

FAQ for potential mentors

EWU McNair Scholars' Program
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Contents

Q. What is the purpose of the McNair Scholars' Program?	2
Q. Why should I be a faculty mentor?	2
Q. Do faculty mentors receive compensation?	3
Q. What exactly is expected of faculty mentors?	3
Q. How are mentors selected?	3
Q. What kind of time commitment is required, and how should I interact with my mentee?	4
Mentor Guidelines	4
Q. What does it mean to mentor low-income, traditionally underrepresented and first-generation college students?	5
Q. I'm unclear about the process students undergo to become McNair Scholars. How exactly does this work?	6
McNair Scholar Process	6

Are you interested in mentoring a McNair Scholar? Wondering how to get started? Here we have answers to general questions potential mentors may have about the program and your role as a Faculty Mentor.

Q. What is the purpose of the McNair Scholars' Program?

The McNair Scholars' Program prepares low-income, first-generation and minority undergraduates for doctoral success by providing scholarly activities and community engagement to empower engaged scholars as agents of positive change in a culturally diverse world.

Q. Why should I be a faculty mentor?

In addition to having great service experience for your tenure package, mentors who participate as mentors for McNair Scholars have the potential to create personal and professional connections for life with students working in your field. Strong relationships forged advances the discipline, ensuring the quality and commitment of the next generation of scholars. Students with good mentors often begin making significant contributions before they complete their graduate degrees and are more likely to have productive, distinguished, and ethical careers that enrich their disciplines and reflect well on mentors. Positive experiences with mentorship also means that emerging scholars go on to be good mentors themselves in the future. Effective mentoring helps to ensure the quality of research, scholarship, and teaching well into the future. Table 1 below lists some top reasons why the mentorship program is valuable both for students and for faculty mentors.

Table 1: The Benefits of Positive Mentorship

Benefits for Students	Benefits for Mentors
It supports their advancement in research activity, conference presentations, publication, pedagogical skill, and grant writing.	Your students will keep you abreast of new knowledge and techniques and apprise you of promising avenues for research.
Students are less likely to feel ambushed by potential bumps during stressful or difficult periods in their graduate careers.	Sending successful new scholars into the field increases your professional stature.
The experiences and networks their mentors help them to build may improve the students' prospects of securing professional placement.	Your networks are enriched. Helping students make the professional and personal connections they need to succeed will expand your own circle of colleagues.

The knowledge that someone committed to their progress is supporting them with solid advice can help to lower stress and build confidence.	Good students will be attracted to you. Word gets around about good mentors who are most likely to recruit and retain outstanding students.
Constructive interaction with a mentor and participation in collective activities they arrange promote engagement in the field.	It is personally satisfying. Seeing your students succeed can be as rewarding as a major publication or significant grant.

Q. Do faculty mentors receive compensation?

A. Yes, but it is limited. Subject to approval, faculty mentors are eligible to receive \$600 during the summer for students involved in the McNair Summer Research Internship.

Q. What exactly is expected of faculty mentors?

The absolute duties of a mentor will vary depending on the relationship mentors have with students. Mentors are expected to guide students in their research, give professional and academic advice, and meet with students as needed in order for them to complete their research projects satisfactorily. The goals of McNair are as follows:

1. To educate: Provide the research skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in graduate school;
2. To transform: Build strong relationships and inspire them to pursue a graduate education;
3. To empower: Provide the necessary avenues for self-esteem building such as conferences, class presentations, community presentations and so forth.

The program relies on the work of numerous individuals to accomplish these goals.

Faculty mentors help us achieve these goals by way of the following objectives:

1. Building strong relationships with students by conducting a research project that generates a strong research based article and potential publication.
2. Helping the student write a publication quality research paper.
3. Keeping the student informed about conferences they may like to attend, and helping them submit abstracts to these events.
4. Involving the student in academic events (thesis defense, departmental seminars, class presentations, etc.)
5. Assisting students in their search for PhD programs.
6. Aiding students with navigating the graduate school application process.
7. Working with the student and EWU Writers' Center to produce a high-quality Statement of Academic Purpose for the student.
8. This relationship would also facilitate a strong letter of recommendation for graduate school.

Q. How are mentors selected?

Mentors are usually identified by the McNair Scholars themselves once they are accepted into the program. Typically, a mentor is someone who is within the scholar's discipline and can guide them in



determining their research area, interest, and defining methods. However, formal mentors must have a conversation with the program director (Dr. Christina Torres Garcia) in order to become official EWU McNair Scholars' Program mentors. The program director will ensure that mentors are able to assist the student over the summer with their research and be dedicated to their academic and professional development. Mentors are provided with a handbook and a contract to sign before they can officially begin mentoring their student.

