



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA
MCNAIR SCHOLARS
PROGRAM

USC McNair Scholars Program

JANUARY 2011

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Recapping 2010 & Looking forward to 2011: Scholar & Program Achievements

We experienced a very successful 2010 USC McNair Scholar recruitment cycle. USC faculty, deans, and staff assisted in encouraging promising students to apply to the program, and current McNair Scholars also assumed an important role in recruiting their classmates. This year we admitted twenty-six students, which represents the largest number ever selected. The selection process was competitive, with record numbers of students applying from across campus departments. The selected students are introduced in this newsletter, and in the months ahead their academic profiles, research projects, and faculty mentors will **appear in the program's website**. While in McNair, these outstanding students will acquire research training, faculty and graduate student mentorships, graduate school preparation, professional development, and competitive funding for summer research, national conferences and to visit prospective graduate programs at universities across the U.S.

The new scholars are currently enrolled in an Undergraduate Research Methods Course (AMST 392), where they will learn the ins and outs of research, proposal writing, and working with faculty mentors. This course will help equip these scholars for the 2011 McNair Summer Research Institute & Graduate School Preparation Program.

The fall semester was also a period where we worked closely with

continuing McNair Scholars in a number of areas, including: advising students continuing their research projects, and helping students refine their abstracts and papers for **publication in the program's journal** and for external conferences and publications. We also provided support to students applying to graduate school, those getting into graduate programs, and those searching for scholarships/ fellowships, and organizing their CV's/Résumés.

Important to mention, a number of former McNair Scholars (those that graduated from USC one, two, or even five years ago), turned to our office to acquire advisement on their decision to return to graduate school.

Other program achievements from this past year include successfully planning, facilitating, and executing the 2010 McNair ten-week summer program with twenty-five students, and hosting the 15th Annual USC McNair Scholars Symposium where over 100 guests attended including faculty, deans, student family members, and McNair Scholars from UCLA and Cal State Universities. Furthermore, we selected six McNair Scholars for an East Coast trip that involved visits to Harvard, Yale, NYU, and the University of Pennsylvania.

On the administrative side, we are pleased to share three important updates from this past fall semester. First, we successfully closed the last four-year McNair grant cycle

(2006-2010), and initiated the new McNair grant period (2010 - 2014). McNair is funded via a grant from the U.S. Department of Education TRIO Office, and is renewed every four years pending program performance. Second, the following USC academic and administrative units provided direct funding to continue **supplementing McNair's federal grant**: the USC Office of Undergraduate Programs, USC Graduate School, and USC College of Letters, Arts, & Sciences. Third, significant progress was made with efforts relating to the McNair U.S. Department of Education annual report, which includes assessments on current and **former students' progress, especially in** the areas of facilitating research experiences and graduate school matriculation.

We hope you take the time to review all the scholar achievements highlighted in this newsletter. We would like to once again thank everyone that contributes to making the USC McNair Scholars Program a great resource for students. Without a doubt, 2011 will be filled with opportunities for all participants, and we will see these students excel and realize extraordinary achievements.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Richard Andalon
Assistant Dean, USC Graduate School,
Director, USC McNair Scholars
Program*

*Adrian H. Huerta, M.A.
Program Specialist & Coordinator,
USC McNair Scholars Program*

