



SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY CARBONDALE
MCNAIR SCHOLARS

Handbook

Updated October 2025

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History of the Federal TRIO Programs

The history of TRIO reflects a progressive commitment to expanding educational opportunities. The first program, **Upward Bound**, was created under the **Economic Opportunity Act of 1964** as part of the nation's War on Poverty. The following year, the **Higher Education Act of 1965** established **Talent Search**, and in **1968**, **Student Support Services**—originally known as *Special Services for Disadvantaged Students*—was authorized under the Higher Education Amendments.

By the late 1960s, these three initiatives became collectively known as **TRIO**. Over time, TRIO expanded to include additional programs serving students from middle school through post-baccalaureate study:

- **1972:** *Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC)* and *Veterans Upward Bound* were added to help adults re-enter higher education.
- **1976:** The *Training Program for Federal TRIO Programs* was created to strengthen program staff and leadership development.
- **1986:** The *Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program* was established to prepare underrepresented students for doctoral study.
- **1990:** The *Upward Bound Math/Science* program was introduced to encourage students' pursuit of STEM fields.
- **1998:** The *TRIO Dissemination Partnership* program began to promote the sharing of successful TRIO practices.
- **2001:** The *Student Support Services (SSS)* program was amended to allow direct financial assistance (Grant Aid) for Pell Grant recipients.

Today, TRIO encompasses **eight federally funded outreach and support programs** designed to help students navigate the educational pipeline—from middle school to doctoral completion. TRIO programs are authorized under the **Higher Education Act of 1965, Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2**, and related amendments.

TRIO Programs

- Educational Opportunity Centers
- Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program
- Student Support Services
- Talent Search
- Training Program for Federal TRIO Programs Staff
- Veterans Upward Bound
- Upward Bound
- Upward Bound Math/Science

* Adapted from "History of the Federal TRIO Programs", <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/HEP/trio/triohistory.html>

About Dr. Ronald E. McNair

Dr. Ronald Erwin McNair was born on October 21, 1950, in Lake City, South Carolina. Encouraged by his family and teachers to pursue academic excellence, he graduated valedictorian of Carver High School in 1967. He earned a B.S. in Physics, magna cum laude, from North Carolina A&T State University in 1971 and a Ph.D. in Laser Physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1976 at the age of 26.

A brilliant scholar and versatile individual, Dr. McNair was a Presidential Scholar, Ford Foundation Fellow, and NATO Fellow. He received three honorary doctorates and was also a sixth-degree black belt in karate and an accomplished saxophonist. As a physicist at Hughes Research Laboratories, he became a recognized expert in laser physics. In 1978, he was selected for NASA's astronaut training program, and in 1984 he became the second African American in space aboard the *Space Shuttle Challenger*.

Dr. McNair tragically lost his life on **January 28, 1986**, when the *Challenger* exploded shortly after launch. He was posthumously awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor. Later that year, Congress established the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, honoring his belief in the power of education and commitment to expanding opportunities for underrepresented students pursuing doctoral study and academic careers.

SIU Program Goals and Objectives:

The McNair Scholars Program at SIU is structured around key goals that guide how the program identifies, supports, and prepares students for graduate education. These objectives reflect the program's commitment to creating a rigorous, supportive environment where scholars are empowered to explore research, develop academic confidence, and prepare for graduate study.

- **Identify, recruit and select** first-generation, and low-income students or historically underrepresented students to work in collaboration with a faculty mentor.
- **Guide and support** scholars as they identify research topics, develop a plan for conducting the research, and complete research projects under the direction of a faculty mentor.
- Provide the necessary **academic and social support** to ensure the continuation and completion of the baccalaureate degree.
- **Assist scholars** in the selection of **appropriate graduate programs**, and guide them in the application and acceptance process as a requirement of a seminar on preparing for graduate study. Each scholar will apply to at least **(3) three** graduate programs.

Program Objectives 2022-2027

Mission: The **SIU McNair Scholars Program** prepares talented first-generation and low-income college students, as well as students from groups historically underrepresented in graduate education, for success in doctoral study. Through research, mentorship, and academic development, the program fosters scholarly excellence, supports graduate school achievement, and cultivates the next generation of faculty and researchers committed to advancing equity and knowledge in higher education.

Research or Scholarly Activities

90% of McNair Participants will complete research and scholarly activities that will directly impact their educational progression each McNair Program academic year.

