



# McNair Launcher

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## MCNAIR PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program is made possible through a grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education. This grant supports undergraduate students' scholarly activities throughout the summer and the academic year.



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## Phenomenal Opportunities through Campus Visitations

by Herisa S. Stanislaus

I have always heard that campus visits are an advantageous privilege in the graduate school application process. However, I did not fully understand the scope of this opportunity until two of my cohorts Kendra Sylvester, Valesca St. Cyr and I went on campus visits through the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program. We visited University of Georgia, Emory University, and Georgia State University. All of these universities have merit-based programs in our various disciplines which include the MD-PHD Program, Nutrition, Public Health, and Communication Sciences and Disorders.

During these campus visits we were able to individually converse with the admission directors of our departments of interest. But before we went to our various departments, we all had the phenomenal opportunity to speak with the Director of the MD-PHD program at Emory University who answered several questions. Although we were initially nervous, Mr. Byrd (the Director of the McNair Scholars Program) adequately prepared us for our highly anticipated interviews with faculty by providing us with a list of pertinent questions to review beforehand. Thus, when I personally spoke with the Associate Director of Admissions for the Emory Rollins School of Public Health I was more than prepared. The benefits from this interface were vast because I was able to formulate a clearer picture of how my educational and career aspirations would fit within Emory's program of study. I also received exemplary answers to all of my various questions. At the end of our interview we exchanged business cards. This exchange added an extra touch of professionalism, which I am happy to note, was not lost on the Associate Admissions Director, Ms. Shelton. During each interview we strove to leave a great impression upon the faculty. My cohorts and I knew that we represented not only ourselves but the entire McNair Scholar Program at the University of Florida.



Consequently, we must have done something right because one of Admissions Director stated that fellow scholar Valesca St. Cyr exhibited "poise" and exemplary "preparation" during her interview.

Another benefit of campus visitations, aside from the interface time with faculty, is the opportunity to see the campuses. I tried to envision myself at each campus for the next few years of my life. One of my crowning moments was when I walked on to the campus of Emory University. I felt this indescribable thrill of being in the presence of giants. I thought many scholars have walked amongst these halls and one day I will hopefully be one of them. We also encountered various graduate students during our visits where we happily inquired about their programs of study and personal experiences with the University.



## Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program

University of Florida  
427 Yon Hall  
PO Box 113280  
Gainesville, FL 32611-3280  
352-846-2575  
352-846-2581 fax

<http://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/mcnair>

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### McNair Program Staff:

Program Director:  
Dr. Bernard Mair

Assistant Director:  
Mr. Curtis Byrd

Program Assistant:  
Mrs. Edna W. Daniels

McNair Peer Advisors:  
Jasmine Crenshaw  
Shirley Elisbrun  
David Hassan  
Cesar Moreno  
Pierre St Juste

## The ABRCMS Experience

By Ms. Monica Solomon

Greetings! I am currently a senior at the University of Florida majoring in Health Education & Behavior with a specialization in Community Health and a minor in Communication Studies. I have been afforded the opportunity of conducting meaningful research for two years as a Ronald E. McNair Scholar at the University of Florida.



This past November, my research abstract entitled, “Applying the Precede-Proceed Model to Populations with an Intellectual Disability and the Health Promoters who Serve Their Needs” was selected as a poster presentation at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS) in Phoenix, Arizona. ABRCMS boasts the largest professional conference for both biomedical and behavioral undergraduate, post- baccalaureate, and graduates students. This year there were approximately 2700 attendees, 1400 student presenters, and 250+ exhibitors from a variety of schools such as Harvard University and Johns Hopkins University. Due to support from the UF Ronald E. McNair Scholar program and a FASEB MARC Travel Grant that I received, I was able to present a poster on my independent research project and network with some of nation’s best and brightest students. I truly had an enriching, inspiring, and motivating experience at the ABRCMS and am truly grateful for the chance to partake in such an occasion.