Q. What kind of time commitment is required, and how should I interact with my mentee?

Mentors are required to be on-campus for the summer when/if mentees are involved in the EWU McNair Summer Research Internship during the summer quarter. Outside of that commitment, there is no specific hour/effort requirement to be a mentor to a McNair Scholar. However, it is advisable to keep certain guidelines in mind as you establish a schedule and outcomes with your mentee.

The fundamental rubric for McNair faculty mentors is to be partial to the student but impartial about the McNair student's work. Clarity is the foundation upon which such a relationship is built. Be transparent about your expectations concerning the form and function of the relationship, and about what's reasonable to expect of you and what isn't. Pay particular attention to boundaries, both personal and professional, and respect theirs just as you expect them to respect yours.

Mentor Guidelines

Mentor guideline 1: *Within mutually agreeable limits, mentors have an open door. Because your time is so valuable, it is often the most precious thing you can give.* What lies behind that door, literally and figuratively, should be a haven of sorts. Give students your full attention when they are talking with you, and the time and encouragement to open up. Try to minimize interruptions. Consider scheduling an occasional meeting on campus away from the office or department to help create more personalized time.

Mentor guideline 2: *Use concrete language to critique students' work.* What the mentor communicates with the students must be timely, clear and, above all, constructive. Critical feedback is essential, but it is more likely to be effective if tempered with praise when deserved. Remind students that you are holding them to high standards in order to help them improve.

Mentor guideline 3: *McNair Mentors keep track of their students' progress and achievements, setting milestones and acknowledging accomplishments.* McNair staff will assist on this task as well. Let your students know from the start that you want them to succeed, and create opportunities for them to demonstrate their competencies. When you feel a student is prepared, suggest or nominate him or her for presentations, scholarships, fellowships, projects, and teaching opportunities.

Mentor guideline 4: *Encourage students to try new techniques, expand their skills, and discuss their ideas, even those they fear might seem naive or unworkable.* Let students know that mistakes are productive because we learn from our failures. These practices nurture self-sufficiency. As tempting as it can be to dictate paths, the person in front of you has different strengths and aspirations.

Mentor guideline 5: *Provide support in times of discouragement as well as success, and be mindful of signs of emotional and physical distress. Do not assume that the only students who need help are those who ask for it. If a student is falling behind in their work, resist concluding that this shows a lack of commitment, and contact the McNair office to assist the student.*

Mentor guideline 6: *Perhaps the student is exhausted, or unclear about what to do next, or is uncomfortable with some aspect of the project or research team. Although it is ultimately the responsibility of students to initiate contact with you, it may make a difference if you get in touch with the student who is becoming remote. Let him/her know s/he is welcome to talk with you during your office hours, and that the conversation can include nonacademic as well as academic issues.*

Mentor guideline 7: *Being open and approachable is particularly important when a student is shy or comes from a different cultural background, like McNair scholars. Many or all McNair students suffer from the impostor syndrome – anxiety about whether they belong in graduate school – so it is important to reassure them of their skills and abilities to succeed. The enthusiasm and optimism you show can be inspirational. Make sure that students understand not only the personal consequences of their commitment to their work, but also its value to the professional community and to the general-public.*

Mentor guideline 8: *Share what you have learned as both a scholar and a member of a profession. You might think things are obvious to McNair students that are not. At the same time, tell your students what you learn from them. This will make them realize they are potential colleagues. Identify professional workshops and networking opportunities for them. Involve students in editing, journal activities, conference presentations, and grant writing.*

Of course, it is not necessary to embody all of these attributes in order to be a successful mentor. Individuals have relative strengths in their capacity for mentoring, and mentors should be clear about what they can and cannot offer. Part of effective mentoring is knowing when to refer someone to another resource that might be more helpful. Please always inform the McNair Staff if there is any concern on the development of the student.

Most important and more than any particular piece of advice or supportive act, your students will remember how they were treated. The example you set as a person will have a profound effect on how they conduct themselves as professionals.

