



UCSB McNair Scholars Program: 2026 Application

The McNair Scholars Program prepares qualified undergraduates for entrance to graduate programs in all fields of study. The goals of McNair are to increase the number of first-generation and low-income students in Ph.D. programs, ultimately diversifying academia, government, and industry, among other fields. To do so, scholars have the opportunities to participate in academic year and summer research activities; attend courses, seminars and workshops on topics related to graduate school preparation; complete a research project under the guidance of a faculty mentor; and present their research at local, regional and national conferences.

ESSAY PROMPTS

You will need to be prepared to answer the following three prompts on the application:

- 1) McNair prepares first-generation and low-income students for graduate study in doctoral programs. What are your reasons for pursuing the doctoral degree (Ph.D)? How has your background influenced your educational aspirations and career goals? (limit to 400 words)
- 2) Gaining research experience can be challenging for many reasons. Describe a time when you had to take initiative to navigate a challenging or unfamiliar situation, either for yourself or on behalf of someone else. How did this experience demonstrate your perseverance or resilience? (limit to 400 words)
- 3) We know it can feel awkward to “sell yourself.” However, we want to know about your collaborative strengths. What value do you think you would bring to the McNair cohort? In answering this question please think about what your strengths are in a collaborative environment and what roles you tend to play in group settings. (limit to 100 words)