



# SCHOLAR HANDBOOK

## 2022

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## **I. General Information**

### **Program Description**

The McNair Scholars Program is a federal TRIO program funded at 151 institutions across the United States and Puerto Rico by the U.S. Department of Education. It is designed to prepare undergraduate students for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities. McNair participants are either first-generation college students with financial need, or members of a group that is traditionally underrepresented in graduate education and have demonstrated strong academic potential. The goal of the McNair Scholars Program is to increase graduate degree awards for students from underrepresented segments of society.

### **Ronald E. McNair, Ph.D.**

Ronald Erwin McNair was born October 21, 1950, in Lake City, South Carolina. While in junior high school, Dr. McNair was inspired to work hard and persevere in his studies by his family and by a teacher who recognized his scientific potential and believed in him. Dr. McNair graduated as valedictorian from Carver High School in 1967. In 1971, he graduated magna cum laude and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Physics from North Carolina A&T State University (Greensboro). Dr. McNair then enrolled in the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1976, at the age of 26, he earned his Ph.D. in laser physics. His dissertation was titled “Energy Absorption and Vibrational Heating in Molecules Following Intense Laser Excitation.” Dr. McNair was presented with an honorary doctorate of Laws from North Carolina A&T State University in 1978, an honorary doctorate of Science from Morris College in 1980, and an honorary doctorate of science from the University of South Carolina in 1984.

While working as a staff physicist with Hughes Research Laboratory, Dr. McNair soon became a recognized expert in laser physics. His many distinctions include being a Presidential Scholar (1971-74), a Ford Foundation Fellow (1971-74), a National Fellowship Fund Fellow (1974-75), and a NATO Fellow (1975). He was also a sixth-degree black belt in karate and an accomplished saxophonist. Because of his many accomplishments, he was selected by NASA for the space shuttle program in 1978. His first space shuttle mission launched successfully from Kennedy Space Center on February 3, 1984. Dr. Ronald E. McNair was the second African American to fly in space. Two years later, he was selected to serve as mission specialist aboard the ill-fated U.S. Challenger space shuttle. He was killed instantly when the Challenger exploded one minute, thirteen seconds after it was launched. Dr. McNair was posthumously awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor. After his death in the Challenger Space Shuttle accident on January 28, 1986, members of Congress provided funding for the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program. Their goal was to encourage low-income and first-generation college students, and students from historically underrepresented ethnic groups to expand their educational opportunities by enrolling in a Ph.D. program and ultimately pursue an academic career. This program is dedicated to the high standards of achievement inspired by Dr. McNair’s life.

## **Program Purpose**

To prepare students to pursue post-secondary degrees successfully. The McNair Scholars Program at Northeastern Illinois University is designed to provide **(1) first-generation and low-income or (2) underrepresented students** with a guided research experience under faculty mentorship, academic counseling, tutoring, and other scholarly activities. Scholars will participate in three seminar courses intended to prepare them for graduate studies through training in developing a research-based thesis, support through the graduate school application process, financial awareness, and professional/career skills development.

## **Program Guidelines**

The McNair Scholars Program operates under a set of regulations established by the Department of Education. Under these regulations, the program monitors the progress of each scholar to ensure compliance with the following objectives:

- McNair Participants will complete research and other scholarly activities while in the program and receive a bachelor's degree.
- Bachelor's degree recipients will be accepted and enrolled in a graduate program in the fall term of the academic year immediately following the completion of a bachelor's degree.
- McNair participants who are first-year graduate students will continue their enrollment in graduate school at the beginning of the next academic year.
- McNair participants will attain a doctoral degree within ten (10) years of the attainment of their bachelor's degree.

The following guidelines were formed to meet the overall project objectives of increasing the participation of NEIU McNair Scholars in graduate school:

- 28 McNair Program participants will be served each year.
- 50% of McNair Program participants will be STEM students
- At least 80% of McNair participants will complete research and scholarly activities that will directly impact their educational progression each academic year.
- At least 66% of McNair Scholars will enroll in a post-baccalaureate program by the academic year's fall term immediately following their bachelor's degree.
- At least 83% of graduated McNair Scholars will continue to be enrolled in graduate programs after the first year.
- At least 6% of McNair Program participants will attain a doctoral degree within ten years of the attainment of the bachelor's degree.