The conference’s highlight for me occurred during the Final Awards and Banquet portion where I discovered I had placed in the top 10 out of the 120 student presenters in the Social and Behavioral and Public Health category and received an award for an “Outstanding Poster Presentation”. I was quite flabbergasted that I had been chosen as a top poster presenter out of the countless innovative and thought-provoking poster presentations at ABCRMS. I am extremely grateful because I know without a shadow of doubt that my participation in the Ronald E. McNair Scholars program helped me develop the skills necessary to be successful at ABCRMS. I am so humbled to have been afforded the opportunity to network amongst the nation’s best and brightest students.

Additionally, during the conference I got the opportunity to witness a keynote address by Dr. Mae Jemison and take a picture with her as well. Dr. Mae Jemison, a role model of mine ever since I was a little girl, is truly a woman who is multifaceted and is described as, but not limited to an entrepreneur, scientist, and the first woman of color to go into space. Watching her keynote address at ABCRMS is definitely a memory that I will cherish for years to come. Overall, this conference motivated me and incited my passion for conducting research that contributes to the field of Behavioral Sciences. I am determined to complete my goal of obtaining both a Master’s of Science in Public Health and a Ph.D. in Public and Community Health so that I can use the skills acquired from my education to empower individuals facing health disparities.

I would like to sincerely thank the Ronald E. McNair program and its affiliates for their continued support of my academic endeavors and providing me with the resources to achieve my goals. Also, I would like my McNair Director, Mr. Curtis Byrd; as well as Dr. Christine Stopka, Tony Delisle, Mrs. Edna Daniels, Mr. Earl Wade for their continued support and encouragement! ABRCMS was a truly a phenomenal conference that included numerous networking opportunities, educational workshops, resume/personal statement critique opportunities, and the chance to learn about innovative research projects. Once again, I would like to like to thank the Ronald E. McNair Program for its selfless promotion of higher education.

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## One of the Best and Brightest

By Victoria Ajayi



Adam Amir is a returning scholar studying Political Science and a self created program of study concerning queer prospective on German history. He is a testament to the high caliber of student which the McNair Program attracts. Adam speaks both German and Hebrew, has earned placement on the Dean's list during every semester, and is also part of the prestigious University Scholars program. His research includes the oppression and experience of gays and lesbians. Adam received a Phi Kappa Phi Study Abroad Grant to conduct research concerning Paragraph 175, an anti sodomy law (punishable by death) which Nazis extended to include even the fairly innocuous act of writing a love letter. The list of Adam's accomplishments is quite long.

Worthy of due notice, Adam was one of only two students in the state of Florida to receive the Harry S. Truman Scholarship for research. Granting its winner 30,000 towards graduate school, the Truman Scholarship is quite distinguished and very competitive. Adam, however, is not simply a brilliant mind. He completed over 100 hours of community service, for which he was awarded the University of Florida Presidential Service Award. The McNair Program attracts and helps shape future leaders who understand that true scholarship includes a commitment to the community. A well rounded scholar, Adam has a reputation among his peers for a fine sense of humor, a willingness of offer advice for his fellow scholars, and an undoubtedly brilliant mind.

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## Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Stephanie Evans

By Victoria Ajayi

Dr. Stephanie Evans, also known as Mrs. Byrd, serves as a shining example of the model McNair student. Dr. Evans conducted research through the McNair Program at the California State University-Long Beach for two years. Her research topics ranged from a cultural examination of the Brazilian martial art capoeira to a study of activism in connection with women's rights. Dr. Evans graduated with an Interdisciplinary Studies BA in Comparative Humanities--gender and cross-cultural American studies. She earned high honors and went on to finish her Ph.D. in Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. She serves as an example of the power of the McNair Program, and of what an intelligent and determined woman can accomplish with the resources provided by the program.

However, the quality that truly distinguishes Dr. Evans as a pillar of the University of Florida McNair Scholars Program is her ability to put her "money where her mouth is." One of her research specializations is community service-learning. Accordingly Dr. Evans has taught classes with a community service focus, and has given and continues to give of herself freely to both the University of Florida and Gainesville communities. She serves as an advisor for the McNair Program and a mentor for at least one McNair scholar every year.

