

# UCSB MCNAIR SCHOLARS PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

SUMMER/FALL 2021, VOL. 17



## McNAIR



### SCHOLARS PROGRAM UCSB

The UCSB McNair Scholars Program is supported by the U.S. Department of Education Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, UCSB Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and, deans of the College of Letters and Sciences. Additionally, our science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) scholars are partially funded by Edison International.



# NOTE FROM THE Faculty Director



**Faculty Director**  
Miroslava Chavez-Garcia, PhD

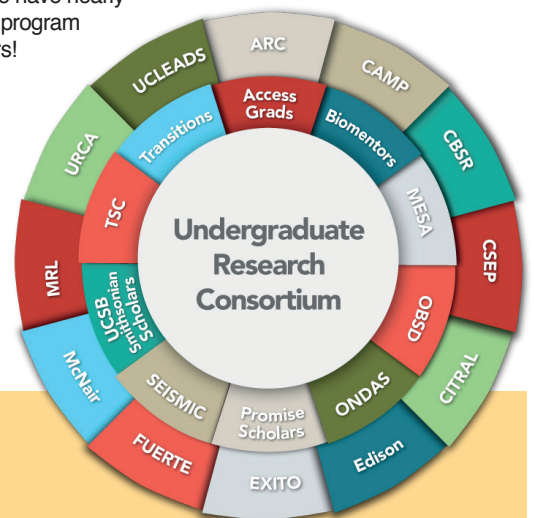
Welcome to fall 2021. We are so glad to be easing ourselves back to campus after a long hiatus and look forward to settling into a new groove, with hybrid, in-person, and online-remote activity. The COVID-19 pandemic certainly has upended all our lives but with patience, flexibility, and support we will get through this. We are a resilient bunch and grateful for the many friends—faculty, staff, students, and administrators—we have at UCSB.

We have many new changes at the McNair Scholars Program and want to share the news. After nearly five years of giving her professional expertise, experience, and insights on the graduate school application process for first-generation, low income, and underrepresented students, Associate

Director Dr. Yvette Martinez-Vu has separated from McNair to explore new opportunities. In her stead, we welcome Dr. Veronica Fematt, who is a UCSB Ph.D. alumna from the School of Education. Most recently, she was the Policy and Practice Dissemination Coordinator at the Center for Evaluation and Educational Effectiveness (CEEE) at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) and a postdoctoral scholar and lecturer in the Department of Chicana/o Studies at UCSB. We are excited to have her map out her vision for the program.

Riding the momentum of new leadership in the area of undergraduate research, we have partnered campus units that work directly with undergraduate students in providing research opportunities and related support

services, particularly those working with first-generation, low income, and underrepresented undergraduates. Working with Dr. Anita Stahl, the new Director at URCA, we have launched the Undergraduate Research Consortium, which will bring together all the resources undergraduates need to engage in research opportunities. We have nearly twenty program partners!



## Welcome to McNair



### Dr. Vanessa Woods

Dr. Vanessa Woods has agreed to join McNair as the new co-PI following the departure of Dr. Anne Charity Hudley to Stanford University. Dr. Woods also joins our new STEM Advisory Board, composed of six faculty, all of whom have been supporters of the program. They are featured on our newly revamped website with our new logos and branding as well. At the website, students can find everything for how to apply to the program, where and how to find potential faculty mentors, and the rewards and challenges of McNair.

Along with a consultant, Dr. Woods is helping prepare for the next application cycle for the Department of Education (DOE) Ronald E. McNair 5-year grant, which is set to open in early winter quarter of 2022. A successful award from DOE, along with generous campus support, will allow us to continue to support the program for the next five years, 2022 to 2027. Wish us luck! Feel free to contact us at any time. We are always looking for feedback and welcome any support.

