Welcome to our New Transfer Student Cohort

Kylie Baker
- Major: Psychology and Black Studies
- Minor: Applied Psychology
- Hometown: Santa Rosa, CA
- Graduation: June 2018
- Mentor: Dr. Melissa Morgan-Consol
- Research Interests: Cultural Variables and Social Justice Perspectives in African American Communities

Natalie Bernai
- Major: Psychology
- Minor: Applied Psychology
- Hometown: Fontana, CA
- Graduation: Spring 2018
- Mentor: Dr. Mya Barnett
- Research Interests: Child Development, Latinx Mental Health, Parent-Child Relationships, Academic Achievement

Rodolfo Cerda
- Major: Sociology
- Minor: Education
- Hometown: El Monte, CA
- Graduation: June 2018
- Mentor: Dr. Rebeca Mireles-Ríos
- Research Interests: Masculinity, Educational Achievement, Higher Education, Education Equality

Roberto Chavez
- Major: Chemistry
- Hometown: Tijuana, Mexico
- Graduation: June 2013
- Mentor: Dr. Craig Hawker
- Research Interests: Photochemistry, Molecular Machinery, Environmental Chemistry

Jeremy Neill
- Major: Geography/Geographic Information Science
- Hometown: Riverside, CA
- Graduation: June 2016
- Mentor: Dr. Keith Clarke

Chris Turner
- Major: Biological Anthropology
- Hometown: Glenrothes, Scotland
- Graduation: Spring 2018
- Mentor: Dr. Michael Gurven
- Research Interests: Osteology, Bioarcheology

It’s another spring quarter with many changes and great excitement at the offices of the McNair Scholars Program. At this time of the year we celebrate our McNair scholars. After two years of faculty mentored research, participation in seminars and workshops which prepare them for entrance to graduate school, and the arduous process of making application to graduate programs, our 2017 Seniors applied to Master’s or Doctoral programs, and 80% are on their way to post-baccalaureate training in the Fall. We will showcase the scholarship of six of our seniors and one of the juniors in the 7th edition of the UCSB McNair Scholars Research Journal, which will be available in June. Thanks again to the faculty mentors whose efforts on behalf of our students allow them to produce a first publication in what we hope is a long and stellar academic career.

More of our McNair Scholars from the first cohort have attained their doctorates. We are pleased to announce that this spring we will have six former students with doctoral degrees from institutions such as the University of Iowa, Indiana at Bloomington, and Berkeley. At last count, we have close to fifteen other McNair students working on the last stages of their dissertations. This year, a goodly number of our alumni completed their Master’s programs, and a sizable number are moving from that course of study to PhD programs. One example is Marlon Castro, who has gone from a Master’s in Postsecondary Education from the University of Southern California to Pennsylvania State University doctoral program in Higher Education; another is Michelle Parra who completed a Master’s in Sexuality Studies at San Francisco State who will begin a doctorate in Sociology at the University of California, Santa Cruz this fall.

It is also a time of tremendous change. After eight years as Assistant Director, Monique Limón ran a very successful campaign for California Assembly and is now in Sacramento representing the 37th Assembly District. Two exceptional new staff have stepped in to serve our students and the program, Dr. Yvette Martinez-Vu as Assistant Director and Mr. Marcus Mathis as Program Coordinator. You can read more about this major transition and meet our new personnel in this issue. Change comes also with an influx of new students. We admitted seven transfer students with majors in Electrical Engineering, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Policy.

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Meet the New Staff

New Assistant Director, Dr. Yvette Martínez-Vu
Assistant Director

Dr. Yvette Martínez-Vu, joined the staff on January 23, 2017. She received her PhD in Theater and Performance Studies from UCLA where she wrote a dissertation titled Transindigenous Materialities: Gender, Indigeneity, and Objects in Mexicana and Chicana Performance. Dr. Martínez-Vu has extensive experience working with undergraduates, including positions at UCLA’s Scholarship Resource Center and Undergraduate Research Center as well as serving as Graduate Mentor for the Mellon Mays Fellowship Professional Network. Author of several scholarly articles and a frequent presenter at conferences, Dr. Martínez-Vu is uniquely qualified to help McNair Scholars navigate the complicated academic terrain and prepare for what awaits them in graduate school. When she is not working with and for students, she enjoys delving into novels and memoirs by women of color, attending live theater performances, practicing yoga (for mind and body), and spending time with her husband and 3-year-old son Emillano (Emi).