Graduate School Enrollment

40% of McNair Program bachelor's degree recipients (or equivalent) will be accepted and enrolled in a post-baccalaureate program of study by the fall term of the academic year immediately following the completion of the bachelor's degree (or equivalent).

Continued Enrollment in Graduate Study

80% of first year graduate students will continue to be enrolled in graduate school at the beginning of the fall term of the next academic year.

Doctoral Degree Attainment

8% of McNair program participants served who will attain a doctoral degree within ten (10) years of the attainment of the bachelor's degree.

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 of the following:

- Be a first-generation and income eligible college student
- 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:

- Have a cumulative GPA of 2.6 or higher (4.0)
- Be enrolled at least full-time at SIU Carbondale as an upcoming sophomore or junior.
- Be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.
- Be available to participate in a full-time summer research internship before graduating.

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

- Participate in mandatory events
- Complete Semester check-in meetings
- Comply with all federal, state, and local laws and all SIU regulations and procedures while participating in the McNair Scholars Program
- Maintain a strong academic record (2.8 GPA or higher)
- Comply with all McNair Scholars Program requirements, as detailed in the handbook

Roles and Responsibilities

Scholar Responsibilities:

- Select a faculty mentor
- Attending all scheduled workshops and events
- Attend check-in meetings each semester
- Seek academic and career counseling when needed
- Research potential graduate programs
- Meet regularly with your faculty mentor and with McNair staff
- Complete at least one research project under the guidance a faculty mentor including a final paper and poster
- Present your research paper at the Undergraduate Research Conference, another McNair conference elsewhere in the country, or at a professional conference in your discipline
- Seek opportunities to publish your research paper in the National McNair Journal or in a peer-reviewed journal for your discipline
- Apply to graduate school and funding opportunities
- Notify the McNair staff of the status of all your graduate school acceptance applications and financial packages offered
- Maintaining contact with McNair staff after you graduate from the University.

Mentor Responsibilities:

- Commit to the progress and success of the Scholar
- Serve as the primary research advisor and guide the Scholar through the research process

- Assist the Scholar with the dissemination of the research
- Assist the Scholar with the development of final paper and poster
- Engage in graduate school exploration discussions.
- Assist the Scholar with selecting appropriate and realistic graduate programs
- Facilitate Scholar's professional growth and development

McNair Staff Responsibilities:

- Provide resources for Scholars to conduct research
- 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
- Provide travel assistance to professional conferences
- Provide opportunities for Scholars to present research
- Provide Scholars with academic and career counseling
- Offer GRE tutoring

Attendance and GPA Policy

Attendance

As outlined in the **Participation Agreement**, scholars are expected to attend all scheduled McNair activities, including workshops, advising sessions, and program events. Absences require **prior approval** from McNair staff. Unexcused absences result in a written warning. **Three warnings** may lead to dismissal from the program.

Grade Point Average (GPA)

Scholars must maintain a **minimum cumulative GPA of 2.6**. If a Scholar's GPA falls below this threshold, they must meet with McNair staff to develop a success plan, which may include **weekly tutoring**, academic counseling, or additional progress check-ins.

Communication Policy

Email is the **official form of communication** for the McNair Scholars Program. Scholars must maintain an **active SIU email account** and check it regularly for program announcements, travel notices, and event reminders. Failure to respond to important communications in a timely manner may affect eligibility for certain program benefits.

Alumni Responsibilities

The McNair Program is federally required to track alumni progress for ten years following program admission. Scholars must maintain updated contact information and respond to annual follow-up requests regarding academic enrollment, graduate school status, and career placement.

Program Components

Student Recognition Ceremony

All new McNair Scholars will be announced at our annual Student Recognition Ceremony in **April**. The location and time will be announced at a later date. Family and friends are encouraged to attend. Please dress in professional attire (no jeans, shorts, sweats, flip flops, etc.) as we want all Scholars to look their best.

McNair Courses

These required one-credit-hour courses will prepare all McNair Scholars for graduate school by developing academic and research skills critical to success at the graduate level. Each course is designed to provide information and experiences vital to understanding the research process, acquiring a sense of academic professionalism, and managing the graduate school application process. There are two mandatory fall courses that all McNair Scholar must attend: Undergraduate Research Professional Development Seminar – Univ 301a and Graduate School Preparation Seminar – Univ 401a. These are described below.