Farewell to

# Dra. Yvette Martinez-Vu



**Dr. Yvette Martinez-Vu has decided to pursue new professional and personal opportunities.**

After nearly five years of dedication, Associate Director, Dr. Yvette Martinez-Vu has decided to pursue new professional and personal opportunities. With her popular podcast, “Grad School Femtoring: A podcast for first-generation students of color,” and her wealth of expertise and training with first-gen, low income, and underrepresented students, she is poised to bring many new insights and resources, making graduate study a possibility to people traditionally locked out of higher education. We will sorely miss her infectious laugh and her ability to keep McNair running smoothly and efficiently, especially making it an inviting and warm space for everyone who came through McNair. We wish her much success and happiness on her journey. As part of our tribute, we would like to offer some reflections by McNair scholars and alumni.

“Thank you for everything! Your dedication to supporting students and academics of color is evident in all your involvements - starting from being Assistant Director at McNair to hosting an incredible podcast on graduate school. You’ve changed the trajectory of so many of us in the best ways possible. I appreciate [her] compassion, transparency, and overall realness. I’m excited for your new chapter and wish you and your family the best as this adventure begins!” Sirenia, Alumna

“You truly were one of the best mentors I ever had. I honestly don’t think I would have gotten into UCSD without you. Thank you for taking the time to help me with not only academic and grad school things but personal things as well. I can’t tell you how much I appreciate the amount of time you took out of your day to help all of us with everything and anything. I hope to one day see you again and I wish you the best in everything in life.” Jose Delgado, Alumnus

“Thank you for all you have done for our McNair Scholars Program and what you have done for me. I still remember when we first met and you said ‘your name is Josh? It’ll definitely be easy for me to remember that!’ Meeting and learning from you inspired me to not only work on myself as an educator. From our conversations on toxic masculinity to the impact of our work in academia, it truly has been amazing to learn from you as a mentor.” Josh Salas, Alumnus

“I want to thank you so much for the work you’ve put into this program, the students you’ve inspired like me, and the lives you’ve impacted as an amazing mother setting an example for other mothers! Your work has reminded me that our personal lives inform how we give back, and I want to follow in your footsteps to continue the efforts for a better, more equitable world. Thank you for sharing yourself professionally and candidly when we needed both and I hope that the energy you’ve invested comes back to you tenfold on your future endeavors! Alyssa Frick-Jenkins

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart for the support you’ve provided. You are hands-down the best supervisor I’ve ever had, and you’ve shaped in major ways who I am and who I will be as a professor and mentor.” Christopher Morales, McNair Grad Mentor



# Class of 2021 Graduate Programs

Fifteen graduating seniors began graduate programs this fall.



**Xochitl Briseño**  
MSEd program,  
UC Berkeley



**Marco Colin,**  
PhD program,  
Chemical Engineering,  
University of Delaware



**Zoey Eddy,**  
PhD program,  
Psychology,  
Rutgers University



**Kevin García,**  
MS program,  
Biology,  
CSU San Marcos



**Jaquelyn Valenzuela,**  
PhD program,  
Education,  
UC Santa Barbara



**Rosalía Hernández,**  
PhD program,  
Data Science,  
UT Austin



**Juanita Iheanacho,**  
MA program,  
Ethnic Studies,  
SFSU



**Fidel López,**  
MS program,  
Mathematics,  
New York University (2022)



**Jaqueline López,**  
PhD program,  
School Psychology,  
UC Berkeley



**Wren Palmer,**  
PhD program,  
American Studies,  
University of Michigan



**Luna Pérez-Vega,**  
MS program,  
Urban Studies,  
UC Irvine



**Carolina Ramírez Moreno,**  
PhD program,  
Literature,  
UC San Diego



**Julia Rosales,**  
MPP program,  
UC Berkeley



**Raymond Thicklin, MS/**  
PhD program,  
Physics,  
UC San Diego



**Almalina Gomes,**  
MPH program,  
Emory University



# Summer Program Highlights

The McNair Scholars Summer Program continued virtually this summer due to the ongoing pandemic. Eighteen students participated in our online summer program, while five of our scholars attended external summer programs. Diana Sanchez joined the 2021 Virtual Moore Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program at UNC, Chapel Hill, Abraham Soto participated in the Summer Internship Program at John Hopkins University School of Medicine, Alyssa Frick-Jenkins participated in the Academic Research Consortium Summer Program at UCSB, and Isaias Ghezze and Odalys Callejas