In addition to complying with Department of Education guidelines, McNair participants also agree to abide by a set of responsibilities and commitments established by the NEIU McNair Scholars Program. All scholars must read and sign the **Participation Agreement, Student Education Profile, and Pre and Post Skills Survey**. Copies of documents will be provided in the **Forms** section of the **Scholar Handbook 2022**. All

Scholars will complete the forms in the presence of the Director and/or Academic Skills Specialist to answer any questions or concerns they may have.

### **Program Eligibility**

Students who intend to pursue a career that requires a Ph.D. and who meet the following criteria should apply to the program. Eligibility requires one or both of the following:

1. Be a first-generation and low-income college student
2. A member of a group underrepresented in graduate education, which is defined in McNair Program regulations, 34CFR 647.7 (b); 34 CFR 77.1; and the supplemental priorities as Black (non-Hispanic), Hispanic, American Indian, Alaskan Native (as defined in section 7306 of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA)), Native Hawaiians (as defined in section 7207 of the ESEA), and Native American Pacific Islanders( as defined in section 320 of the HEA).

Additionally, applicants must:

1. Have 60 credit hours completed
2. Have a cumulative GPA of **2.8 or higher (4.0)**
3. Be available to participate in a full-time summer research internship
4. Be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident

**To maintain good standing with the program, a scholar must:**

1. Participate in mandatory events
2. Enroll in and complete 3 McNair courses
3. Maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher (4.0)
4. Establish and maintain an appropriate meeting schedule with the faculty mentor
5. Comply with all federal, state, and local laws and all NEIU regulations and procedures while participating in the McNair Scholars Program
6. Comply with all McNair Scholars Program requirements, as detailed in the Participation Agreement

## **II. Overview of Roles, Responsibilities, Research, and Program Activities**

### **Program Participants' Roles**

The success of the McNair Scholars Program begins with the strength of its foundation—the program staff, faculty mentors, and cohort of Scholars. It is fundamental for mentors and students to build a strong relationship whose pillars foster talent, maturity, motivation, commitment, creativity, academic strength, a desire to learn, and a willingness to accept and overcome challenges.

McNair Scholars, mentors, and staff each have specific roles and responsibilities within the program. All will work collectively to meet program, research, and personal expectations throughout the McNair experience. The following is a set of duties established for scholars, mentors, and program staff:

**Scholar Responsibilities:**

- Select a faculty mentor
- Conduct ongoing research under the supervision of a faculty mentor
- Present research at professional conferences
- Seek academic and career counseling when needed
- Research potential graduate programs
- Prepare for the GRE (if applicable)
- Apply to graduate school
- Undergo reviews throughout the semesters you are in the program
- Accept and adhere to the staff and mentor's directions and guidance

**Mentor Responsibilities:**

- Commit to the progress and success of the Scholar
- Guide the Scholar through the research process
- Assist the Scholar with the dissemination of the research
- Assist the Scholar with the development of oral and poster presentations
- Encourage the Scholar to seek academic and career counseling when needed
- Assist the Scholar with selecting appropriate and realistic graduate programs
- Evaluate Scholar's progress throughout the year
- Work with the staff to facilitate Scholar's professional growth and development

**Staff Responsibilities:**

- Oversee the mentor/Scholar relationship
- Provide resources for Scholars to conduct research
- Provide travel assistance to professional conferences
- Provide opportunities for Scholars to present research
- Provide Scholars with academic and career counseling
- Offer GRE tutoring
- Provide logistical support in the graduate program selection process
- Provide assistance and support in the graduate school application process
- Monitor individual Scholar's progress throughout the year
- Provide direction for Scholars' professional growth and development

**Program Activities**

To enhance scholars' intellectual and research development and achieve the objectives listed above, the NEIU McNair Scholars Program provides activities in which all Scholars must participate. The following is a list of activities, tasks, responsibilities, and events designed by the NEIU McNair Scholars Program to assist scholars in their academic and career development.