Q. What does it mean to mentor low-income, traditionally underrepresented and first-generation college students?

The EWU student body is changing rapidly. We have higher number of Latino, African American, and Native American students enrolled than ever before. Eastern needs to adapt to a more diverse student body. Here are some helpful points to keep in mind:

Underrepresented students need role models. Many students from historically underrepresented groups feel that faculty do not identify with their experiences. We should remember to value diversity in



faculty and in the student body, but also remember that faculty mentors provide excellent guidance to students with different backgrounds than their own.

Be open to hearing students' perspectives on race, gender, and sexual orientation. Sometimes, students are fearful of speaking up about issues of race, gender, and sexual identity. Additionally, sometimes faculty will assume that the student is only interested in these topics if they belong to an underrepresented group. Try not to make assumptions and listen to the student if they come to you with a discussion on these topics.

Underrepresented students may feel isolated. Reach out to your mentee if they seem to be struggling. Ask about hobbies or other activities outside of academics and show an interest in the student. A good mentor will make the student feel welcomed in the academic community.

Burden of being a spokesperson. Underrepresented students are sometimes burdened with being spokespeople for their age, race, or gender group in addition to academics. Try to avoid putting students in this position, and instead allow them to offer their perspective freely.

Facilitate an inclusive atmosphere in labs and classes. Sometimes, excess competition and criticism can hinder the participation of underrepresented students, who feel that their contributions are not valued. Set firm rules for group discussions to ensure that others are respected, and be sure not to let only a few students dominate the discussion.

Stereotypes. While all of us struggle to overcome the assumptions others make about us, for the groups of people that have historically been excluded from higher education stereotypes can be especially challenging. Recognize that each student has unique strengths and interests, and remember that all people from a certain group will not share the same thoughts and perspectives.

[Q. I'm unclear about the process students undergo to become McNair Scholars. How exactly does this work?](#)

McNair Staff works closely with each student throughout the year and we have established several communication streams to assist McNair mentors stay in touch with this program: the McNair Blog, Facebook, LinkedIn, Newsletters and other publications, as well as emails. We also invite you to contact our office throughout the year so we can assist in any project you made have for the McNair student.

[McNair Scholar Process](#)

Fall: We begin recruiting students to our program once the academic year begins. (You may have seen our emails asking you to keep an eye out for students that seem interested in doing research.) The flowchart for this process is shown below (Figure 1).

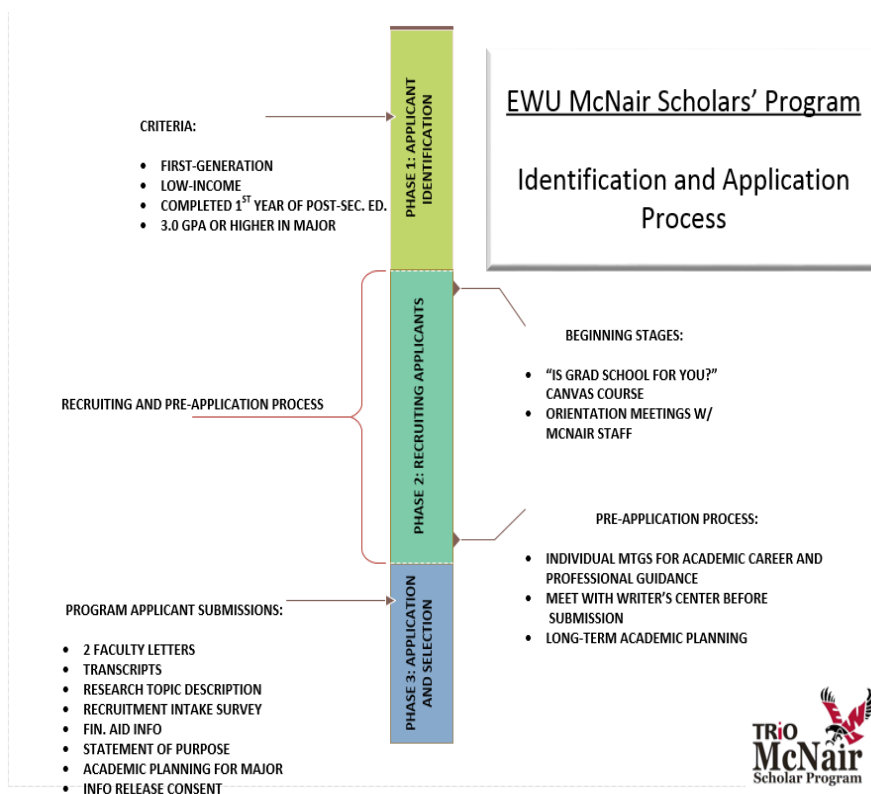


Figure 1: Application Process for MSP

We invite students who are interested in our program to:

