

# SIUC McNair Newsletter

McNair Scholars Program

9/18/2018

Volume 1, Issue 1

## *The McNair Program welcomes new scholars*



From left (back row) – Erin Boester, Destanee Williams, Jessica Jurak, Yasmin Ibrahim, Allison McMinn, Francis Gatimu, Nathaniel Jordan, Luis Prado, and Christian Rose. From left (front row) – Hamza Ajeena, Kennedy Byers, Brittan Cobb, Areaaj Mubarak, Itzel Mendoza, Tori Rhone, and Alexis Rusk.

The McNair Scholars Program at SIUC recently welcomed 17 scholars on April 26, 2018, held at Guyon Auditorium in Morris Library (SIUC Campus). The ceremony was an outstanding gathering of faculty, past scholars, friends, and family to welcome the newest scholars of the program.

The McNair Scholars Program is an educational opportunity program funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The program is structured to prepare undergraduates 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. The program is dedicated to **Dr. Ronald E. McNair** and the high standards of achievement inspired by his life.

The program would like to thank **Dr. Karen Renzaglia** for writing the initial McNair grant

and the following renewal McNair grants. The program would also like to thank SIUC administrators for all the support that is instrumental in the success of this program, including **Dr. James Garvey** (Vice-Chancellor of Research), **Dr. Meera Komarraju** (Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs), the Graduate School, the Office of Associate Chancellor for Diversity. We would also like to extend a special thank you to all the SIUC faculty mentors for giving the McNair scholars the opportunity of working in their lab to pursue their research interests. Lastly, we would like to thank all family and friends

for their constant support and encouragements to our scholars.

**Rhetta Seymour**, the director of the McNair program, opened the ceremony by educating the audience about the history of McNair. **Dr. Vanessa Enriquez**, a former McNair scholar, was the Keynote Speaker at the ceremony. She earned her doctorate in Cell and Molecular Biology with specialization in Cancer Biology in 2014. During her professional career, she has worked in different capacity including researcher, project manager, technical writer, and consultant. During the ceremony, Dr. Enriquez talked about how being part of the McNair program played an influential and life-changing role in her career. Graduating McNair scholar, **Izabella Bradford** also spoke passionately about her experience and how the program influenced her academic life.

Seventeen SIUC undergraduates from different majors were inducted during the ceremony. **Hamza Ajeena** (majoring in Animal Science), **Erin Boester** (Psychology), **Kennedy Byers** Africana Studies/ Anthropology), **Brittan Cobb** (Animal Science), **Francis Gatimu** (Political Science), **Yasmin Ibrahim** (Biological Science), **Nathaniel Jordan** (Plant Biology), **Jessica Jurak** (Physics), **Alexis Lane** (Psychology), **Allison McMinn**

(Electrical Engineering), **Itzel Mendoza** (Psychology), **Areaj Mubarak** (Human Nutrition & Dietetics), **Luis Prado** (Geography), **Tori Rhone** (Biological Science), **Christian Rose** (Civil Engineering), **Alexus Rusk** (Physiology) and **Destanee Williams** (Paralegal Studies) represented 2018 McNair scholars.

The ceremony also recognized 6 continuing and 13 graduating McNair scholars. The continuing McNair scholars include **Frankie Anderson**, **William Browning**, **Aaron Caldwell**, **Jamieson Deamer**, **Dakota Discepolo** and **Madison McMinn**. The success of the McNair program can also be measured with graduating scholars like **Xavier Aguirre**, **Baylen Earles**, **Daniel Morales** who graduated in Fall 2017 while **Angelina Bahena**, **Izabella Bradford**, **Shayla Brown**, **Jacqueline Chavez**, **Ana Hernandez**, **Carelsha Hines**, **A. Dave Levisky**, **Tierney Rhone**, and **Harleigh Williams** graduated this Spring 2018 with their baccalaureate degrees. All the graduated McNair scholars were presented with a medal and a plaque.