Undergraduate Research Professional Development Seminar – Univ 301a

We will explore the value and process of engaging in research and other related professional activities. We will also examine graduate school experiences.

Course Objectives:

- Enhance academic skills (writing and technical reading) that best prepare undergraduates for success in graduate school.
- Prepare for and write a research project proposal.
- Identify a faculty mentor.
- Compile application packet for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Award.

Graduate School Preparation Seminar – Univ 401a

We will provide an overview of the credentials necessary for acceptance into graduate school and establish a clear understanding of how to prepare for and succeed as a graduate student. Scholars will be given guidance on the selection of an appropriate graduate program and in development of a competitive application packet. We will explore the value and process of engaging in research and other professional activities and we will examine graduate school and faculty experiences.

Course Objectives:

- Enhance academic skills (writing and technical reading) that best prepare undergraduates for success in graduate school.

- Prepare for and take the GRE.
- Identify graduate schools and develop a timeline for application.
- Compile application packets for graduate school, including writing a personal statement.
- Understand graduate school expectations and responsibilities.

Summer Research Institute (SRI)

The Summer Research Institute is a vital component of the SIU McNair Scholars Program. The Institute promotes actual research activities that are instrumental in preparing undergraduate students for successful entry into graduate programs.

Goals

The goal of the summer research project is to provide McNair Scholars with experience in all aspects of the research process including the following:

- Conceptualizing a problem
- Preparing a proposal
- Conducting a literature review
- Designing a research project
- Gathering data
- Analyzing data
- Drawing conclusions based on empirical evidence
- Reporting results

Scholars will develop not only critical research skills, but will also improve their communication skills through the presentation of their research results in both written and oral forms.

Conducting Research & Culminating Presentation

Each McNair Scholar is responsible for conducting an original research project under the direct supervision of their mentor. Scholars are expected to dedicate at least **25 hours per week** to their research (excluding Friday workshops) unless alternative arrangements are approved by the McNair Director.

Throughout the summer, Scholars will:

- Participate in orientation and training during Week 1
- Participate in the virtual graduate school preparation workshops (TBA)
- Attend Friday workshops (9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.) Weeks 2–7
- Meet regularly with McNair graduate advisor
- Prepare and present at the **McNair Scholars Research Symposium**, which includes:
 1. An abstract submission
 2. A professional research poster
 3. A formal research paper

Mentor Selection

During the spring semester prior to the Summer Research Institute, McNair staff and Graduate Advisors will work with each Scholar to identify a research mentor (if one isn't identified prior to the SRI). This will require a serious effort on the Scholar's part to explore the interests of the faculty in his/her department.

Outside Work or Classes

Due to the demand and rigors of each research project, Scholars are **not** allowed to take classes or to work outside of the McNair program for the duration of the eight weeks.

SRI Attendance

All Scholars conducting research during the summer are **required** to participate in all aspects of the orientation week (unless otherwise excused by the McNair Director or Staff).

Workspace and Schedule

Since each Scholar represents a different college/department, there will be many variations among the research projects. Arrangements should be made with each Scholar's research mentor to secure a workstation or lab space to use during the summer program. The expectations remain the same for all Scholars—all must work the designated time on their research project and/or McNair activities throughout the eight weeks.

GRE PREP sessions

GRE prep sessions will be offered every week throughout the summer. The times vary—see calendar for details. All rising seniors are required to take the actual GRE **prior** to fall semester. Currently, the Educational Testing Services will provide McNair Scholars with a fee reduction certificate valued at 50% of the test-taking fee. **Please Note: Each scholar will be responsible for the remaining 50% of the test taking fee.** The McNair staff will assist you in preparing the appropriate paperwork. Once you are notified by the McNair staff that your fee reduction certificate has been received, you should schedule your test during July 16th- August 15th.

Stipends and Research Supplies

Each McNair Scholars will receive a stipend of **\$2,800** for participation in the Summer Research Institute. The stipend is distributed in five **\$560** payments over the course of the Summer Research Institute and is contingent upon completion of assignments and expectations set forth in the Student Participation Agreement. Stipend disbursements will be delayed if any Scholar fails to maintain satisfactory progress in the program, has unexcused absences, or neglects to turn in assignments, (i.e. literature review, paper, poster presentation, etc.). In the event of an unexcused absence, you will lose **\$50.00** per day for each day missed.