**Program activities focus on:**

- Mentorship Selection
- Meeting with Your Mentor

- Research Action Plan
- Research Proposal
- McNair Summer Research Institute
- Research Conferences
- Publication/Research Paper
- GRE Tutoring
- Seminar Courses
- Workshops
- Other events

Additionally, the NEIU McNair Scholars Program provides students with the following services:

- Academic and Career Counseling
- Faculty Mentorship Assistance
- Summer Research Stipend (\$2,800)
- Opportunities to Present and Publish Research
- Graduate School Visits
- Funded Conference Travel
- GRE Tutoring and Fee Waivers
- Graduate School Application Fee Waivers
- Assistance in Applying to Fellowships, Grants, and Other Opportunities
- Academic and Career Workshops
- Networking with other McNair Scholars across the country

**Additionally, the NEIU McNair Program Requires Three-One Credit Developmental Course:**

- *Developing a Research-Based Thesis* (Spring semester)
- *Preparing for Graduate School* (Summer semester)
- *Professional Development for Graduate School and Future Careers* (Fall semester)

## **McNair Summer Research Institute**

The McNair Summer Research Institute (MSRI) is a vital component of the NEIU McNair Scholars program. The MSRI provides Scholars with the opportunity to conduct their research projects under the supervision of their faculty mentor.

The objective of the MSRI is to provide Scholars with a paid research experience, which includes the following:

- Conceptualizing a problem
- Preparing a research proposal
- Conducting a literature review
- Designing a research project
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) application and approval

- Gathering data
- Analyzing data
- Drawing conclusions based on empirical evidence
- Reporting findings

Scholars will develop critical research skills and improve their communication skills by presenting their research results in both written and oral forms.

## **Mentor Selection**

Prior to the McNair Summer Research Institute, Scholars will select a faculty mentor in their field of study or interest to develop a research project. The McNair staff will guide Scholars in choosing a mentor. Scholars are highly encouraged to meet with the McNair Director and/or the Academic Skills Specialist for advice before making a final decision.

Scholars must select a faculty mentor whose research experience aligns with the scholar's research interest(s). Scholars must acknowledge that they are entering into a long-term relationship with a mentor that may last into their post-baccalaureate and professional careers, so the personality and mentoring approach of a mentor should be compatible. We recommend that Scholars meet with several faculty members to discuss their interests and aspirations within a graduate program and their professional careers.

McNair mentors are required to be faculty or staff members at NEIU. All mentors must complete the *Mentor Contract* form. It is the responsibility of Scholars to ensure that form is completed, signed, and submitted to the McNair Director or Academic Skills Specialist.

## **Meeting with your Mentor**

Scholars are responsible for setting up regular meetings with their mentors to discuss research progress and approve their research log. We encourage Scholars to meet with their mentors once a week.

The following are the duties and responsibilities established for Scholar and Mentor relationships. The intent behind these guidelines is to help Scholars and Mentors determine the plan for their regular meetings:

- Mentors are responsible for providing students with constructive feedback on Scholars' research projects.
- Mentors will aid Scholars in exploring graduate programs of interest.
- Mentors will aid Scholars in their professional development by identifying potential conferences to present research and sources for publication.
- Scholars and Mentors are required to set realistic goals before every follow-up meeting.
- Mentors will promptly provide thorough and helpful feedback on Scholars' academic and research progress.
- Mentors may express interest in collaborating with Scholars on a research publication.



- Mentors will assist Scholars in developing their Academic/Research and Personal/Diversity Statements for graduate school applications.
- Mentors may assist Scholars in networking with academic and professional individuals or organizations for student graduate school attainment.

Lastly, Mentors will submit a progress report to evaluate the Scholars' progress. The evaluation intends to ensure that Scholars are making progress within the McNair activities and are fully supported by Mentors and McNair Staff members when needed.

## **Research Action Plan**

Mentors and Scholars will work together to set long-and short-term research goals, determine a research action plan, and arrange a timeline for the completion and dissemination of the research project. Scholars must submit the Research Action Plan form to the McNair Director or Academic Skills Specialist by **June 1, 2022**. Scholars are responsible for turning in the original plan and an updated plan (if the project changes) for each continuing semester and summer; they remain active scholars.