*"Education is the key. It is your first start to the roadmap to success. Once you have that key you can change the world"*

*-Dr. Vanessa Enriquez  
(Keynote Speaker)*

Finally, we would like to thank **Rhetta Seymour** and undergraduate assistants **Tierney Rhone** and **Tori Rhone** for organizing a fantastic ceremony. It takes a lot of work and effort to coordinate all the little details that go into running such a show.

To learn more about the McNair program, please visit <https://mcnair.siu.edu/> or contact Rhetta Seymour at [rseymour@siu.edu](mailto:rseymour@siu.edu)

*"To be a McNair scholar essentially means commitment, perseverance, and passion"*

*-Graduated McNair Scholar Isabella Bradford*



## Moments of the induction ceremony



Opening remarks by McNair Director Rhetta Seymour at the induction ceremony



Keynote Speaker Dr. Vanessa Enrique



2017 McNair Scholar and Graduating Senior Izabella Bradford



Continuing McNair Scholars- Jamieson Deamer, William Browning, Aaron Caldwell and Madison McMinn



Graduating McNair Scholars- Xavier Aguirre, Harleigh Williams, Izabella Bradford, Jacqueline Chavez, Carlesha Hines, Tierney Rhone. Front Row – Angelica Bahena, A. Dave Levsky and Ana Hernandez.

## Twelve McNair Scholars start SRI



Top row– Alexis Rusk, Kennedy Byers, Francis Gatimu, Yasmin Ibrahim, Erin Boester, Itzel Mendoza, Brittan Cobb, Tori Rhone, Hamza Ajeena. Bottom row- Aaron Caldwell and Alexis Lane.

Twelve McNair Scholars started the Summer Research Institute (SRI) this summer. The SRI is an intensive 8-week program where McNair scholars engage in mentor-based research. McNair SRI scholar included **Hamza Ajeena** under the mentorship of **Dr. Amer AbuGhazaleh**, **Erin Boester** under the mentorship of **Dr. Lisabeth Dilalla**, **Kennedy Byers** under the mentorship of **Dr. Ras Michael Brown**, **Aaron Caldwell** under the mentorship of **Dr. Saran Donahoo**, **Brittan Cobb** under the mentorship of **Dr. Amer AbuGhazaleh**, **Francis Gatimu** under the mentorship of **Dr. Stephen Shulman**, **Yasmin Ibrahim** under the mentorship of **Dr. James MacLean**, **Nathaniel Jordan** under the mentorship of **Dr. Jane Geisler-Lee**, **Alexis**

**Lane** under the mentorship of **Dr. Michelle Kibby**, **Itzel Mendoza** under the mentorship of **Dr. Stacy Thompson**, **Tori Rhone** under the mentorship of **Dr. Joseph Cheatwood**, and **Alexis Rusk** under the mentorship of **Dr. Buck Hales**.

During the SRI, students work closely with faculty mentors to complete individual research projects and pursue their own research question. They also conducted fieldwork, compiled literature reviews and composed original research papers. In addition to research, scholars also underwent six weeks of GRE training sessions with McNair Research Advisor **Jorden Thomas**. These sessions were aimed at improving their GRE

composite scores. The scholars also spent a week of professional development at the start of the SRI. The scholars attended workshops on conflict resolution, stress and time management, nonverbal communications and participated in public speaking, team building, and ropes course exercises.

At the end of the SRI, each student presented a scientific poster in the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual McNair Summer Research Symposium. The poster highlighted the independent research work conducted with a respective faculty mentor. The symposium was held on July 20, 2018, at Guyon Auditorium in SIUC Campus.



## SRI Highlights



McNair Scholar Hamza Ajeena at the public speaking session



Team Building Exercise with McNair Scholars



Professional Development Session with McNair Director Rhetta Seymour



McNair scholars preparing for GRE



McNair scholars gearing up for the Rope Course at the Touch of Nature. From Right- Francis Gatimu, Erin Boester, Itzel Mendoza, Alexis Lane, Tori Rhone, Nathaniel Jordan, Brittan Cobb, Yasmin Ibrahim, Alexis Rusk, Hamza Ajeena, Kennedy Byers and Aaron Caldwell.

