



“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.”

– Ronald E. McNair

# 2021 McNair Scholars Program Newsletter

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Our UWO McNair Scholars Program seeks to empower high-achieving, first-generation, low-income, and racially minoritized undergraduates to realize their potential by providing opportunities to develop skills and gain the experiences that will prepare them for graduate study. Central to our mission is to build a community of scholarship where participants engage in faculty-mentored research, distinguished by active learning, mutual respect, and collaborative scholarship. Inherent in our mission is to harness the energy of a new and more diverse generation who is committed to scholarly inquiry.

# A Note from the Director:



Cordelia Bowlus,  
M.Ed, MA Program  
Director

Reflecting on 2020 and the spring of 2021, my head spins with the intensity of having navigated our scholars through a rigorous summer of research in the midst of a perfect storm. Between the pandemic and the social unrest ignited by the horrific death of George Floyd at the hands of police, all of us felt at some point in time too distracted, worried, anxious, and/or depressed to focus on the mission. Despite this, thirteen of the fifteen McNair scholars not only completed solid research projects with extensive literature reviews, but they also presented at several virtual conferences, including the Illinois TRIO McNair Symposium and the WISys Sparks Symposium. Six continued their research and data collection into the fall and spring. Eleven presented in the spring at the WISys Quick Pitch and/or our campus Celebration of Scholarship. One scholar even got their research published in a scholarly journal. The stress of 2020 did, however, leave its mark on all of us. For several scholars that meant taking gap year before going on to graduate school. For our McNair Program, it meant a difficult recruiting year, our PR lost in the shuffle as many students and faculty, detached from the physical campus and overwhelmed by e-mail and zoomed out, went into survival mode. Suffice to say, we are eleven strong this summer, with nine newly recruited scholars and two, who are participating in a second year in the row. For me the highlight of 2021 has been pulling down our masks, knowing we are vaccinated and being able to laugh and enjoy a meal together. We are all looking forward to our first McNair Showcase in two years and invite you will stop by the Culver Family Welcome Center on Friday, September 17 between 4 and 6 PM to view our scholars' poster presentations and celebrate their achievements.



Sara Hagedorn joins our team as an alumnus of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. She holds a bachelor's degree in biology and a professional master's degree in conservation biology. Sara developed her interest in science and research from UW Oshkosh, and to this day carries that passion with her. Sara remembers what it is like to have a good team supported by strong leadership to guide her in obtaining the education and career she desired. She currently works in another position on campus where she succors to students the same leadership imperative to her success. If that position was not rewarding enough, Sara has joined the McNair team and hopes to play an integral role in the educational success of present-day scholars.



Leah Vang is a rising senior from Menasha, Wisconsin. Entering college undecided, she soon discovered her passion for understanding the human mind and society, declaring herself a psychology major with a minor in sociology. She credits much of her success as a first-generation college student to her Student Support Services advisor who was always there to help her make the most of her education. Because of her positive experience, Leah plans to pursue a graduate degree with an eye on a career as an academic advisor in higher education. She is excited for this experience as the McNair Program student assistant and looks forward to following the research that the scholars have this year!

# Introducing the 2021 McNair Cohort



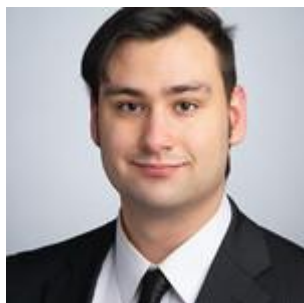
Back row, left to right: Jayda Newman, Em Garvey, Matt Frisch, Prof. Nenad Stojilovic, Josh Roberts, Hector Ortega, Nick Morrissey, Prof. Robert Wagoner

Front row, left to right: Kaycey Henning, Cordelia Bowlus, Leah Vang, Lux Beibhinn, Mia VanHooreweghe



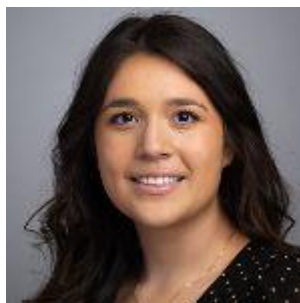
*Lux  
Beibhinn*

Lux Beibhinn (Fond du Lac, WI), a women's & gender studies major with a sociology minor and LGBTQ+ certificate, will conduct research with Prof. Kathleen Corely. The focus of their project will be on queer teen suicide rates and how social processes and institutions impact mental health on LGBTQ+ individuals.