## **Research Proposal**

As part of the McNair Scholars Program experience, all scholars are required to develop a research proposal on a topic of their choice with the approval of a faculty mentor. All research proposals will include a well-developed introduction and questions about the purpose and significance of conducting the research, literature review, and methods. The first version of the proposal will serve as a blueprint for executing the project during the McNair Summer Research Institute. We encourage Scholars to meet with their faculty mentor, course instructor, and director for any questions or concerns they may have about their research proposal.

A helpful resource Scholars can use when developing their research proposal is the following: <https://www.scribbr.com/dissertation/research-proposal/>

The following are some of the general components that are part of a research proposal:

- Title
- Abstract (200 words max)--written after the proposal is completed
- Statement of the research question to be investigated or the purpose of the research
- Discuss the context of the study and why it is an important question to address
- List some of the literature you as a researcher have read that relates to the research study
- Describe the methods used to answer the research questions, such as data collection, data analysis, etc.

During the spring semester, all Scholars will develop their research proposal in a written document in collaboration with their faculty mentors.

## **IRB Approval Procedures**

When conducting research involving human subjects, it is required that proper procedures be followed. Approval by Northeastern's IRB is required before starting any research involving human subjects at Northeastern. Retroactive review and approval of studies involving human subjects are not allowed. Research conducted without IRB approval is considered noncompliant with human subjects regulations and NEIU policies. Continuing review by the IRB is required for all non-exempt human subjects research.

McNair Scholars will need to meet with their faculty mentor to determine whether or not they will need to complete an IRB application.

For more information and instructions on obtaining approval for your research, please visit the following link:

<https://www.neiu.edu/academics/university-research-resources/institutional-review-board>

If you have any questions about the IRB process, please email the IRB Office at [irb@neiu.edu](mailto:irb@neiu.edu) or call (773) 442-4675.

### **Time and Effort (Timesheet) Forms**

An essential part of the research project is to document Scholars' progress. All Scholars must document their research activities weekly and submit a Time and Effort (timesheet) form to the McNair office at least twice a month during the summer semester. The record will be made available to mentors, who may automatically receive a copy once per month.

### **McNair Summer Research Institute Review and Materials**

In the summer, Scholars will engage in 30-40 hours of research per week for eight weeks. They will receive feedback and guidance from their faculty mentor during this time. Scholars will create a PowerPoint and Poster presentation to present at research conferences. By the end of the summer, Scholars should have completed sufficient research to develop a presentation.

Scholars and mentors must remember that research presentations are an essential component of the research experience. Scholars will submit a draft of their presentations by the end of the McNair Research Institute. They will work with the McNair Director or Academic Skills Specialist to finalize the presentation. For Scholars with poster presentations, the McNair Director must receive an email from the faculty mentor that the final version is approved and ready for printing. The McNair Scholars Program will cover the cost of presentation materials.

### **Research Symposiums and Conferences**

As part of the McNair Program experience, all Scholars will present their research project at a McNair National Conference. In addition, Scholars will present at the Spring NEIU Student Research and Creative Activities Symposium. All Scholars will have the opportunity to present at other national conferences of their choice with the approval of their faculty mentor and program director.

## **Publication of Research Project**

All scholars are encouraged to complete and submit their research projects for publication. For this reason, Scholars must take their research projects seriously and participate in all scholarly activities assigned to them. We strongly recommend that faculty mentors and Scholars discuss these requirements at the beginning of their research experience and that they address these requirements in the **Research Action Plan**. All Scholars must submit a quality research paper to the McNair Office upon graduation from NEIU. The article may be published in an academic journal, but it can also be a thesis/capstone if it is related to the McNair research project.

### **III. Research Stipends and Pay Schedule**

McNair Scholars will receive a stipend of **\$2,800** for their participation in the McNair Summer Research Institute. The compensation will be distributed in four installments throughout the McNair Summer Research Institute and is contingent upon completing assignments and expectations outlined in the Student Participation Agreement. Stipend disbursement will be delayed if any Scholar fails to maintain satisfactory progress in the program, neglects to submit assignments (i.e., research proposal, paper, PowerPoint presentation, etc.), or has unexcused absences.