The poster session lasted for an hour and a half and was attended by SIUC administrators, faculty, mentor, past McNair scholars, SIUC graduate, and undergraduate students. The session was judged by **Dr. Michael Hylin, Dr. Amber Pond, Dr. LaShonda Stewart and Dr. Sandy Pensoneau -Conway.**

**Dr. James Garvey** (Vice-Chancellor of Research) presented opening remarks at the symposium followed by **Dr. Karen Renzaglia** (PI of the McNair Program) who emphasized the importance of McNair program and its influence on undergraduate research. At the end of the symposium, all twelve McNair scholar received outstanding research achievement certificates for completing the SRI. Faculty Mentors were also awarded Outstanding Mentor certificates for their time and resources and the providing the McNair scholars the opportunity of working in their lab. McNair scholars **Nathanial Jordan** and **Yasmin Ibrahim** won the first and second place for the best STEM poster while McNair scholars **Francis Gatimu** and **Erin Boester** won the first and second place for the best Social Science poster at the symposium.

McNair scholar **Alexis Lane** gave inspirational closing remarks. She said, "This summer I learned to challenge myself in a way I never expected. I learned to push myself to my fullest extent. I learned that if you believe in

yourself, not even the biggest obstacle can hinder your success. The research we conducted was not easy. People conduct research like this over the course of months, sometimes even years. We did this in 8 weeks. There were times when I didn't think I could do it, as I'm sure others can relate. Yet through the support of everyone in this program, we were successful." She also emphasized the importance of friendship "Overall, I am tremendously grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in the McNair Scholars Program. I made friendships, attained crucial information and preparation for my future, and had a great time while doing it."

McNair scholar **Francis Gatimu** also shared his summer experience "Being the first time I was to conduct original research I felt greatly overwhelmed coming into the McNair program. However, the first couple of weeks eased my nerves after I began interacting with the amazing people in my cohort and the McNair support staff. I felt like the weeks of orientation not only prepared me mentally for the task that was before me but gave me the tools needed to excel in life. The poster presentation and the days leading up to it was the most difficult since this is what we have been working and preparing for throughout the entire summer. However, the McNair support staff went far and beyond to ensure they offered us maximum support and

*"This summer I learned to challenge myself in a way I never expected. I learned to push myself to my fullest extent."*

*-Alexis Lane  
(McNair Scholar)*

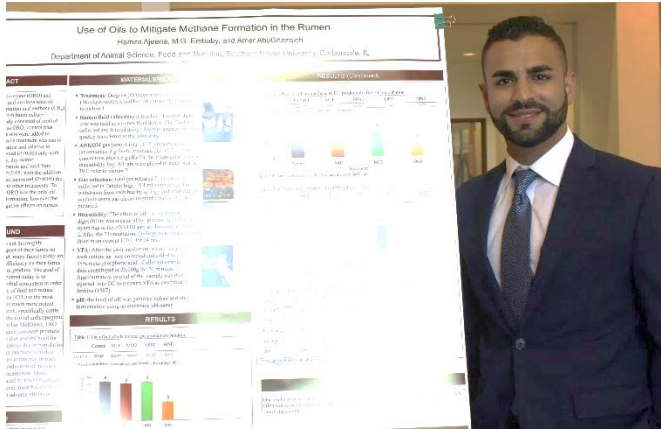
practical preparation which enabled me to do that which 8 weeks prior seemed impossible conduct and present my own original research!"

The program would like to all the Matching Funds Contribution including the Office of the Chancellor, Office of the Provost, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research, Office for Institutional Diversity, Graduate School and the College of Liberal Arts. We would also like to thank all the workshop presenters **Cristina Castillo, Michelle Garrett, Rebecca Gonnering, Phil Howze, Jorden Justice, Mandy King, Gauri Pitale, and Emily Vajjala**. We would also like to thank **Dr. Karen Renzaglia** (PI of the McNair grant), **Rhetta Seymour**, (Director of the McNair Program), and McNair Research Advisors **Jorden Thomas and Laxmi Sagwan-Barkdoll**.