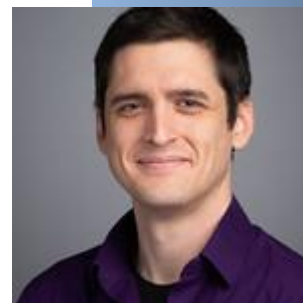
*Matt  
Frisch*

Matt Frisch (Oshkosh, WI), seeking a dual-degree in engineering and physics with a minor in mathematics, will be conducting research for the second summer in a row alongside Prof. Nenad Stojilovic. They will be researching in the area of crystallography polymers, with a focus on the origin of crystallite phase in selected polymers.



*Anissa  
Garcia*

Anissa Garcia (Waukesha, WI), a women's & gender studies major with a Spanish minor, will be examining Barbie and Bratz play and how exposure to these dolls enable perception to racial and ethnic diversity. Her IRB approved project involves interviews with adults who grew up playing with these dolls. Anissa will be working alongside her mentor, Prof. Caryn Murphy.



*Em  
Garvey*

Em Garvey (Appleton, WI), a physics major with a professional emphasis and a minor in mathematics, is interested in particle physics. With their mentor Prof. Mark Lattery, they will examine the strengths and weaknesses of the PANDA detector to identify and study charmonium decays.





*Kaycey  
Henning*

Kaycey Henning (Hurley, WI), a nursing major with a psychology minor, will work with Sarah O'Connell, MSN, to examine the effects of isolation on long-term care residents during the Covid-19 pandemic.



*Kirandeep  
Kaur*

Kirandeep Kaur (Franklin, WI), a biomedical science major with a psychology minor, will be working with her mentor, Prof. John Chan. By researching neurotransmitter receptors in schistosomes (flatworms), they are seeking to find new and more effective treatments against this deadly, water-borne human parasite.



*Nick  
Morrissey*

Nick Morrissey (Weston, WI), a philosophy major, will be working with Prof. S. Evan Kreider to evaluate Metamodernism in the context of emerging computer-based art forms. They are interested in understanding how the digital revolution will change in our conception of aesthetics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



*Jayda  
Newman*

Jayda Newman (Wausau, WI), a psychology major and neuroscience and philosophy minor, will be conducting research with Prof. Robert Wagoner. They will be looking at how our understanding of the mind impacts the practical application of therapy.



*Hector  
Ortega*

Hector Ortega (Fitchburg, WI), a political science and philosophy major, is working with Dr. Michael Baltutis to evaluate the Tibet-China relations and the role that Tibetan Buddhism has in the Tibetan Autonomy Debate.



*Josh  
Roberts*

Josh Roberts (Waukesha, WI), a music performance (instrumental) major, is working with Prof. Drew Whiting to better understand what resources and curriculum are available to woodwind performers who are interested in pursuing a career in multiple woodwind performance pedagogy.



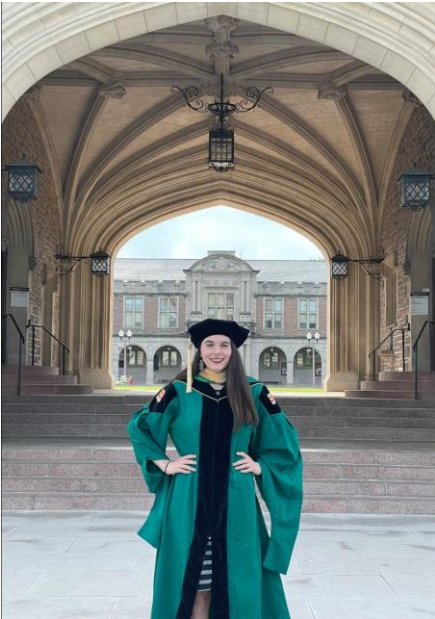
*Mia  
VanHooreweghe*

Mia VanHooreweghe (Appleton, WI), a kinesiology major with a chemistry minor, will be studying receptors in schistosomes alongside Prof. John Chan, with the goal of developing better alternative drug treatments against this deadly, water-borne flatworm.