Marcus Mathis became Program Coordinator for the McNair Scholars Program in December 2016 after a long and varied career at UCSB. His commitment to undergraduate students is evident from the types of positions he has held on campus, ranging from Student Information Services Representatives in the Registrar’s Office to Counselor, Cultural Center Coordinator, and Social Media/Graphic Design Lead at the Educational Opportunity Program. Marcus received his BA from UCSB, double majoring in Art History and Black Studies and is working towards a graduate degree at UCSC’s Gevirtz Graduate School of Education. Marcus has a depth and breadth of knowledge about the challenges facing undergraduates from underrepresented communities and has devoted his professional life to helping students overcome these hurdles. A self-described “speculative science fiction nerd,” Marcus is an avid photographer and father of two, 13-year-old Preston and 10-year-old Amani.

Farewell to Monique Limón

With tremendous sadness, the staff and students of the McNair Scholars Program said farewell in December to Monique Limón, who served as the Assistant Director for eight years. Monique, along with Director Dr. Beth Schneider, built the framework for the program, and Monique provided exemplary leadership, offering outstanding service to undergraduates and the campus more generally. For our students, she was also an important role model as a first-generation Latina who excelled in her education at Berkeley (BA) and Columbia University (MA). Before McNair, Monique was the Director of Diversity for the Graduate Division. In recent years, she also served on campus as an instructor for the STEP Program, participated on the task force on the Black Resource Center and was the lead campus representative for the California Diversity Forum. Those of us who have been with McNair watched her skillfully combine her full-time job at UCSB with service to the community and then in elected office as a Trustee of the Santa Barbara Unified School District. We know that Monique will be serving the campus and local communities well as our representative in the California Assembly.

Scholar Profile: Andrea Mora

Graduating senior Andrea Mora is majoring in Psychology with a minor in Applied Psychology. Andrea has been working with her faculty mentor, Dr. Maryam Kia-Keating, from the Counseling, Clinical & School Psychology Department in the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education. Andrea transferred to UCSB in summer 2015 from Santa Barbara City College. During her first summer as a McNair Scholar, Andrea completed a research project titled: Barriers to Help-Seeking among Latino/Hispanic Parents which she presented at the Undergraduate Research Colloquium (URCA) in spring 2016. Andrea’s clinical and teaching experiences as a crisis counselor for the Santa Barbara Rape Crisis Center and tutor at Santa Barbara City College have informed her decision to earn a doctoral degree. She is passionate about pursuing research on developing and disseminating effective intervention programs to increase the utilization of mental health services among Latinx populations.

Andrea believes her greatest challenge in getting to this point in her career has been balancing her responsibilities as student and mother of two small children, while holding various part-time jobs to offset the costs of her education. She reports that although it can be draining at times, the support she has received from her coworkers, friends, family, the McNair Scholars Program and the UC McNair Scholars Program has encouraged her during hard times. Andrea was admitted to several graduate programs and ultimately selected a combined MSW/PhD program at the University of Michigan, with a concentration in Developmental Psychology.

She credits the McNair program with providing her with the tools needed to pursue a doctoral degree. She states, “The advice and support I have received has focused not only on my academics and research, but also on the development of my self-esteem and confidence that as a first-generation, Latina young mother, helped me pursue graduate studies and succeed.” She advises other McNair Scholars to take advantage of all the resources offered at the program and university. She encourages others to always put their best effort forward, utilize the mentorship opportunities provided through McNair mentors, and seek additional opportunities outside of McNair to continue growing as scholars.