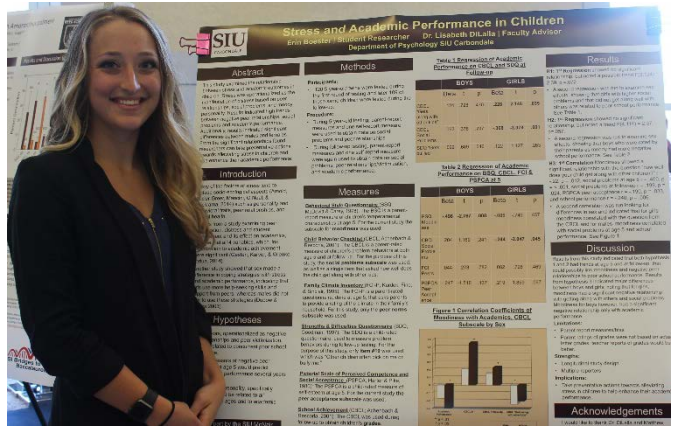
Finally, we would like to extend a special thank you to family and friends of all McNair scholars for their constant support and encouragement.



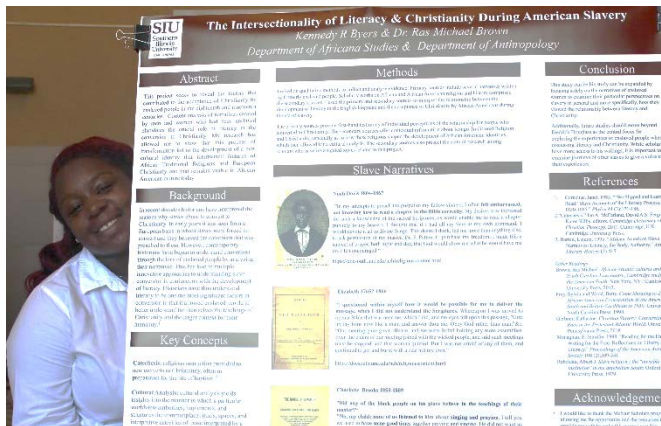
## PROUD MOMENTS AT THE SYMPOSIUM



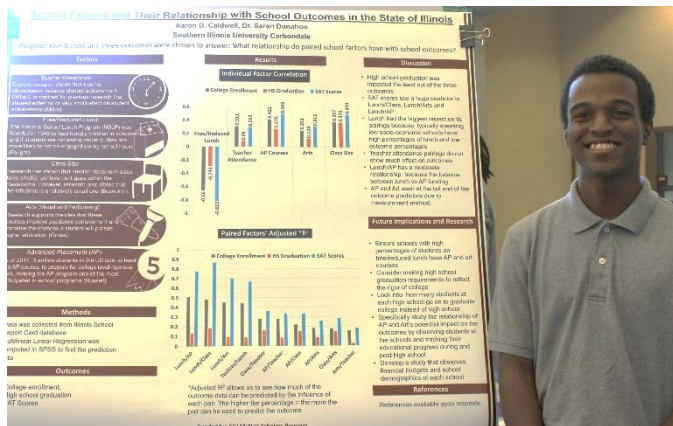
**Hamza Ajeena** presented her research “Use of Oils to Mitigate Methane Formation in the Rumen” under the mentorship of **Dr. Amer AbuGhazaleh**.



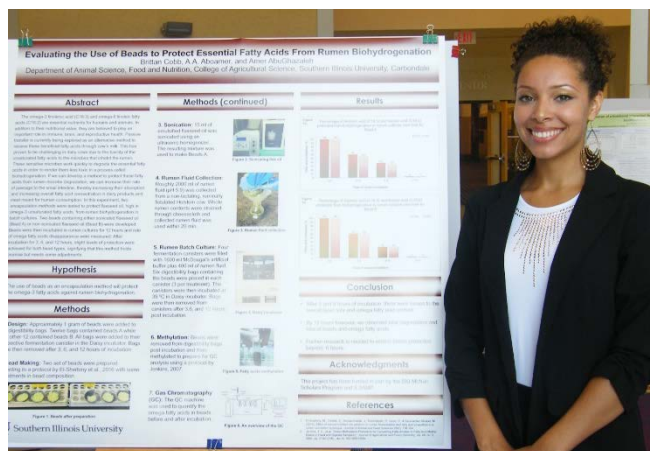
**Erin Boester** presented her research “Stress and Academic Performance in Children” under the mentorship of **Dr. Lisabeth DiLalla**.



