McNair office upon graduation from UNT. This will ideally be a paper that has been published in an academic journal, but it can also be a thesis if it is related to the McNair research project.

C. Research Stipends and Pay Schedule

As a Scholar you receive a research stipend, provided by UNT, each month during the academic year (fall and spring semesters). You may also be eligible to receive a summer research stipend if you meet specific criteria. Funds from DOE and UNT support the summer stipends, with a maximum of \$2,800. The purpose of the research stipend is to support your efforts in research to enhance your learning experience. The following shows the monthly amounts you can expect to receive:

- October through May: \$175 per month for a total of \$700.
- June through September: \$700 per month maximum; for a total of \$2800
 - At the end of the summer, once you have met all requirements, you will receive a final check of \$700, making the summer total \$3500.

All amounts are subject to change, pending funding from the DOE and UNT. Stipends are processed by the office of Student Financial Aid Services, and they are deposited into your student account.

If, in the summer, you receive funds from a non-McNair research opportunity (e.g., NSF Research Experiences for Undergraduates, REU), you will not receive the maximum of \$2,800. For example, if you conduct research at another institution and they are providing you with a stipend of \$5,000 (with federal funds) for research, then you will not receive funding from McNair as the funds are more than likely coming from the same source. However, if you are receiving \$1,000 in funding from the other institution, then you are eligible to receive \$2,500 in funding from the McNair Scholars Program.

D. Travel

You should actively seek out opportunities to participate in educational and scholarly events that will enhance your knowledge of graduate education, provide experience in presenting your research, and allow you to network with faculty, researchers, and students involved with graduate education nationwide. Mentors should inform you about special events that foster scholarly development and networking opportunities.

The program can cover part or all of expenses to special events that directly relate to the purposes and objectives of the UNT McNair Scholars Program. The McNair Program has a procedure for requesting travel support, arranging travel arrangements, and reporting your travel once completed. You must meet with the McNair Director for travel approval. We encourage you to start travel planning as early as you can to get the best prices for registrations, flights, hotels, etc.

Eligibility for Travel

The Director approves travel requests, in the following priority order, to scholars planning to:

1. *Present* research at a professional conference
2. *Attend* a professional conference (this is on a case-by-case basis and the request must come from your mentor)
3. *Visit* a prospective university for graduate school or to interview for a graduate program. The availability of funds may constrain the support for such travel. Thus, you may have to provide your own food, lodging, and other expenses

Requirements and Expectations for Travel

You are all ambassadors of the UNT McNair Scholars Program. As such, you must always conduct yourself in a professional manner. Although the following travel information concerns scholars, mentors should become familiar with them to help you prioritize your travel.

Before you travel, you must:

- Inquire about various events scheduled and dress accordingly
- Be prepared to present research
- Seek the guidance of mentors, McNair staff, and senior scholars
- Follow program travel procedures as described in McNair travel information

When attending professional conferences, you must:

- Attend all scheduled conference sessions and meetings
- Network and establish contact with professionals in your field: faculty, administrators, fellow students, and staff from participating institutions

When presenting your research, you must:

- Prepare for your presentations by practicing with mentors, peers, and/or staff to get feedback and constructive criticism
- Take multiple copies of oral presentation (flash drive, cd, email to self, etc.)
- Arrive at the site early to familiarize yourself with the room and test the audio-visual equipment if needed

When traveling to visit prospective graduate programs or to interview, you must:

- Coordinate your plans with the Director
- Seek your mentors' advice, names of contact persons, and opinions about the programs
- Read about the institutions you plan to visit
- Read articles published by prospective major professors and other faculty
- Contact the Office of Graduate Admissions and the department of your choice to schedule meetings with the chair, faculty, administrators, financial aid officials, and graduate students
- Prepare an interview portfolio, including statement of purpose, transcripts, vitae, publication or writing samples, GRE scores, and appropriate questions for/about the graduate program