Introducing the USC McNair Scholar Cohort 2011

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Year</i> | <i>Majors and Minors</i> |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Armando Barajas | Junior | Philosophy and Political Science |
| La Tarrell Brown | Junior | Sociology |
| Josephine Chou | Junior | Psychology and minor in Religion |
| Crispin Collins | Junior | History and minor in French |
| Abel Delgado | Junior | History and minor in Human Resources |
| Juan Espinoza | Junior | International Relations & Communication |
| Rahel Gebreyes | Sophomore | International Relations |
| Mariah Gill | Junior | Environmental Studies |
| Carmina Gomez | Senior | Health Promotions & Disease Prevention |
| Ana Gomez Vasquez | Junior | Sociology |
| Ruby Gonzalez | Sophomore | Biological Science |
| Harmony Huynh | Sophomore | Biological Science |
| Evelyn Larios | Junior | Sociology & Occupational Therapy |
| Kevin Lozandier | Junior | Business Administration and minor in Web Design |
| Albert Madrigal | Sophomore | English, and in French & Management Consulting |
| Luis Maldonado | Sophomore | Health Promotion & Disease Prevention and Global Health, and minor in Spanish |
| Bertrand Perdomo-Ucles | Senior | Public Policy, Management and Planning and minor in Public Health |
| Dy Phi | Junior | Political Science & Communication |
| Andrea Porter | Sophomore | Sociology and minor in Forensics & Criminology |
| Trinidad Rios | Sophomore | Communication |
| Daniel Rios | Junior | English and minor in Advertising |
| Jon Rocha | Junior | International Relations |
| Javier Sotelo | Junior | Health Promotions & Disease Prevention and minor in Economics |
| Christina Wilkerson | Junior | Sociology |
| Charnan Williams | Sophomore | African American Studies & Sociology |
| Christelle Williams | Junior | Psychology |





Scholars going on to Graduate School

Andrea Martinez, pursuing a Ph.D. in Political Science at Stanford University

Marni Sullivan, pursuing a Ph.D. in Neuroscience at the University of Chicago

Aileen Ng, pursuing a Ph.D. in Classics at the University of Florida

Gustavo Lopez, pursuing a Ph.D. in Chicana/o Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara

Brandyn Castro, pursuing an M.D./Ph.D. at Boston University

Brian Nguyen, pursuing an O.D. (doctorate) in Osteopathic Medicine at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine

Darren Knight, (currently in process of deciding), will pursue an M.D. Admitted to Emory University, George Washington University, & UC Davis (other universities pending).

Anene Uchechukwu, pursuing a J.D. (law) at the University of La Verne

Jeanette Acosta, pursuing a Masters in Public Policy at Harvard University

John Kim, pursuing a Masters in American Studies at the University of Texas, Austin

Thaimi Flna, pursuing a Masters in Health Counseling at University of Miami, Florida.

Keyaira Kelly, pursuing a Masters in Communication Management at USC

Karina Ledezma, pursuing a Masters in Public Health at USC

Luis Valdez, pursuing a Masters in Public Health at UCLA.

Suzanne Williams, pursuing a Masters in Public Health at Northern Illinois University

Please note: There may be other USC McNair Scholars from previous cohorts that began graduate school this year. Some Scholars take time off after acquiring their bachelor's degrees. We'll learn about these students' graduate-level matriculation in the months ahead and report this information accordingly.

Scholars Presenting at National-Level Conferences

Claremont Graduate University McNair Conference, October 2010

Shameil Bell, *The Jerk 'Movement': Aesthetics and Identity in an Emergent Youth Dance Form*

Erika Humphries, *Barriers Associated with Mothers Entry to Post-Secondary Education Programs & Mitigating the Barriers*

Vannessa Sanchez-Gonzales, *Racial Identities of Caribbeans in Los Angeles*

Jonathan Truong, *Resisting the Growth Machine: Esperanza Community*

Roland (Tony) Zapata, *The Latino Gender Gap: Access to Higher Education*

Yale University-sponsored Research Conferences

Shameil Bell, *The Jerk 'Movement': Aesthetics and Identity in an Emergent Youth Dance Form*, New Jersey, July 2010

Karina Ledezma, *Beliefs and Determinants of Physical Activity in Latina Women.*, New Haven, Connecticut, March 2010

Mellon Mays Fellowship Conference, California Institute of Technology, November 2010

Silvia Green, *Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and Maternal Infanticide*

Daniel Rios, *On the Millennial Horizon: Roberto Bolaño and Latin America's Shifting Literary Landscape.*

California McNair Symposium, UC Berkeley, August 2010

Nathaniel Gonzalez, *Negotiating Boundaries at a Secular University: Religious Pluralism and the Evangelical Christian Identity*

Vladimir Medenica, *Posting Political Participation: Young Voter Political Engagement on Social Networking Sites*

Liset Dondiego, *A Qualitative Study of Supplement use among Young Hispanic/Latina Women Enrolled in a Fitness Center*