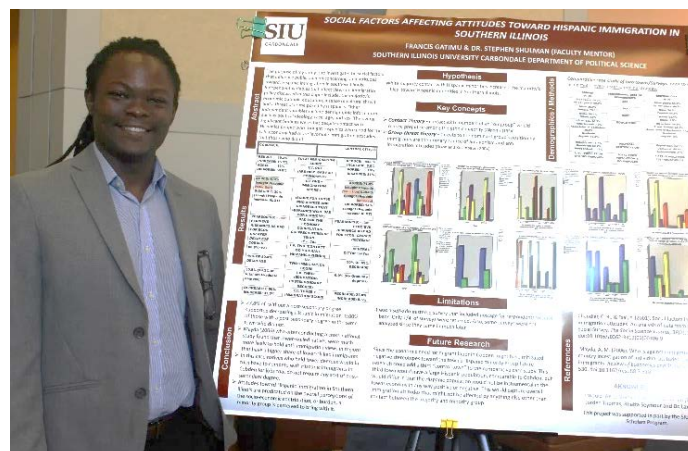
**Kennedy Byers** presented her research “The Intersectionality of Literacy & Christianity during American Slavery” under the mentorship of **Dr. Ras Michael Brown**.



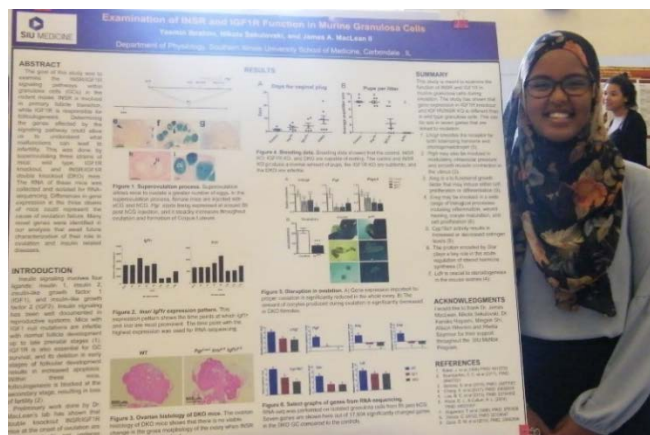
**Aaron Caldwell** presented his research “School Factors and Their Relationship with School Outcomes in the State of Illinois” under the mentorship of **Dr. Saran Donahoo**.



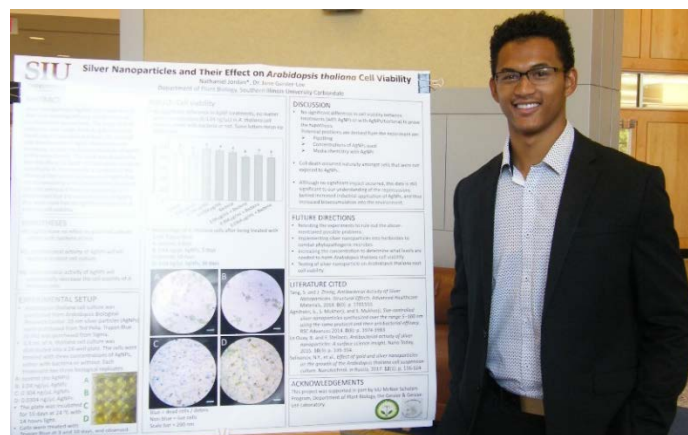
**Brittan Cobb** presented her research “Evaluating the use of beads to protect essential fatty acids from rumen biohydrogenation” under the mentorship of **Dr. Amer AbuGhazaleh**.