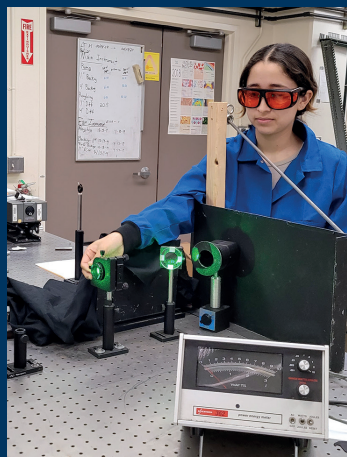
were WAVE Fellows at CalTech. Students in our summer program worked on individual research projects and began preparing for graduate school. They attended weekly seminars on research, writing, and presentation skills, and workshops to prepare them for the first year of graduate school. Seniors presented their research at the annual UCLA McNair Scholars Conference, and all our scholars participated in the UCSB McNair Summer Research Symposium. Both events continued virtually and were well attended by faculty, family, and friends.

## Edison STEM Summer Scholars Program



**Caleigh Wagner**

Twelve students took on a hybrid -- in-person and virtual -- undergraduate research journey as a part of the Edison Scholars Summer Program. Thanks to the continued generosity of Edison International, each scholar who participated received a \$4,000 stipend. Edison Scholars performed research for eight weeks in the midst of UCSB's transition to in-person work in research spaces. Alongside developing their research projects, Edison



**Dalila Gallegos**

Scholars sharpened their science communication skills by preparing elevator pitches to share their research with audiences outside of their field. Student projects spanned from biomaterials to education assessment. As an example, Edison Scholar, Dalila Gallegos's photochemistry project examined the lifetimes of excited molecules. Caleigh Warner worked in the de Vries Group on atomic force microscopy, while Maxi Li helped develop techniques towards ad-



**Max Li**

vancing biological materials. Over the course of the summer, the Edison Scholars also participated in professional development workshops on topics such as "Getting Organized for Graduate School" and other seminars that assisted students in preparing personal statements and poster presentations. We are very proud of the success and growth of this summer's Edison Scholars.



# 2021 UCLA McNair Conference



From July 27 to July 30, 2021, McNair Scholars joined from across the country to present their research at the 2021 UCLA Virtual National McNair Conference. The conference included keynote speakers and panels, as well as a graduate school fair and workshops. This was the second online National McNair Conference hosted by UCLA due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The conference went off without a hitch. The website UCLA utilized provided a central hub through which attendees could access sessions and connect individually during the conference. The conference was attended by over 650 McNair scholars and staff representing 54 institutions. It was a well-organized and impressive conference.

Our scholars did an excellent job in sharing their research via Zoom. Fourteen of our McNair Scholars presented their research, connecting with scholars and attendees from across the nation. Presentations ranged from an examination of the inequities in K-20 education for first-generation college students to the exhumation history of the Central Aleutian arc using geobarometry. The conference was an opportunity for scholars to present their research and explain its potential impact to an interdisciplinary audience. As Ronald McNair said, “Whether or not you reach your goals in life depends entirely on how well you prepare for them and how badly you want them.” Our scholars demonstrated their hard work and commitment in spades at the 2021 UCLA Virtual National McNair Conference.

## Thriving, Not Surviving:

### Navigating Higher Education as a First-Generation College Student

For the fourth year in a row, the McNair Scholars Program helped organize a workshop on “Thriving, Not Surviving: Navigating Higher Education as a First-Generation College Student.” Held virtually on, August 3, 2021, this year’s event was a collaboration among the McNair Scholars Program, ONDAS Student Center, Transfer Student Center, and Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) at UCSB.