Kim Vu, *The Role of Calpain in Neuroblastoma Metastasis*

Gina Jaqua, *Demographic and Behavioral Factors Associated with African Americans' Preference for Menthol Cigarettes and their Preferred Methods of Cessation*

Reza Ghassemi, *Transitioning to Integrated Project Delivery: Strategies to Overcome Barriers*

Eastern Sociological Society Conference, February 2011

Nate Gonzalez, *Negotiating Boundaries at a Secular University: Religious Pluralism and the Evangelical Christian Identity*

Erika Humphries, *Barriers Associated with Mothers Entering Post-Secondary Education Programs & Mitigating the Barriers*

Monika Largarica, *School Counselors & Policy Mediation: Understanding and Affecting Urban Student Outcomes*

Jonathan Truong, *Resisting the Growth Machine: Esperanza Community Housing Corporation and the L.A. Live CBA*

Daniel Wu, *Reimagining the Figueroa Corridor, 1960-2005: Growth Politics, Policy, and Displacement*

Scholars Engaged in the Publication Process

Jeanette M. Acosta

Managing Editor of the Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy

Daniel Wu

*Published "Post-Post Racial: Cities, Regions, and a 21st American Dream" in *Dialectics: Journal of Leadership, Politics, & Society* Fall '2010*

Karina Ledezma

*Co-authored a publication with USC Professor Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati in a Spanish journal, *Estudios sobre las Culturas Contemporaneas (Studies Concerning Contemporary Cultures)*, Volume 16, No. 31, 171-200. Title: "Regale Salud: Un Programa de Promocion de Salud y Prevencion de enfermedades por contaminacion del humo del cigarillo entre Latinos en los Estados Unidos, Summer '10*

Reza Ghassemi

*Co-authored a publication with USC Professor Burcin Becerik-Gerber, "Transitioning to Integrated Project Delivery: Strategies to Overcome Barriers," in the *Len Construction Journal*, February/March '11*

Vladimir Medenica

*Published "Civil Liberties and the Online Regulation of Sex". *USC Undergraduate Journal of Law and Society*, Vol. 4(2), 34-42.*

Adam Perez

*Writer, Editor & Producer Roles for multiple USC & external mass media sources: *USC Daily Trojan*, *USC Annenberg TV News*, *ABC 7*, *NBC LA*, *NPR Radio**

Ashley Williams

*Assistant Editor for the *USC Daily Trojan**

*Writer for the *Huffington Post*, and published *Social Media is the Gateway to Hispanics*, published January 6th, 2011.*



Scholars Receiving Scholarships, Fellowships, & Academic Honors

Ashley Williams, *Arizona State University, Meredith-Cronkite Fellowship (for broadcast journalism), January 2011*

Bertrand Perdomo-Ucles, *Mexican American Alumni Association Scholarship, 2009 – 2010*

Breanna Morrison, *USC Provost Fellowship, Summer & Fall 2010*

Carmina Gomez, *Mexican American Alumni Association Scholarship, 2009 – 2010*

Cymone Lonon, *USC Provost Fellowship, Fall 2010*

Daniel Rios, *Mellon Mays Fellowship Program, 2010-2011*

Erica Silva, *Mexican American Alumni Association Scholarship, 2009 – 2010*

Evelyn Larios, *Mexican American Alumni Association Scholarship, 2009 – 2010*

Jonathan Truong, *USC Provost Fellowship, Fall 2010*

Jorge Rodriguez, *Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Summer Fellowship, July 2010; Mellon Mays Fellowship Program, 2010-2011; Mexican American Alumni Association Scholarship, 2009 – 2010*

Keshia Groves, *Melissa Finney Award for Overseas Studies, 2010 & Todd and Joselyn Miller Travel Award, 2010*

Liset Dondiego, *Mexican American Alumni Association Scholarship, 2009 – 2010*

Michael Angel Vazquez, *Mexican American Alumni Association Scholarship, 2009 – 2010*