**Francis Gatimu** presented his research “Social factors affecting attitudes toward Hispanic immigration in Southern Illinois” under the mentorship of **Dr. Stephen Shulman**.

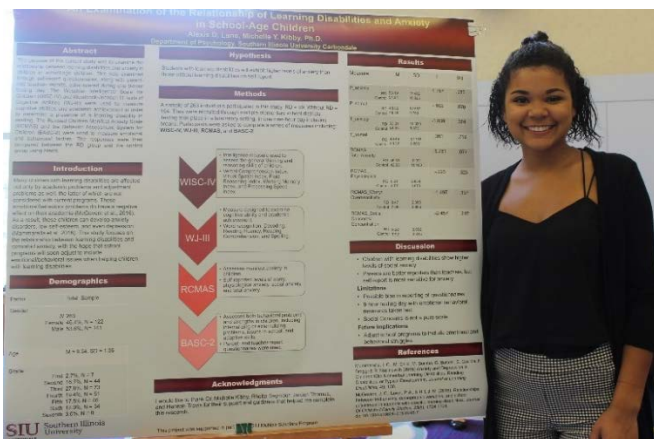


**Yasmin Ibrahim** presented her research “Examination of INSR and IGF1R function murine in granulosa cells” under the mentorship of **Dr. James MacLean**.

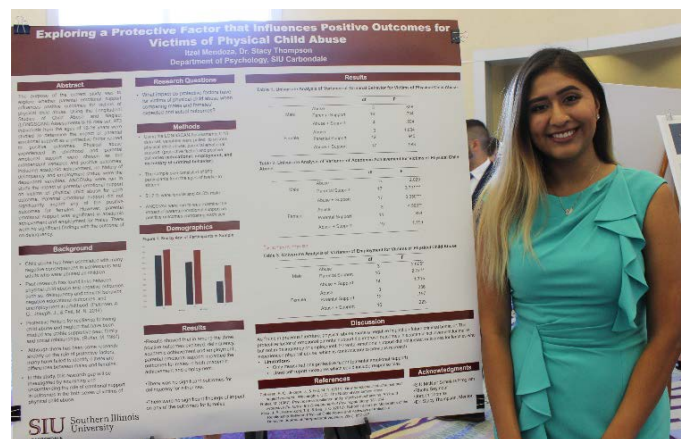


**Nathaniel Jordan** presented his research “Silver nanoparticles and their effect on Arabidopsis thaliana cell viability” under the mentorship of **Dr. Jane Geisler-Lee**.

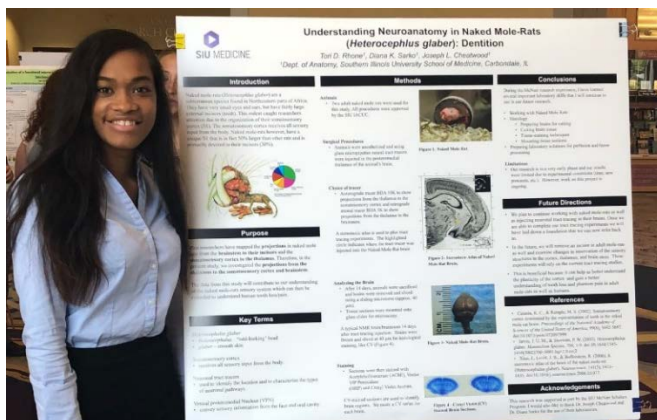




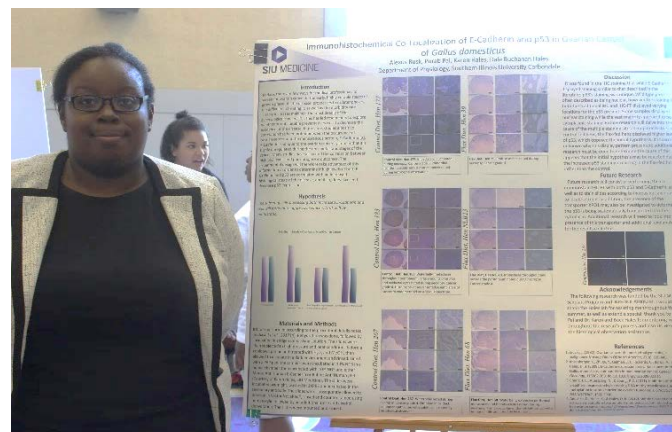
Alexis Lane presented her research “An Examination of the Relationship of Learning Disabilities and Anxiety in School-Age Children” under the mentorship of Dr. Michelle Kibby.