#### **First Stipend Requirements (\$500)**

- Research Proposal approved by the faculty mentor
- The research Action Plan includes the amount of progress toward completion for the McNair Summer Research Institute. Scholars and mentors must agree on the set timeline.

#### **Second Stipend Requirements (\$800)**

- Complete **Time and Effort** forms or “timesheet.” These forms are designed for the Scholars to provide a three-week timesheet detailing their work on their projects based on the **Research Action Plan at 30 hrs per week**. Scholars must sign the form to be processed.
- The program’s director will approve timesheets.
- Checks will arrive at the address provided by Scholars. Once the payment is received, Scholars must notify the Director via email with a copy/photo of the check receipt.

#### **Third Stipend Requirements (\$800)**

- Complete **Time and Effort** forms or “timesheet.” These forms are designed for the Scholars to provide a three-week timesheet detailing their work on their projects based on the **Research Action Plan at 30 hrs per week**. Scholars must sign the form to be processed.
- The program’s director will approve the timesheets.
- Checks will arrive at the address provided by Scholars. Once the payment is received, Scholars must notify the Director via email with a copy/photo of the check receipt.
- For Scholars required to take the GRE, please include the times and dates they prepared on the **time and effort form**.

- Scholars taking the GRE will notify the program director and input the hours spent studying for the exam on the **Time and Effort** forms.

#### **Fourth Stipend Requirements (\$700)**

- For Scholars to receive their final research stipend, they must provide a copy of their **abstract, research paper, and final paper approval form** signed by the faculty mentor.
- Complete **Time and Effort** forms or “timesheet.” These forms are designed for the Scholars to provide a three-week timesheet detailing their work on their projects based on the **Research Action Plan at 30 hrs per week**. Scholars must sign the form to be processed.
- The program’s director will approve the timesheets.
- Checks will arrive at the address provided by Scholars. Once the payment is received, Scholars must notify the Director via email with a copy/photo of the check receipt.

#### **IV. Travel**

The McNair Scholars Program will help students seek opportunities to participate in educational and scholarly events that will enhance their knowledge of graduate education, provide experience in presenting research, and network with faculty, researchers, and other scholars from around the nation. Mentors must notify students of events and conferences that further Scholars' academic development and networking opportunities.

Scholars must follow the program procedures for requesting traveling funds, accommodations, and reports. Scholars must meet with their mentor and the program director for travel approval.

#### **Eligibility for Travel**

The Director will approve travel request forms, in the following order, to scholars planning to

1. Present research project at a research conferences/symposiums
2. Present at a McNair National Conference
3. Visit a prospective institution for graduate school or interview for a graduate program. Available funds for travel may vary, resulting in Scholars having to cover the cost of food, lodging, and other expenses.

#### **Expectations for Travel**

Scholars must always conduct themselves professionally as they are representatives of the NEIU McNair Scholars Program. The following are tips for presenting themselves as such:

When attending professional conferences, Scholars must:

- Dress professionally
- Attend all scheduled conference sessions and meetings
- Network and establish connections with professionals in your field: faculty, administrators, fellow students, and other institutional representatives

When presenting their research projects, Scholars must:

- Practice their presentation with the faculty mentor, McNair staff, McNair peers, and other staff members to receive feedback and constructive criticism
- Take multiple copies of your PowerPoint/Oral presentation (Google drive, flash drive, email to self, etc.).
- Arrive at the site early to familiarize yourself with the room and test the audio-visual equipment if needed.

When traveling to visit prospective graduate schools or to interview, scholars must:

- Coordinate plans with the McNair Director
- Meet with the faculty mentor for advice and opinions on the graduate programs
- Seek mentor advice for contacting faculty, staff, and current graduate students
- Read articles published by faculty and other staff members within the program of interest
- Contact the Office of Graduate Admissions and the department of interest to schedule a meeting with the program director, faculty, current graduate students, and financial aid advisors.
- Prepare an interview portfolio that includes the following: statement of purpose/diversity, transcripts, curriculum vitae, publications or other writing samples, GRE scores, and a list of questions for the interviewer.