Monika Langarica, *Phi Kappa Phi Academic Honor Award, 2011*

Nathaniel Gonzalez, *USC Provost Fellowship, Fall 2010*

Peggy Weng, *Rose Hills, Summer 2010 & USC Provost Fellowship, Fall 2010*

Daniel Wu, *USC Provost Fellowship, Spring 2010, Summer 2010 & Fall 2010; Mellon Mays Fellowship Program, 2009-2010*

Shamell Bell, *Yale University Summer Research Fellowship, Summer 2010*

Silvia Green, *Mellon Mays Fellowship Program, 2009-2010; Mexican American Alumni Association Scholarship, 2009 – 2010*

Vladimir Mendenica, *Robert E. Lane Scholarship, 2011*

Scholars Visiting East Coast Universities

“Trade in our Flip-Flops and Sunglasses for Rain Boots and Mittens”

A McNair Scholar’s reflection of his East Coast College Visit

One of my fall responsibilities as Program Specialist & Coordinator is to organize visits to universities across the U.S. for USC McNair Scholars interested in connecting with faculty members and learning about prospective graduate program opportunities. After reviewing a competitive pool of applications, we selected six students to participate (Kim Vu, Erica Silva, Daija Lewis, Julian Tarula, Michael Randolph, and Jonathan Truong). These students listed over 15 institutions to visit in the Midwest and East Coast regions of the country. My task was to accommodate student top picks, narrow down the choices, and planning the corresponding itineraries including researching universities, reviewing flight schedules, planning driving routes, and arranging hotel accommodations. Although, this was a little challenging, but very achievable. We truly enjoyed putting in the time and effort for the extraordinary group of students selected for this very special USC McNair Scholars University Visitation Program.

The purpose of this trip was to allow the Scholars to develop personal relationships with program faculty, staff, and current students to gain an in-depth perspective of future graduate programs and home for two to six years of their lives. Besides some minor logistical challenges, such as getting lost in New Jersey for 10 miles, the trip was a success. The students received positive feedback from potential faculty advisors, experienced new food, cultures, weather, and visited five highly-selective research universities (University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, New York University, Yale University, and Harvard University). Below, Mr. Michael Randolph will share a narrative of his first experience on the East Coast. - **Adrian H. Huerta**

With my exhaustion from the copious amounts of group meetings, midterms and papers at USC, traveling to the East Coast seemed like the perfect getaway. But little did I know, this adventure would also require the stamina, endurance and professionalism that one would expect in the classroom. However, in this case, the cities were our classroom and we were definitely the new students. Like other McNair Scholars on the trip, this was my first time traveling to the East Coast. I didn’t quite know what to expect or how best to prepare for the expedition. Thus, I took everything in strides. The seven of us left our beloved So Cal just hours after Sunday’s dusk and we were greeted by the sunrise in Washington, DC.

It hit me that we were in a different part of the country once I began to see the varying license plates from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and Maryland. The harsh cold took some time to get accustomed to but I managed, purchasing hats and scarves as deemed them necessary. The first school on our list was the University of Pennsylvania. Here, I visited the world famous, Wharton School of Business. I was thrilled to be in the facility that produced some of the world’s leading financial masterminds. After my meeting with that department staff, our group reconvened to stuff our faces with Philly’s finest- cheese steak, steak fries, onion rings, and hot mozzarella sticks.

We digested our food and caught up on much needed (and deserved) sleep in the van ride through New Jersey. I wanted to see everything out my foggy window, but my eyes would not let me as they shut for just a few moments. In and out of consciousness, the bright lights of the New York City skyline awoke us all. *We had arrived.*

After we checked in our hotel, I immediately scheduled out my plans for the next day. The early planning came in handy. I woke up and caught the 1 Subway to Battery Park at the end of the Manhattan Island. I stood in amazement of the Statue of Liberty and bought a hot dog from a cart in the financial district. I worked my way north to NYU. There I met with the graduate admission counselor from the School of Professional and Continuing Studies. I was amazed by their willingness and eagerness to speak with me. They were astounded by the idea that I had flown all the way out from California just to speak with them about their program. Thus, they went above and beyond by providing me with as many resource, contacts and pamphlets that they could find. Once that meeting concluded, I ventured around and got lost in SoHo before my engagement at Columbia University. After riding the wrong subway trains, I managed to finally make my way back to Upper Manhattan with the help of my Blackberry GPS. At Columbia, I met with a current student. We went to a local restaurant and he elaborated on the culture of the East Coast, New York and his graduate program. The themes seemed to be parallel with many of my initial observations. New York has a lot of resources, but there are a lot of people competing for those opportunities. Thus, one must work continuously hard -- but you are working with and competing among the best. Thus, I walked out of that conversation ready and inspired to work harder and dream bigger.