In addition, up to \$500 will be available to each scholar as needed to pay for research related materials. To order research supplies each Scholar must work with the P-Card administrator in his/her respective department. The McNair Office will provide each administrator the proper account information for reconciliation purposes.

Academic Credit

It is possible to receive academic credit for research efforts in the McNair Summer Research Institute. All Scholars who are interested in receiving academic credit for their research involvement have two options.

- 1) Scholars can discuss with their mentor about registering for 1-6 credit hours of independent study.
- 2) Scholars can enroll in 1-6 credit hours of UNIV 301B: McNair Research Project.

Pending approval from the University administration, McNair will cover the costs of three credit hours of your summer tuition. If you have additional questions, contact the McNair Office.

Plagiarism Policy

All work submitted under the McNair Scholars Program must be original and represent the scholar's own effort. Presenting another person's work, ideas, or words as your own—whether copied, paraphrased, or uncredited constitutes plagiarism and violates the **SIU Student Conduct Code**. Consequences for plagiarism may include **failure** of the assignment or course, disciplinary action, or **suspension** from the university. When in doubt, cite your sources and consult your instructor, research mentor, or the **Writing Center** for clarification and support.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The SIU McNair Scholars Program permits the limited use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, GitHub Copilot, DALL·E, etc.) for editing and support purposes only, such as brainstorming, grammar correction, formatting, or summarizing existing articles. Using AI tools to **generate original content**, ideas, analyses, or creative work is **strictly prohibited** and may be treated as **academic misconduct** under the SIU Student Conduct Code.

Because expectations may vary across research disciplines, each scholar **must confirm AI use guidelines** directly with their **faculty mentor** prior to beginning their project.

Additional Program Services & Benefits

Individualized Tutoring

McNair Scholars may request a personal tutor for any course. Scholars must first meet with their instructor before requesting tutoring support. The McNair Program will assist in hiring a tutor for 2–5 hours per week. Once assigned, Scholars are responsible for coordinating tutoring sessions. Missing two or more scheduled sessions may result in cancellation of remaining appointments.

Academic Counseling and Advising

Each McNair Scholar is expected to schedule a meeting with a McNair Staff member. These meetings provide academic, research, GRE, and graduate school guidance. Scholars are

expected to check in regularly. Also, a McNair Staff member is available to assist with mentor matching, research proposal development, tutoring requests, and general academic or professional support throughout the program.

Scholars Study Room

All Scholars have access to the McNair Study Room (Woody 213), which includes computers, a printer, telephone, books, and graduate school resources. This is a shared workspace intended for study, research, and collaboration.

Student Travel Funds:

McNair travel funds may be used for:

- Presenting McNair-funded research at professional conferences
- Visiting potential graduate schools

Covered expenses include:

- Registration fees
- Transportation (flight, train, shuttle, or mileage if less than airfare)
- Lodging
- Meals (excluding alcohol and tips)

Priority is given to:

1. Scholars with strong attendance at McNair events
2. Graduating seniors
3. Scholars who completed the Summer Research Institute
4. Scholars with a 2.8 GPA or higher

Application Process

- Submit a Travel Request Form to the McNair Director at least 4–6 weeks before travel.
- Seek additional funding from your department or college.
- McNair staff will assist with registration, travel, lodging, and per diem arrangements.

Important Reminders

- Travel funds are limited to domestic (U.S.) destinations.
- Scholars are responsible for costs associated with changes or cancellations.
- Plan early to reduce expenses and maximize available funds.
- Keep the McNair office informed of any travel issues or emergencies.

McNair Senior Scholars Directory

Graduating Scholars are included in the national McNair Senior Scholars Directory, compiled by the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE). This directory, distributed to graduate school recruiters nationwide, features each Scholar's research title and intended graduate field of study.

Fee Waivers and Fellowships

Many universities offer application fee waivers and McNair-specific fellowships to support graduate study. For the most current listings, visit the COE McNair Fee Waiver and Fellowship List at .

Additional Research Opportunities

- REACH Program – Offers \$2,000 research grants and assistantships for undergraduate research.
- Undergraduate Research Forum – An annual spring event featuring poster presentations and awards.
- Off-Campus Research Opportunities – Scholars are encouraged to apply to Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REUs) and other external research programs.