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.
Welcome New Juniors

- **Denise Castro**
  - Major: Global studies, educational studies minor
  - Hometown: Ventura, CA
  - Mentor: Dr. Diana Arya
  - Research Interest: Educational reform, mental health

- **Andrea Hercules**
  - Major: Sociology
  - Hometown: Hesperia, CA
  - Mentor: Dr. Rebeca Mireles-Rios
  - Research Interest: Racial inequality, school discipline in K-12 schools, linguistic minority students

- **Yaxcha Mariles**
  - Major: Sociology
  - Hometown: San Jose, CA
  - Mentor: Dr. Miya Barnett
  - Research Interest: Mental health disparities among low-income minority and immigrant families

- **Jamieth Rodriguez**
  - Major: Global studies, education minor
  - Hometown: El Monte, CA
  - Mentor: Dr. Rebeca Mireles-Rios
  - Research Interests: Global health, health inequity, community health sciences, student opportunity gap

- **Miranda Tran**
  - Major: Psychological & brain sciences, double minor in applied psychology and theater
  - Hometown: Monterey Park, CA
  - Mentor: Dr. Maryam Kia-Keating
  - Research Interest: Barriers Asian-Americans face when accessing mental health services, especially with co-existing identities

- **Marian Walker**
  - Major: Environmental studies
  - Hometown: Corona, CA
  - Mentor: Dr. Jennifer King
  - Research Interest: Biogeophysical systems, land restoration, urban planning, and sustainability

- **Ajah Whitehead**
  - Major: Global studies, regional emphasis on Africa
  - Hometown: Long Beach, CA
  - Mentor: Dr. Jean Beaman
  - Research interest: political development in Francophone Africa
Meet the New Grad Mentor

Xochitl Clare

Connecting the arts and sciences to promote environmental protection.

Xochitl is a marine biology Ph.D. candidate in the Hofmann Lab investigating the effects of climate change on fisheries species. As a first-generation Latina African American, she shares Caribbean heritage, where the importance of life at sea is in folktales, music, and food—Xochitl boldly uses her cultural lens and background in performing arts to increase access to our blue backyards. She is passionate about fostering interdisciplinary work and mentors her students in building long-lasting professional communities in order to thrive in their respective communities.

McNair is Recruiting Faculty Mentors

Are you eager to mentor highly motivated first-gen, low-income, and/or underrepresented minority students pursuing graduate school? Join Us!

Faculty Mentor Expectations

- Work with scholars to develop a schedule for their research goals and establish guidelines for them to follow on a quarterly basis.
- Assist scholars prepare assignments related to McNair and/or their projects.
- Meet with scholars throughout the program and do so according to assignments, deadlines, and/or needs.
- Acquaint scholars with the “culture” of research and discuss career opportunities in the discipline, especially teaching and academic research.
- Interact frequently and develop a professional relationship with the scholar and expect to write letters of recommendation for graduate school.

Contact us: McNair@mcnair.ucsb.edu
Jaqueline Lopez Santiago

Jaqueline Lopez Santiago is a graduating senior majoring in communication, with a minor in applied psychology. Her research explores intervention methods used in schools and their cultural responsiveness. During the past summer she completed an independent project evaluating the social acceptability of a universal screening tool used by teachers to identify children with social emotional needs. In graduate school she plans to research the role of teachers in the classroom as it pertains to disciplinary policies, implicit bias, and identification of children who need additional support. Jackie hopes her research will have an impact beyond academia, helping to identify and challenge structures that disadvantage underrepresented students.

As a first-gen, low-income person of color, Jackie has faced many challenges in her time at UCSB, including the imposter syndrome that often comes with the graduate school application process. She was able to succeed with the help of her support network—the McNair staff, her faculty and graduate student mentors, her supervisors at the ONDAS Center, and of course her friends and family. She says, “I think that the McNair program was especially helpful as I applied to graduate programs—it was great knowing that if I had any questions there was always someone ready to answer them or that there was someone always willing to talk and bounce ideas off of. It was also very special knowing that there were people who believed in me.”

Jackie is currently weighing admission offers from the school psychology Ph.D. programs at University of Minnesota, UC Berkeley, UW Madison, UW Milwaukee, and Lehigh University.

**SCHOLAR PROFILE**

**An Alumni Voice on Diversity in STEM**

Below is an excerpt from a “Diversity in STEM” seminar from a recent alumni, Bryant Pahl. Bryant is a first-year Ph.D. student in earth system science at UC Irvine.

“Providing Allyship to URM Students”: Learning from Structured Research Programs

From my personal experience, fostering a welcoming and supportive environment for underrepresented (URM) students to succeed can be modeled by grad prep programs like the UCSB McNair Scholars Program. In Hurtado et al. (2008), students participating in structured research programs remarked the internal faculty being supportive not only in graduate school prep, but also with encouragement and mentoring. Similar to the students in the study, I could not imagine myself being in a Ph.D. program without the guidance and support of the McNair staff and my cohort. Without the inclusive space that they provided, during both the hardest and greatest moments of my undergraduate career, I would not have been well-prepared for graduate school. I believe that there is a form of allyship that each academic department can learn from these structured research programs.

Listening without Judgement

I have had experiences in my department where I felt unheard, judged, or experienced microaggressions. My experience with McNair staff was vastly different. I remember confiding to the McNair directors about wanting to take a break from school for personal reasons and being met with reassurance and guidance. Not only was I listened to, but I was not judged for my experiences. It is important to approach conversations with students—academic, personal, or other—without pre-determined biases about the person you are discussing with. We can learn from staff in these structured research programs who are trained not to judge their students no matter who they are or their backgrounds by implementing implicit-bias training for faculty and academic staff.

