

UCSB McNair Scholars Newsletter

Fall 2019/Winter 2020



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NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Fall and winter quarters at the UCSB McNair Scholars Program are extraordinarily busy times, when typically, transitions of staff and students occur. Our recently graduated scholars from the Class of 2019 began their master's or doctoral programs in universities across the country, with three at the University of Chicago, two at UCLA, and one each at UCSB, Harvard, NYU, Stanford, Illinois, Riverside, USC, and University of San Francisco. We welcome Iliana Flores, a McNair alumna from California State University, Fullerton, now a doctoral candidate in the Counseling, Career, and School Psychology Program, as a new graduate mentor. And finally, these are my last few months before retirement after 13 years as the Director of the program, truly intellectually stimulating, emotionally satisfying, and politically exciting days with wonderful students and staff.

During the fall quarter, we admitted a new cohort of undergraduates, many transfer students, who are now doing their research under the direction of UCSB faculty mentors. Meanwhile, the seniors completed their statements of purpose, personal statements, and writing samples for graduate applications; during this coming month each will decide on the graduate programs they will enter in Fall 2020. The newsletter highlights one of the current seniors, Sebastian Gonzalez, a major in Physics.

The program is excited to announce the continuation of our sponsorship of the Edison Scholars Program for calendar year 2020 thanks to a yearly gift from Edison International. These funds support scholarships and summer research opportunities for students in Edison-specified STEM fields.

Featured in this issue are Volume 9 of the *McNair Scholars Research Journal* in which seven 2019 graduates have published research and an alumni article that showcases the ongoing graduate experience of Andrea Mora, 2017 UCSB McNair alum, currently working her way through a joint MSW/PhD program at the University of Michigan.

Dr. Beth Schneider

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

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New Juniors



Kevin Garcia
Major: Microbiology
Hometown: Fullerton, CA
Mentor:
Dr. David Valentine
Research Interests:
Environmental solutions



Almalina Gomes
Major: Global Studies
Hometown: Fairfield, CA
Mentor: Dr. Paul Spickard
Research Interests: Public health in Ethiopia



Takashi Katayama
Major: Physics
Hometown: Akaiwa, Japan
Mentor: Dr. Douglas Eardley
Research Interests:
Gravity



Jaqueline Lopez
Major: Communication
Hometown: Los Angeles, CA
Mentor: Dr. Erin Dowdy
Research Interests: Universal screening of elementary aged children; Mental health evaluations of Chicax children



Gilbert Murillo
Major: Political Science and Sociology
Hometown: Norwalk, CA
Mentor:
Dr. Christopher McAuley
Research Interests:
Incarceration to activism



Wren Palmer
Major: English
Hometown: Oxnard, CA
Mentor: Dr. Paul Spickard
Research Interests: Pacific literature; Pacific sports history



Carolina Ramirez Moreno
Major: Spanish & Chicana/o Studies
Hometown: Arvin, CA
Mentor: Dr. Silvia Bermudez
Research Interests: Latin American culture; Impacts of immigration on youth



Ryan Rising
Major: Sociology
Hometown: San Diego, CA
Mentor: Dr. William Robinson
Research Interests: Mass incarceration; Higher education as pathway from recidivism



Zion Solomon
Major: Religious Studies
Hometown: San Diego, CA
Mentor: Dr. Elizabeth Perez
Research Interests: Indigenous and diasporic African religions



Luna Perez-Vega
Major: Sociology
Hometown: Huntington Park, CA
Mentor: Dr. Zakiya Luna
Research Interests: Gentrification; Organizing and activism



Jaquelyn Valenzuela
Major: Statistics and Data Science
Hometown: South Gate, CA
Mentor: Dr. Rebeca Mireles-Rios
Research Interests: Sports analytics; Education analysis

Farewell to Dr. Beth Schneider



It is with great sadness that we bid our farewell to Professor Beth Schneider who served as the McNair Program Director for thirteen years.