Itzel Mendoza presented her research “Exploring a Protective Factor that Influences Positive Outcomes for Victims of Physical Child Abuse” under the mentorship of Dr. Stacy Thompson.



Tori Rhone presented her research “Understanding the neuroanatomy of naked mole-rats (*Heterocephalus glaber*): Dentition” under the mentorship of Dr. Joseph Cheatwood.

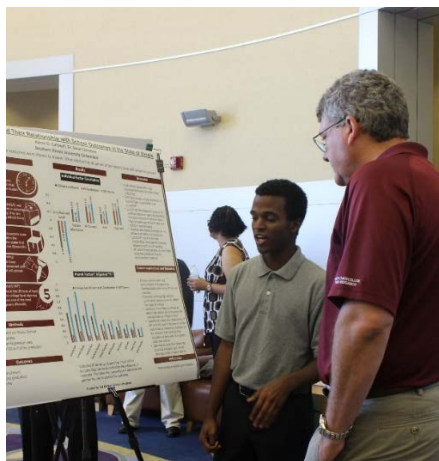


Alexus Rusk presented her research “Immunohistochemical co-localization of E-cadherin and p53 in ovarian cancer of *Gallus domesticus*” under the mentorship of Dr. Dale Hales.

## Moments of SRI Symposium 2018



McNair Scholar Tori Rhone with her mentor Dr. Joseph Cheatwood



McNair Scholar Aaron Caldwell presenting to Dr. James Garvey



McNair Scholar Alexis Lane sharing her closing remarks



From left- STEM Awards: 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Yasmin Ibrahim, 1<sup>st</sup> Place Nathaniel Jordan  
Social Science Awards: 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Erin Boester, 1<sup>st</sup> Place Francis Gatimu



McNair Scholar Kennedy Byers with Rhetta Seymour



Top row- Kennedy Byers, Nathaniel Jordan, Yasmin Ibrahim, Francis Gatimu, Erin Boester, Itzel Mendoza, Alexis Rusk, Hamza Ajeena. Bottom row- Brittan Cobb, Aaron Caldwell, Alexis Lane and Tori Rhone.



## *McNair Scholars recently enrolled in Doctoral and Master's Degree*



**Leslie Murray**- McNair SRI  
2015 scholar  
Enrolled in Ph.D. at Southern  
Illinois University since Fall  
2018



**Baylen Earles**- McNair SRI  
2016 scholar  
Enrolled in Ph.D. at Indiana  
University since Fall 2018



**Ana Hernandez** - McNair SRI  
2017 scholar  
Enrolled in MA in Social Work  
at U of Illinois Urbana  
Champaign since Fall 2018



**Jorden Thomas**- McNair SRI  
2016 scholar  
Enrolled in MA in Public  
Administration at Southern  
Illinois University Carbondale  
since Fall 2018



**Izabella Bradford**- McNair SRI  
2017 scholar  
Enrolled in MS in Microbiology  
at University of New  
Hampshire since Fall 2018



**Juan Corral**- McNair SRI 2017  
scholar  
Enrolled in MA in Educational  
Psychology at University of  
Wisconsin Milwaukee since  
Fall 2018



**A. Dave Levsky** - McNair SRI  
2017 scholar  
Enrolled in MS in Physics at  
Portland State University since  
Fall 2018



**Charlesha Hines** - McNair SRI  
2017 scholar  
Enrolled in MA in Applied  
Clinical Psychology at Penn  
State University since Fall 2018