**Being Vulnerable**

When I had my first meeting with one of the McNair staff members, we sat down and talked about our lives. I was able to explain who I was, where I came from, and my motivations to be part of academia. I was met with the same vulnerability from the staff member. It let me know they were human too, and it helped me develop the trust to confide in them with personal problems to this day.

Being vulnerable with someone is easier said than done, but the opportunity to do so can help mitigate the feelings of hostility that students may feel in a research environment. Even if faculty members are not necessarily vulnerable with their students, it is still important for faculty to be open to the vulnerability of students and to meet them with an unbiased perspective. For me, being met with a judgement-free and openly vulnerable staff helped me feel like I was supported in my goals. These are skills that many professors could develop to foster a more welcoming environment for other first-gen, low-income, and URM students.

**Works Cited**

Faculty Director
Miroslava Chavez-Garcia PhD.

NOTE FROM THE
Faculty Director

It is my honor to communicate with you as the new Faculty Director of the McNair Scholars Program at UCSB. I have been given a big responsibility to carry on the legacy that Dr. Beth Schneider built for this campus. I look forward to carrying out the program’s goals and objectives in preparing undergraduate students for graduate school and increasing graduate degree awards for first-generation, low income, and/or underrepresented students. As you might guess, winter and spring is when we see the fruit of the labor the students, staff, and faculty mentors have invested in McNair. Indeed, we have heard the terrific news from many, if not most, of our students about the doctoral and master’s programs that have already admitted them. We are still awaiting to hear from more. Congratulations to you and your supporters!

I also want to take the opportunity to announce that we have a few “new and improved” projects. As you will see with this communication, we have a new look to our quarterly newsletter as well as logo. We did this to pay homage to Ronald McNair and his legacy and to update the graphics. We also plan to make the annual UCSB McNair Journal more widely available to the public than in years past by publishing it at our website. When we move back into the offices, we anticipate, too, incorporating new media to highlight the work of our accomplished alumni. Finally, we are working to strengthen our ties with potential faculty mentors and student organizations on campus and to build new ones with all the supportive folks who have joined our community in recent years. We welcome input as we move forward in expanding and strengthening the McNair community at UCSB.

Farewell to Grad Mentor

Maddie Nolan

It is bittersweet for us to say goodbye to Maddie Nolan, who has worked as a Graduate Mentor for the McNair Scholars Program for over four years. In that time, she has made a huge difference in the strength and growth of our program. Among many contributions, she has helped us make improvements to our curriculum, teaching, and advising to better serve our STEM students. She has also served as a role model to our students, who have the following words to say about her:

“Maddie has been an approachable, relatable, and supportive mentor and I am very excited for her to keep inspiring people in her next chapter.”

“Maddie was such an awesome asset to the McNair team and I’m going to be so sad to see her go! She really has done it all as a mom, scholar, and mentor for the McNair program!”

“Aside from being my STEM resource within McNair, Maddie has really modeled the type of scientist I admire. She has always been nonchalant, unassuming, and humble about her scientific expertise. Mentors with personalities like her, truly embody accessibility to students.”

As hard as it is to see her go, we are also proud that she is completing her Ph.D in ecology, evolution, and marine biology and starting a job as the Assistant Regional Habitat Program Manager with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Thank you for your service to our program, Maddie!
McNair
Publications and Awards

Zoey Eddy

Emily Lopez
• Awarded the Qualcomm Scholarship by MESA, for academic achievement and leadership in SAGNAS, an organization that promotes diversity and inclusion STEM.
• Awarded the Ostrow Bruckner Scholarship by the math department, for outstanding academic achievement.

Isaias Ghezae
• Awarded a $6,000 scholarship in a neuroscience essay contest for his essay, https://www.dropbox.com/s/up01duhl3xjddxr/Essay%20for%20Dr%20Doris%20Tsao.pdf?dl=0 My Journey in Neuroscience (Thus Far) as a Black Student. This scholarship is awarded by a Caltech neuroscience professor Doris Tsao, https://www.bbe.caltech.edu/people/doris-y-tsao with the goal of encouraging African American college students to pursue their dreams about understanding the brain.
• Awarded the $750 URCA Grant, fall 2020.
• Accepted to the Society for Personality and Social Psychology’s “Social-Personality Undergraduate Mentorship Program”.
• Accepted as a Student Research Affiliate at the Center for the Science of Moral Understanding.
• Accepted into Caltech’s BrainWAVE Fellowship Program this summer at their Tianqiao and Chrissy Chen Institute for Neuroscience.

Abraham Soto
• Awarded the Hispanic Scholarship Fund Scholarship this, June 2020.
• Awarded the Schmidt Research Mentorship Fellowship, June 2020.

Jordan Fobbs
• Published a poem and analysis titled “Black Man Lost,” in Starting Lines: An Anthology of Student Writing, published by the UCSB Writing Program.

Nicole Mendoza (alumna)
• Awarded the Dean’s Fellowship Award for the 1st year of her PhD program.
• Submitted a paper with her mentor from UCSB and two of her grad students to the Health Communication Journal. Also submitted the paper to the National Communication Association conference that is happening in November, where they have been awarded top 5 paper in the Health Communication division.


Carolina Ramirez Moreno
• Awarded a $750 URCA grant

Wren Palmer
• Awarded the English Department’s Christopher Michaels-Martinez Memorial Scholarship.

Julia Rosales
• Received the UCSB Economics Undergraduate Department Service Award.
• Graduated with highest honors.