Professor Schneider has been at UC Santa Barbara since 1981, contributing to the development of the feminist studies specialization in the Department of Sociology, as well as being a founding mother of the UCSB Women's Studies Program (now called the Feminist Studies Program). She served twice as sociology department chair. Her primary research areas are sexuality and gender studies, political and social movements, and health. Her publications include *The Social Context of AIDS*; *Women Resisting AIDS: Feminist Strategies of Empowerment*; and *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. Dr. Schneider served for ten years on the editorial board of the international journal *Sexualities*, for four years as Editor of *Gender & Society*—one of the top five journals in gender and women's studies—and twice chaired the Sexualities Section of the American Sociological Association. In 2014, she was

honored with the Sociology of AIDS Network Award for Career Contributions to the sociology of AIDS and recently she won both the Feminist Mentoring Award from Sociologists for Women in Society, and the Simon and Gagnon Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Sociological Association Sexualities Section.

She has been a leader in shaping UCSB diversity efforts. In addition to serving as McNair Program Director, for five years she served as the Co-Principal Investigator for UC-DIGSSS (Diversity in Graduate Studies in the Social Sciences), a project that served U.S. underrepresented graduate students funded by the National Science Foundation. Professor Schneider chaired the Academic Senate Committee on Diversity and Equity for two years; at the same time, she was the campus representative to the UC President's Task Force on LGBTQ Issues. At UCSB, she also received multiple honors for her teaching: Professor Schneider won the university Academic Senate Award as Outstanding Faculty Graduate Mentor, Margaret T. Getman Service to Students Award, and the UCSB Academic Senate Distinguished Teaching Award. Having spent thirty-nine years at UCSB, Professor Schneider has been a champion for diversity and inclusivity for our McNair Program and the larger campus community. She will be greatly missed. We wish her continued success and happiness in her retirement.



Alumna Reflection



Andrea Mora is a UCSB McNair alumna who graduated in June 2017 with a major in psychology and a minor in applied psychology. As a community college transfer, Andrea took advantage of the resources and opportunities available at UCSB during her two years. While at UCSB, she participated in the STEM Transfer Summer Start Program for Psychology, worked at the Non-Traditional Student Resource Center, mentored transfer students through the Transfer Student Center, and was involved in several research projects. Andrea was accepted to the joint Ph.D. program in social work and developmental psychology at the University of Michigan, with a full 6-year funding package. She earned her master's degree in social work degree (MSW) from the University of Michigan in winter 2019 and her master's degree in psychology in winter 2020. As an MSW intern, Andrea provided mentoring and after-school academic and mental health support to at-risk high school students in Detroit, Michigan. She now has her limited license (LLMSW) in the state of Michigan and is working towards her hours for full licensure. Andrea is

on track in her program—she is in her third year of the program, has passed her psychology preliminary exams, and is currently writing her social work preliminary exams. For her master's thesis in psychology, she examined the unique impact of both community violence exposure and gender-based harassment on Latino/a adolescents' PTSD symptoms. Currently under review, Andrea's manuscript highlights the importance of taking into account adolescents' experiences with neighborhood gender-based harassment when studying community violence, as to not discount adolescent girls' experiences.

Andrea is incredibly grateful for the support, opportunities, and resources that McNair offered during her time in the program. She believes that the assignments, workshops, and requirements of the McNair program prepared her well for graduate studies and research. For instance, applying for and receiving the Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities grant and the Transfer Student Research Award for her independent research projects equipped her with the skills of grant writing. During her doctoral journey, she has received the Social Science Summer Research Award for her qualitative research project examining Latino/a adolescents' experiences with community violence, as well as the Blunt Family Childhood Trauma Research Grant for her master's thesis in psychology. Most importantly, Andrea credits McNair for building her identity as a scholar and researcher. As a low-income, first-generation, Latina mother to twin boys, Andrea did not imagine that pursuing academia as a profession was an option. Dr. Schneider and Dr. Martinez-Vu, as well as the graduate mentors instilled confidence in Andrea that she belongs in academia, especially during times when she doubted herself. Now, as one of four Latino/as in the entire joint Ph.D. program, Andrea understands the power of making her mark in the academy as a mother-scholar of color.