My conversation with the Columbia student remained on my mind all the way to Connecticut. As soon as we arrived at Yale, I remembered that I had a contact there. Michelle Nearon, an Assistant Dean for Diversity, who came to speak to our cohort during the Summer Research Institute, who works in the Graduate School. It was nice to see that even among a place so new, I could recognize some familiar faces that would be willing to guide me. Michelle provides me with the contacts that she had at Cornell University and other institutions. This contact recommendation made me realize that the graduate world is as small as the McNair program had emphasized.

Although I wished I could chat with her longer, we were on a tight schedule. Our next stop was Harvard University. Once we arrived, I set out to go to their prestigious Harvard School of Business. It was interesting to be at the location that created the business cases that I read in all of my classes. But I didn’t get a chance to venture much because we were determined not to be late for our departing plane at Logan International Airport. As we waited to board our plan, you could see the exhaustion on all of our faces. This experience was a lot to take in. We had to get acquainted with the weather, culture, various schools, the cities and their intricate subways systems. But even as we were getting acclimated to these different variable we were simultaneously trying to figure out if we would ultimately like to trade in our flip-flops and sunglasses for rain boots and mittens. I believe that this experience was the perfect preview to what will soon to be a reality for many of us. Next time, I ride the New York City Subway; I will be acing an exam.

About the author:

Mike Randolph is a senior in the USC Marshall School of Business majoring in Business Administration with an emphasis in Communication. He is a member of the McNair Scholar 2009 – 2010 cohort and is applying to a number of graduate and professional programs in Human Resources & Management in the East Coast and Midwest.

Student Highlight: Ashley M. Williams

USC Senior Ashley Michelle Williams is pursuing a major in broadcast and digital journalism as well as a double minor in international relations and Spanish. Originally from Michigan, Ashley has obtained great journalism and internship opportunities with Dateline NBC, People Magazine, NBC Network News, CNN International-Madrid and CNN en Español, ABC Good Morning America, BBC Mundo, the Huffington Post, and many other opportunities during her college career.

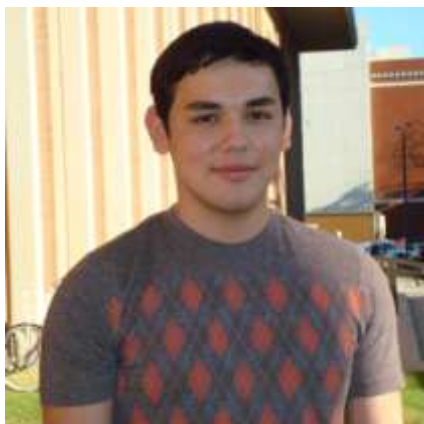
Additionally, she has been granted many leadership positions. She was granted the opportunity to create and host two television shows for Trojanvision; was a global news radio broadcaster for KCRW; was a liaison and Career Prep Fellow in Management Leadership for Tomorrow Program; is an assistant senior editor for the Daily Trojan; and is also a junior varsity debater for the USC Trojan Debate Squad.

Ashley has also tried to make a difference in the world through researching and exposing herself to many cultures. For example, she has conducted research through USC McNair Scholars Program; studied abroad in Madrid, Spain; has volunteered as a judge and assistant coach for the Urban Debate League Foundation; worked as a Residential Advisor for the USC Language Academy and Parkside; researched for the International Relations School under Professor Patrick James; and is currently creating a Human Rights Educational Program with JEP.