Another  
great  
summer  
with an  
amazing  
group of  
McNair  
scholars!

# Alumni Spotlight

## Monica Fieck



Monica Fieck, 2017-18 UWO McNair scholar, completed her Master of Social Work at the Washington University in St. Louis, where she had received \$40,000 in scholarship for her two-year degree program. Monica was drawn to Washington's Brown School of Social Work, Public Health and Social Policy in part because the program offers both a concentration in Violence and Injury Prevention and a specialization in Sexual Health and Education. For the time being, Monica will remain at the Washington University where she is working as a research fellow for a project that examines the implementation of Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) into rape crisis centers in Texas. Monica's long term goal is to work in a mental health setting as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), a process which involves passing the LMSW exam and two years of supervised work under a LCSW.

Sarah Reed, 2017-18 UWO McNair scholar, completed her Master of Public Health at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee with a Master of Public Health. In addition to having her studies funded by the Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) fellowship, Sarah received the esteemed Tomas Garret-Rosas Research Award. Among her accomplishments as a graduate student was the publication of her own research titled, "The Influence of Local Built Environments on Social Belonging." She and her project partner are currently preparing another manuscript's publication. Sarah works as an epidemiologist at Ho-Chunk Nation (HCN).

## Sarah Reed





Joy Evans, 2018-19 McNair Scholar, who is currently pursuing a master's in public health, was recently appointed the new on-site student manager for the UW Milwaukee Food Pantry. Joy credits her experience as a McNair scholar researching food insecurity among college students with her mentor Juliana Kahrs, MPH, as laying the foundation for her current job and success in graduate school. Joy was also awarded the UWM Chancellor's Graduate Student Award that will go towards her summer tuition.

## Inspiring the Next Generation of McNair Scholars



For the past fifteen years, the Wisconsin Association Education Opportunity Program Personnel (WAEOPP) has sponsored an annual fall graduate retreat for TRIO students interested in furthering their education in graduate school. While this retreat has traditionally been held in the Dells, the Covid pandemic forced the fall 2020 retreat online. The success of that event motivated retreat organizers to host a second virtual graduate retreat in April 2021 featuring Ronald E. McNair's older brother Carl McNair as the keynote speaker. His stories of how Ron overcame tremendous obstacles to achieve his dream of attaining a doctorate in physics at MIT and going on to become an astronaut were deeply moving. Read how our scholars were inspired and motivated by Carl's powerful message.

"After hearing Carl McNair speak, it made me realize that there are a lot of opportunities for me if I do not let fear and self-doubt get in the way." – Matt Frisch

"I had listened to the whole segment with Carl McNair and took away a lot of wisdom and pride in what I am doing." – Josh Roberts

"The biggest take away from his speech was to apply myself even when I have doubt and not unselect myself." – Kaycey Henning

"But after listening to Carl, I think I finally understand that it's normal to be scared, but letting that stop you from pursuing your dreams is an injustice that you do to yourself." – Kirandeeep Kaur

"You could tell just by watching him that he loved spreading positivity and talking to young students like myself." – Mia VanHooreweghe

"Carl McNair's attitude on how to handle these "haters" is rejuvenating and helps me feel like I don't need to prove myself to the dream stealers, but to myself, the dreamer." – Em Garvey

"I didn't know that Ronald McNair struggled so much to get into his PhD program; hearing about his personal journey made me feel less alone." – Nick Morrissey

"He reminds us to not shrug off the advice we are given by our mentors, staff, advisors, and counselors, and to not succumb to our doubts about success." – Hector Ortega

"Listening to where he came from and everything he accomplished help me grow some sort of confidence in myself." – Anissa Garcia



# Congratulate our Graduates!



2021 Fox River Graduation Celebration

Left to right: Doua Xiong, Matt Frisch, Dorothy Mitchell, Janaya Godfrey, Jessica Plascencia, Sydney Schmidt, Brianna Roberts, Cordelia Bowlus



Angel Camacho

May 2021 Graduate

Major: Accounting and Spanish

2019 Cohort

Angel will take a few years off to gain experience working as a Tax Associate at Grant Thornton, LLP.