**Tierney Rhone** - McNair SRI  
2017 scholar  
Enrolled in MA in Social Work  
at University of South Carolina  
since Fall 2018



**Harleigh Williams** - McNair  
SRI 2017 scholar  
Enrolled in MA in Clinical  
Mental Health at George  
Washington University since  
Fall 2018



**Jacquelyn Chavez** - McNair SRI  
2017 scholar  
Enrolled in MA in School  
Counseling at Oakland  
University since Fall 2018






**Norris Akpan** - McNair SRI  
2016 scholar  
Enrolled in MS in Physiology  
at Tulane University since Fall  
2018

## *Congratulations to Recent Ph.D. and Master Graduates (2018)*

	<p><b>Dr. Antonio Rodriguez</b>  McNair SRI 2006 scholar  Graduated from University of Maryland with Ph.D. in Political Science  Dissertation Title: Four essays on how presidential policy representation on the issue of immigration affects Latino political behavior</p>
	<p><b>Dr. Elom Amuzu</b>  McNair SRI 2011 scholar  Graduated from Southern Illinois University Carbondale with Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology  Dissertation Title: Fast Tailed Girls: A Qualitative Analysis of Adult African American Women's Early Gender and Sex-Related Socialization Messages</p>
	<p><b>Emily Peterson-</b> McNair SRI 2016 scholar  Enrolled in MS in Civil &amp; Environmental Engineering at University of California, Berkeley since Fall 2017</p>
	<p><b>Naomi Tolbert-</b>  McNair SRI 2015 scholar  Graduated from The University of Chicago with Masters in International Relations  Thesis Title: African Americans and Black Immigrants: Black Identity Development and the Influences of Race and Culture in the United States</p>
	<p><b>Magan Snowden</b>  McNair SRI 2015 scholar  Graduated from Southern Illinois University Carbondale with Masters in Public Health</p>
	<p><b>Brenda Escutia</b>  McNair SRI 2014 scholar  Graduated from North Carolina State University with Masters in Higher Education Administration.</p>
	<p><b>Shantel Franklin</b>  McNair SRI 2015 scholar  Graduated from Indiana University with Masters in Public Administration.</p>



	<p><b>Demetrius Green</b>  McNair SRI 2015 scholar  Graduated from University of Kansas with Masters in Film &amp; Media Studies  Thesis Title:</p>
	<p><b>Leslie Murray</b>  McNair SRI 2015 scholar  Graduated from Southern Illinois University Carbondale with Masters in Philosophy  Thesis Title: Perceiving the Reality of Time</p>
	<p><b>Ivan Vargas</b>  McNair SRI 2014 scholar  Graduated from Southern Illinois University Carbondale with Masters in Economics  Thesis Title: Human Trafficking in the United States</p>

## Upcoming Events

### GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL FAIR



This annual event hosted by The Career Center draws recruiters from over 1,500 graduate and professional programs in health, law, science, business, engineering, arts, humanities, and more. Representatives provide information and materials regarding their specific programs and schools to students who are considering an advanced degree. This event is free and open to ALL students and the public. Also, check the below website for additional information.

<https://www.careercenter.illinois.edu/graduate-and-professional-school-fair>

Date: **October 17, 2018**

Time: 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 pm

Location: U of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign  
Illini Union, Rooms ABC & Pine Lounge

### BIG TEN+ GRADUATE SCHOOL EXPOSITION



The Big Ten+ Graduate School Exposition is specifically designed for those interested in graduate study in the fields of Engineering, Mathematics, Science, Technology, Pharmaceutical Sciences and related disciplines. Students from all institutions are encouraged to attend, and travel scholarships are available! **If you are interested in attending this fair, please contact Rhetta Seymour regarding Registration and Fees.** Also, check the below website for complete schedule and handbook.

<https://www.purdue.edu/gradschool/gradexpo/index.html>

#### The Grad Expo features:

- educational workshops
- an elite graduate school fair
- networking receptions
- and more!

Date: **September 30- October 1**

Location: Purdue University  
West Lafayette, Indiana Campus