Andrea advises current and future McNair scholars to “Take advantage of all the opportunities and resources available. Put yourself and your work out there, and do not be afraid of being turned down. Reach out to colleagues and professors both within and outside your department. Build collaborations and embrace interdisciplinarity. Graduate school is the time to gain skills, expand your knowledge, challenge your assumptions, and be creative with your methodological and applied approaches.”



Meet the New Grad Mentor



Iliana Flores is a new Graduate Mentor for the McNair Scholars Program. She is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology. She is also a transfer and first-generation college student. As a McNair alumna, Iliana enjoys mentoring students and helping them explore their own research interests. Her current clinical and research interests include access and utilization of culturally sensitive mental health services using a social justice lens, bilingual (English-Spanish) professional training and development, and the identity development of Latina community health workers. Outside of work, Iliana enjoys spending her time dancing cumbias and learning how to surf. She is always looking forward to connecting with students, so feel free to stop by the McNair office or schedule a meeting to see her.

Scholar Profile: Sebastian Gonzalez



Sebastian Gonzalez will receive his B.S. in physics from UCSB in June, 2020. His research in biophysics, conducted alongside Professor Sebastian Streichan, focuses on morphogenesis—the physical processes which contribute to an organism’s shape. His interdisciplinary approach combines physics, mathematics, and computer science in order to investigate the dynamics of tissue flow during the embryonic development of *Drosophila Melanogaster* (the common fruit fly). Sebastian says, “It is awesome to see physical concepts being applied to systems where you can see physics come to life.” Through his research into the physics of living systems, Sebastian hopes to contribute to the production of materials with life-like properties such as self-organization.

Sebastian migrated to the U.S. from Venezuela in 2016, when his family escaped the dire economic and social situation of his home country. Coming from a small town and a high school class of just 50 students he was taken aback by the huge lecture halls full of students at UCSB. In spite of these early struggles, Sebastian’s hard work and many accomplishments have earned him the respect of his colleagues.

Sebastian is grateful for the assistance he received from the McNair Scholars Program. He says, “The weekly meetings with my cohort allowed me to stay focused on graduate school applications as well as learning tips and tricks to make the application process run smoothly. The staff members are a dream, with graduate mentors and a writing specialist waiting to sculp your graduate school application to perfection. However, the best part is the family-type atmosphere. The program provides emotional sanity when graduate acceptances or rejections are just around the corner. The staff and cohort will always have your back!”

Sebastian is currently deciding where he would like to attend graduate school after receiving acceptance offers from universities including Brandeis, UCLA, UCSD, University of Chicago, University of Michigan, and Princeton. After completing his Ph.D., Sebastian plans to become a professor of physics so that he can mentor and inspire the next generation of physicists.

UCSB McNair Scholars Research Journal



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Steven Castro

Phonetic Correlates of Stress in Spoken Fijian

Zingha Foma

African Dress as a Tool for Colonial Resistance and Assertion of African Identities

Zenzile Riddick

Decolonizing Our Schools to Dignify Our Youth: Neocolonial Punitive Methods and the Global Community of Children of Color

Jasmin Morales

Restringido al Progreso (Restricted Progress): Systematic Literature Review of Latina/o Students' Persistence within STEM Majors

Johanna Najera

Chronological Analysis at Mulch'en Witz: Ceramic and Carbon Dating of Plazuela Group B at La Milpa, Belize

Claudia Algere

The Impact of Parental Documentation on Latino Voter Turnout

Eduardo Cardenas-Torres

Why Diversity is Important in Bibliometric Research

Lexus Coffey Edison

Insecurities Inside Black Love: The Complexities of Telling How Blacks Live and Love

Israel Chora

The Majority-Minority State: An Examination of Latinx Youth Political Engagement