Riley Dreschsler

May 2021 Graduate

Major: Anthropology

2019 Cohort

Riley will pursue a master's in anthropology at the University of Missouri Columbus. She is the recipient of the prestigious Ronald E. McNair fellowship which includes tuition remission!



Megan Elger

May 2021 Graduate

Major: Communication

2019 Cohort

Megan plans to take a gap year before applying to graduate programs.



Janaya Godfrey

May 2021 Graduate

Major: Criminal Justice

Minor: Political Science and African American Studies

2020 Cohort

Janaya is excited about moving to Madison where she will take a gap year and work before applying to graduate programs. She is interested in public policy analysis.



Bryce Herlache

August 2021 Graduate

Major: Kinesiology

2020 Cohort

Bryce will be pursuing a master's in kinesiology & health promotion with an emphasis in exercise physiology. His program includes certification in high performance. He has received a graduate assistantship and tuition remission.



Malykee Hall

December 2020 Graduate

Major: Biology

Minor: Chemistry

2019 Cohort

Malykee is currently completing an accelerated nursing program at Arizona State University.



Amanda Martinez

May 2021 Graduate

Major: Social Work

Minor: Social Justice and Spanish

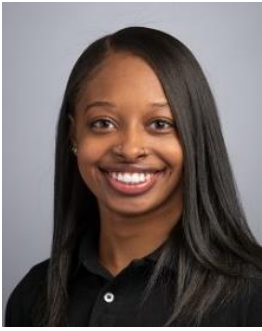
2020 Cohort

Amanda will pursue a master's in social work with a focus on children, youth, and family welfare at the University of Wisconsin Madison. Amanda received a full-tuition award!

You did it!  
*Congratulations*

A large yellow star graphic is positioned behind the word "Congratulations" in the text.





Dorothy Mitchell

May 2021 Graduate

Major: Chemistry

Minor: Biology

2020 Cohort

Dorothy is relocating to New Orleans where she will be pursuing a master's in public health at Louisiana State University.



Elias Flor Martinez

May 2021 Graduate

Major: Biology (Healthcare Emphasis)

2019 Cohort

Elias is preparing to take the MCAT. He will take a gap year before applying to medical school.



Daniel Obi

May 2021 Graduate

Major: Biology (Healthcare Emphasis)

2019 Cohort

Daniel is preparing to take the GRE with the plan to apply to several physician assistant programs. He is particularly interested in UW Madison's program. In preparation for graduate study, he will continue working as a Certified Nursing Assistant.



Jessica Plascencia

May 2021 Graduate

Major: Psychology and Spanish

Minor: Social Justice

2020 Cohort

Jess has been accepted into UW Green Bay's master's in social work program. She is awaiting news of a graduate assistantship.



Brianna Roberts

May 2021 Graduate

Major: Chemistry

2020 Cohort

Brianna will be relocating to Baton Rouge, where she will be pursuing a master's in athletic training at Louisiana State University. Brianna received a full-tuition award!



Karely Rodriguez Jimenez

May 2021 Graduate

Major: Psychology

Minor: Spanish, Social Justice and Criminal Justice

2020 Cohort

Karely plans to take a gap year with the goal of teaching English abroad.



Sydney Schmidt

December 2020 Graduate

Major: Psychology

2020 Cohort

Sydney is currently working as a behavioral therapist. She is still exploring her options for graduate school but knows that her career goal is to continue to work with people on the autism spectrum.



Mylo Wilkins

December 2020 Graduate

Major: Microbiology

Minor: Chemistry

2020 Cohort

Mylo will continue his research under his McNair mentor Professor Matson while pursuing a master's in microbiology at UWO. He has received a graduate research assistantship!



Doua Xiong

December 2020 Graduate

Major: Biology

2019 Cohort

Doua is dedicated to pursuing a career in medicine and public health. She recently took the MCAT and will be applying to a number of medical programs in the Upper Midwest.



Bailey Young

May 2021 Graduate

Major: Psychology

Emphasis: Pre-Med

2018 Cohort

Bailey is preparing to take the MCAT. She will take a gap year before applying to medical school.