This event, which was sponsored by EOP, included a first-generation graduate student panel via Zoom followed by a graduate student-led discussion session in twelve breakout rooms. With over 120 participants, the audience was composed of students in the Summer Transfer Transitions Program (STTP) as well as UCSB undergraduates, graduate students, and community members. The goal of this

event was to increase awareness of the obstacles that first-gen students experience in higher education and provide strategies for thriving in academia. Attendees discussed topics such as family achievement guilt, imposter syndrome, microaggressions, working with mentors, self-care strategies, and building community.

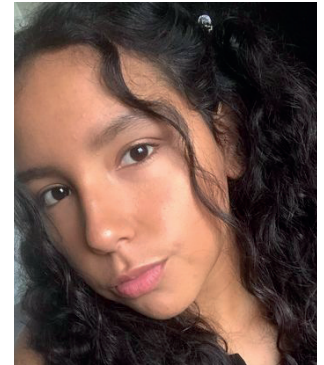




# Class of 2023



**Britney Walton**  
Major: Sociology, Dance, & Applied Psychology Minor  
Hometown: Oxnard, CA  
Mentor: Dr. Jill Sharkey and Dr. Ninotchka Bennahum  
Research interests: Childhood Traumatic Stress, Community Peer Support and Intervention, Somatic/Dance Movement Therapy



**Laura Rosero**  
Major: Psychological and Brain Sciences  
Hometown: South San Francisco, CA  
Mentor: Dr. Heejung Kim  
Research interests: Culture in an Academic Context



**Carla Suarez Soto**  
Major: Linguistics, Chinese emphasis, Spanish  
Hometown: Santa Rosa, CA  
Mentor: Professor Dr. Jin Sook Lee  
Research interests: Multilingual, Multicultural, & ESL Education, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies



**Arsalan Hashmi**  
Major: Biological Sciences  
Hometown: Chatsworth, CA  
Mentor: Dr. Javier Read de Alaniz  
Research interests: Bioengineering, Biotechnology, Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics, Organic Chemistry & Materials Science



**Ezequiel Contreras Martinez**  
Major: Physics  
Hometown: Stockton, CA  
Mentor: Dr. Timothy Brandt  
Research interests: Large surveys and Data Sets; Astro-statistical Techniques; Direct Detection and Characterization of Stars and Faint Companions



**Marian Walker**  
Major: Environmental Studies, Minor, Science & Mathematics Education  
Hometown: Corona, CA  
Mentor: Dr. Jennifer King  
Research interests: Biogeophysical systems, Land Restoration, Urban Planning, and Sustainability



**Arleth Real**  
Major: Political Science & Sociology  
Hometown: Hesperia, CA  
Mentor: Dr. Richard Duran  
Research interests: Educational Policy, Diversity and Equity in Higher Education, Student Retention, Hispanic Serving Institutions



**Jordan Fobbs**  
Major: Black studies, sociology  
Hometown: Union City, CA  
Mentor: Dr. Terrance Wooten  
Research interests: Black Masculinity and Performance Art





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# Publications and Awards

**Isaias Ghezae**, Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, Spring 2021, awarded by The Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation

**Isaias Ghezae**, Mamie Phipps Clark Diversity Research Grant, Summer 2021, awarded by Psi Chi, The International Honor Society in Psychology

**Isaias Ghezae**, Stephens Brehm Undergraduate Psychology Scholarship, American Psychological Foundation, 2021

**Isaias Ghezae**, Diversity Fund Undergraduate Registration Award, Society for Personality and Social Psychology, 2021.

**Ezequiel Contreras Martinez**, UCSB Edison STEM Research Scholarship, 2021

**Ezequiel Contreras Martinez**, UCSB MESA Alumni Scholarship, 2021

**Abraham Soto**, Hispanic Scholarship Fund Scholar Award, 2021

**Abraham Soto**, Leadership Alliance Virtual Professional Development Program, Summer 2021

**Marian Walker**, "Environmental Systems and Societies: Applications of Environmental Policies to Ensure the Establishment and Conservation of Los Angeles Parks and Green Spaces," *Intersect: The Stanford Journal of Science, Technology, and Society*, Vol. 14, no. 3 (2020): <https://ojs.stanford.edu/ojs/index.php/intersect/issue/view/115>.

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