Dr. Evans displays a unique ability to demand excellence from her students, to push students beyond their comfort zones, and to provide criticism when necessary. She also maintains a reputation as one of the most popular professors on campus. Says one McNair scholar, "Dr. Evans isn't my mentor in the program, but she's my mentor in life." Faculty, staff, and students develop lifelong relationships in recognition of the fact that the process of developing future leaders, scholars, and pillars of the community, is not just an academic one. Nor is the purpose of the McNair Program simply to produce scholars. The McNair program at the University of Florida builds community, and through example teaches its scholars to lift as they climb.



## McNair Spring 2010 Calendar

DATE	ACTIVITIES/EVENTS	LOCATION	TIME	FACILITATOR (s)
TH 1/07	<b>Welcome Back Session; Junior Seminar-Summer Research</b>	CSE Room E221	4:00 pm-5:00 pm 5:00 pm-6:00 pm	Mr. Curtis Byrd Mrs. Edna Daniels
TH 1/14	Senior Seminar: Interviewing/Grad-Prof Culture	CBD Room 210	7:00 pm-8:30 pm	Mr. Curtis Byrd, Faculty, Graduate Students
TH 1/21	<b>PowerPoint Preparation Aesthetics &amp; Content Workshop</b>	Rinker Room 238	5:00 pm -7:00 pm	Mr. Pierre St Juste
T 02/09	The Opera	Phillips Performance Arts Center	7:30 pm	Mrs. Edna Daniels
TH 2/11	<b>February Evaluation Due</b>	427 Yon Hall	By 4:00 pm	Mr. Curtis Byrd Mrs. Edna Daniels
F 2/12	<b>Final Abstract Due</b>	427 Yon Hall	By 4:00 pm	Mr. Curtis Byrd Mrs. Edna Daniels
TH 2/18	<b>Poster Presentation Workshop</b>	Rinker Room 238	5:00 pm- 6:00 pm	Mr. Pierre St Juste Mr. Curtis Byrd
F 3/05	<b>Poster Template Due</b>	427 Yon Hall	By 5:00 pm	McNair Scholars
W 3/11-3/14	UM Maryland-College Park McNair Conf./Campus Visits	College Park, MD Baltimore/DC	All Days	Mr. Curtis Byrd Mrs. Edna Daniels
TH 3/18	<b>Public Speaking Workshop</b>	Rinker Room 238	5:00 pm-6:00 pm	TBD
TH 3/25	<b>Poster Presentation Day</b>	Reitz Union 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor East Gallery	12:00 pm-2:30 pm	McNair Scholars
F 4/02	<b>PowerPoint Presentation Due/ Mock Presentations</b>	Rinker Room 238	3:00 pm-6:00 pm	McNair Scholars
F 04/09	<b>Research Presentation Day Scholar Prep Workshop</b>	Reitz Union Room 272, 273, 288,291	3:00 pm-6:00 pm	Mr. Curtis Byrd & Peer Advisors Mrs. Edna Daniels
SA 4/10	<b>Research Presentation Day</b>	Reitz Union Rooms 282/284, etc.	9:00 am-4:00 pm	Staff and McNair Scholars
SA 4/10	<b>Annual McNair Scholar Recognition Banquet</b>	Reitz Union Grand Ballroom	5:00 pm-7:00 pm	Mr. Curtis Byrd Mrs. Edna Daniels Dr. Bernard Mair
Week of 4/12	<b>Scholars Closeout Exit Interviews</b>	McNair Program Office 427 Yon Hall	Various times	Mr. Curtis Byrd for Exit Interviews
W 4/14	<b>April Final Evaluations Due</b>	427 Yon Hall	By 5:00 pm	Mr. Curtis Byrd Mrs. Edna Daniels
TH 4/15	Senior/Junior Seminars: Prep for Beginning Grad School/Summer Research Program	TBA	7:00 pm	Mr. Curtis Byrd Dr. Stephanie Evans

# Scholar Spotlight: A Leader in the Making

By Raelise Emard



McNair scholars are known for being leaders through graduate achievement. However, at the University of Florida, McNair scholars are also known as leaders for their commitment to fostering the school pride of the gator nation and capturing the spirit of the cultures that encompass it. This spotlight is going to be on McNair Scholar, Fariza Alendy, for being one of few black homecoming directors as she served as the Soulfest Director.