# Covid-19 Impact

While thankfully none of our scholars experienced any life-threatening health affects due to the Covid-19 pandemic, their lives and studies were impacted in ways they never could have imagined. There were some advantages to the switch to online schooling, such as not having to commute to campus and being able to join class from the comfort of one's apartment, but for most McNair scholars, both at the undergraduate and graduate level, it was an exercise in self-discipline and perseverance.

## 2019-2020 Cohort

“That [the Covid Shutdown] was a huge challenge... [For me it was] trying to figure out how to still conduct research and... get the entire value of this program.” – Brianna Roberts

“McNair also provided us with the opportunity to present our work to an audience, even in the middle of a global pandemic.” – Karely Rodriguez

“Throughout the program my cohort collaborated with each other to keep everyone motivated to reach deadlines and succeed in their research.” – Sydney Schmidt

## Graduate Students

Monica Fieck: “I visited home in Wisconsin for Spring Break in the Spring of 2020, and they told us not to return for another week, and then we were told not to return at all.” Initially, online classroom engagement was novel and sometimes more exciting, but soon zoom fatigue set in: “I struggled to feel connected to my peers and even to the university and general university community.” The transition to online learning affected her first practicum/internship experience at a domestic violence shelter as well. “The most learning was happening in the environment, and that was taken away from me for the last couple of months of that internship.” Monica had to navigate her second practicum experience as a clinical intern as a Support Services Therapist under Covid restrictions. The agency she worked for specializes in serving survivors of sexual and/or domestic violence, child abuse and sex trafficking.

While conducting intake assessments for clients seeking therapy, Monica's work was done remotely and her interactions with clients were always virtual. Despite overcoming the challenges and finishing her master's successfully, she “felt a strange lack of closure by not being able to go back on campus.”

Sarah Reed: Sarah explains that there were positives and negatives to the sudden change in 2020. As a graduate student in a Master of Public Health program, Sarah received a job opportunity from the pandemic. “There was such a demand for contact tracers and many health departments were reaching out to students since we were readily available and had some prior health knowledge.” She started out as a contact tracer and eventually switched to working on the data side, assisting with data cleanup and quality. “I truly believe that experience made me competitive from a leadership/responsibility aspect and was one of the reasons why I was offered my current position at HCN despite me not having a master's at the time (although the position required it).” There were huge challenges as well.

Her job as a contact tracer was emotionally draining. She often had to do extra steps to find employers, flights, and other household members through medical records, insurance records, social media, and more. In addition, health department staff often received troublesome messages, even resulting in one department being forced to stop contact tracing for some time.



# Thank You!

Thank you to the 2020 McNair research mentors and instructional faculty!

**Jeremiah Bohr**, PhD, sociology

**Aggie Hanni**, PhD, Psychology Assistant  
Vice Chancellor for Enrollment  
Management

**Michael Jasinski**, PhD, political science

**Laura Jean Baker**, MFA, English

**Brant Kedrowski**, PhD, chemistry

**James Kruger**, PhD, English

**Pascale Manning**, PhD, English

**Yoko Mogi-Hein**, EdD, education

**Eric Matson**, PhD, biology

**Justyna Olszewska**, PhD, psychology

**Nenad Stojilovic**, PhD, physics &  
astronomy

**Michael Van Esler**, PhD, radio tv film

**Brian Wallace**, PhD, kinesiology

**Kristi Wilkum**, PhD, communications

The McNair Scholar Program is a federally funded TRIO program designed to increase graduate degree attainment for students from underrepresented groups. McNair participants are high-achieving undergraduates, who are first-generation college students with financial need and/or members of a group that is traditionally underrepresented in graduate education.

To learn more about McNair and what our program has to offer, please visit us at <https://uwosh.edu/mcnairscholars/>

The UW Oshkosh McNair Scholar Program is 100% funded through a TRIO grant from the United States Department of Education PR/Award Number P217A170088. For 2020/2021, the UW Oshkosh McNair Scholars Program received \$260,309 in federal funds.

View this Newsletter in a virtual format that contains more news!  
<https://mailchi.mp/fb802d06b997/mcnair-2021-newsletter>

Follow us on our socials!