She has also obtained many awards during her college career including, a full academic scholarship from the USC Trojan Debate Squad, the 2011 Outstanding Scholar Award from the USC Black Alumni Association, the Pat Tobin Scholarship from the Black Journalists Association of Southern California, and acceptance in the national Meredith-Cronkite Fellowship Program partnered with CBS. Through her voice and her writing, she hopes to bring positive changes in society. After college, Ashley would like to pursue a career in network news as a correspondent, in service with Teach for America, or in a Ph.D. Behavioral Operations Management Program.



Student Highlight: Adam Perez



When I applied to the USC McNair Scholars program my sophomore year, I did not expect it to change my course at USC. Through the McNair program, I was exposed to the world of academia, a world that I could be a part of beyond my undergraduate years at USC.

During my experience with the McNair Scholars program, I developed my individual project to examine civil rights organization as a pivotal role in reshaping the definition of Latinos in Los Angeles; it is titled *"From White to Brown: Latino Identity in Post WWII Los Angeles."* This paper was presented at the USC undergraduate symposium as well as at the National McNair Symposium at UC Berkley. Currently, I am working on my senior honors thesis titled *"Beyond Latino: A Multidimensional Approach to Latino Identity."* My research investigates Latino identity within a multidimensional framework and also questions the practice theory of academia and journalism. My data is comprised of 100 surveys of individuals' narratives of ethnic identity formation.

At USC I was able to combine my passion for research with my love for journalism by working as a photographer and staff writer for the Daily Trojan, and a multimedia reporter for Annenberg TV News. My journalism experience extends beyond the university structures. As a sophomore and junior, I was selected by the National Association of Hispanic Journalist to take participate in their student projects program. The program paired up-and-coming journalists with professionals in the field to produce stories. I carried my knowledge from my former experiences to ABC 7 in Los Angeles where I edited videos, wrote stories, and oversaw social media marketing. My experience in journalism is also diverse; I worked with NPR's Youth Radio as a reporter for All Things Considered as well as served as editor to inner-city students interested in journalism through various programs. Currently, I am an associate producer for NBC LA. I have written stories, set-up media segments, and produced media packages. I also served as a social media advisor to NBC reporters and anchors on new technologies.

In May 2011, I will graduate at the top of my class. I owe much of my success to the McNair Scholars program for setting high standards and cultivating a strong work ethic. Next fall I hope to attend Columbia University for a Master's in Digital Media.





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The McNair Scholars Program prepares high-achieving USC undergraduates for research experiences and graduate school programs. Scholars begin the program by taking a Research Methods Course in the Spring. Throughout the Spring, Summer, and Fall, Scholars participate in graduate school-related preparation workshops and activities.

During the Summer Research Institute, scholars receive a \$2800 stipend for participating in an intense ten-week program where they engage in original research under the mentorship of USC faculty members and doctoral students. Students also acquire housing scholarships and conference travel grants. At the conclusion of the summer, Scholars present their findings to peers and faculty and they have an opportunity to publish their work in the program's journal. Scholars also become eligible for funding to present their research at national scholarly conferences and to visit prospective graduate school programs across the U.S. Website: <http://www.usc.edu/mcnair>

Upcoming Events

Event: University of Southern California (USC) Graduate School Advising & Preparation **Where:** USC GFS 315R
When: 2/1/2011—4/30/2011 (ongoing, by appointment at graduate.diversity@usc.edu) **Time:** 8a.m. – 4p.m.

Event: University of California (UC-all campuses) Graduate Preparation Program (EDGE) **Where:** University of California, San Diego (UCSD) Price Center (inquire with graduate.diversity@usc.edu) **When:** 2/11/2011 **Time:** 8a.m. – 4p.m.

Event: California Diversity Forum: Graduate School Preparation & National Graduate School Fair **Where:** USC
When: 4/2/2011 (inquire with graduate.diversity@usc.edu) **Time:** 8a.m.- 4p.m.

Event: Yale University Summer Programs & Graduate School Opportunities **Where:** Leavey Auditorium **When:** 4/14/2011
 (inquire with graduate.diversity@usc.edu) **Time:** 9a.m. to 12p.m.

Event: USC Annual New McNair Scholar—Faculty Mentor Banquet & McNair Scholar Graduating Senior Recognition
Where: USC University Club **When:** 4/28/2011 **Time:** 4p.m. – 6p.m.