In case you didn't know, homecoming is a BIG deal at the University of Florida, with tradition dating back to 1907. As the university grew, it also adapted to the needs of the university, and tries to create a month-long celebration of events that an entire campus of students can get involved in as well as a events that alumni and staff can connect and appreciate.

One unique event to UF's Homecoming is Soulfest. This year Soulfest celebrated 10 years of diversity and excellence. Soulfest is UF Homecoming's multicultural extravaganza that highlights the variety of cultures and unique backgrounds contained deep within the soul of the Gator Nation. The event kicked-off with an organizational fair taking place on the Reitz Union Colonnade, then a talent showcase of cultural and artistic diversity will proceed at the Reitz Union Amphitheatre. With FREE food, live entertainment and raffles, the event was a huge success. One unique part of Soulfest was the commitment to a blood drive philanthropy. As in weeks leading up to the event, Soulfest encouraged students to donate, and encouraged student to sign up for a bone marrow registry

This year Soulfest had over 1,000 attendees! Soulfest showcased the cultural and artistic diversity at the University of Florida Through international music, food, and dance on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009 from 5:00 pm-10:00 pm for free. Soulfest offered a variety of international music and food to enjoy while you view the multicultural booths and fraternity/sorority exhibits. There was a talent showcase in which students competed for the best in show for chance to perform in the largest student run pep rally in the world, UF's Gator Growl.

We constantly give recognition to scholars for their contributions to the academia world. This is a recognition to a scholar who contributes to and fosters an experience that will shape the history of the university and all who participated in UF's homecoming events.

Fariza Alendy is the Homecoming Soulfest Director. From Miami, Florida, Alendy is a junior majoring in health education and behavior with a specialty in health sciences. This is her first year with the Gator Growl/Homecoming team. She has served as the ACTIONS! 2009 Raise Your Voice Month Campaign director, a First-Year Florida peer leader and a resident assistant. She is also involved in the Black Student Union Leadership and Mentorship Cabinet, is a Streetlight at Shands Sickle Cell team captain and is a Ronald E. McNair Scholar. After graduation she plans to participate in a medical mission trip to Africa, and then go to medical school.



## McNair Advisory Council 2009-2010

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Sciences

# Change and the UF McNair Scholars Program

By Parris Baker

While its purpose of equipping disadvantaged undergraduates with the skills and experience to pursue advanced degrees is the same, the UF Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program has undergone many changes this school year. For one, Dr. Bernard Mair, UF Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, is the new program director, and Mr. Curtis Byrd, Director of Special Programs for Undergraduate Affairs, is the new assistant director. This change in leadership has also been accompanied by office moves from Grinter Hall, to Tigert Hall, to its new home in Yon Hall room 427.

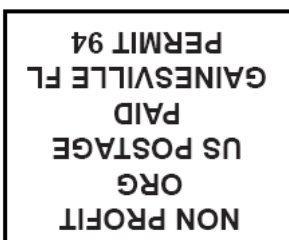
The changes in the program are part of a university wide effort to emphasize undergraduate research. Seeking to raise a new standard of excellence, Dr. Mair has a vision of advancing the quality of research among undergraduates and strengthening the networks within and among UF undergraduate research programs. The McNair Scholars Program, along with the University Scholars, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, and Campus REUs (Research Experiences for Undergraduates) are part of that movement. Dr. Mair's leadership and extensive research expertise along with Mr. Byrd's decade's worth of experience in running undergraduate research programs bring tested skill, fresh enthusiasm, and renewed passion to the vision of the UF McNair Scholars Program.



*Parris Baker  
2009-2010 McNair Scholar*

So, what other changes can the program expect? According to Mr. Byrd, UF McNair Scholars should expect a more intensive research experience during the summer. This adjustment frees scholars to travel more during the Fall and Spring semesters to present their research at national conferences, a change which will allow scholars to develop their presentation skills more than ever before.

With an eye to the future, the program extends gratitude to the leadership team of the past, Dr. Laurence B. Alexander and Mr. Earl J. Wade, as well as to other members of the Gator Nation who have made the program a success.



University of Florida  
427 Yon Hall  
PO Box 113280  
Gainesville, FL 32611-3280