1. Attend a McNair orientation by registering through our Web site. Orientations will be set up throughout the fall quarter.
2. Interview three faculty and write up a three-page reflection of the interview. We present faculty interview forms to help assist the students develop their questions. The reason for this interview is to get to know professors, to build relationships, and to learn from faculty how it is to work in academia and how to get there.
3. Complete an academic plan with Department Advisor. We request this document, because many of the applicants have not even met with their Department Advisors. We want the students to be well informed and advised by the Department.
4. Meet with McNair Director to discuss commitment to the Ph.D. As the students prepare all of these documents and complete the interview, they come and meet with us to do some soul searching. This process is intense; students may require additional meetings to understand the commitment for a Ph.D.
5. After this meeting, we provide the paper McNair Application (this includes a signature that documents first-gen status and ethnicity). It also requires the following:

- Personal Statement
 - Unofficial Transcripts from Community College and EWU transcripts
 - Interview of faculty
 - Academic planning
 - Two Letters of recommendation from Ph.D. professors
 - Research Topic Description (we are not looking for the actual research proposal for their summer research. We are prompting the student to think about a potential research project, and require at least one meeting with the Writer's Center. This may change in spring quarter as they complete the Spring Research Course with us).
 - Recruitment Intake Student Survey
6. The deadline to complete the McNair application is Jan 15th.

Winter: Preparing students to become Scholars

Students are invited to a group interview. If student complete the interviews successfully, we invite them to participate in a winter course titled *Preparing Students to Become Scholars*.

Table 2: Winter Quarter Course Outcomes and Benchmarks (2019)

Developing a Scholarly Identity	Financial Literacy	Course Benchmarks/Outcomes
Improving Academic Writing	Financial management	Apply for two scholarships
Academic mapping for a PhD	Financial assessment	Review Summer Research Internship (SRIO)
Research & Conferences	Grad School funding	Select faculty mentor
Growth mindset & networking		

Once students have completed the course successfully and the McNair search committee has reviewed the application, they are awarded a EWU McNair Summer Research Internship. Before the course is complete, students and the McNair Director begins to select McNair Mentors for their EWU McNair Summer research internships.

Spring: Research Methods

McNair Scholars take a *Research Methods* course during the spring to prepare them for the summer. During spring, Mentor pairings are finalized and the mentor meets with the student to provide an overview of the research idea and draft a clear proposal. Descriptions of specific course tasks and benchmarks can be found in Table 2.

Table 3: Spring Quarter Course Outcomes and Benchmarks (2019)

GRE	Research Project Activities	Course Benchmarks/Outcomes
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Analytical Writing Overview	Explore Research methods	Complete several GRE writing sections evaluated by staff
GRE argument introduction and practice	Qualitative vs. Quantitative	Annotated bibliography
GRE issue introduction and practice	How to read an article	Complete research perspective
	Annotated bibliography	Complete literature review
	How to write a literature review	IRB (Institutional Review Board)
	Theoretical underpinnings	Complete methodology
	Academic dialogue	

Summer: EWU McNair Summer Research Internship

Mentors will guide the scholar's research closely as data are collected and analyzed. Mentors should be available to assist the students during this process. Scholars are expected to spend 35-40 hours/week working on their summer research projects as well as attending a McNair seminar every weekday. Seminar cover topics to prepare scholars to search for graduate schools and funding, submit strong applications, GRE-prep. and support successful completion of a graduate program. Students applying for graduate school in the fall should register and take the test before the fall quarter begins.

Table 4: Summer Research Internship & Course (2019)

GRE	Self-care	Research Project Benchmarks	Grad Application Process
Review strategies	Stress management	Literature review	Search for PhD programs
Individual & group study	Power of mentors & support systems	Methods	Funding & fellowships
ETS & online resources benchmarks	Understanding anxiety & worry	Data collection	Visiting universities

4 practice tests & take GRE test by Sept	Values, career goals, & decision making	Data analysis	PhD Preparation Conference
	Building a network of support	Data discussion	
		Final research project	

Fall: The Graduate School application course

The McNair Scholar Program offers another course titled “The Graduate School application process” during the fall where scholars apply to graduate programs, perfect their Statements of Academic Purpose (SOAP), and learn about the online application process. Faculty mentors maintain contact with the student as they go through this process; it is often overwhelming. Here are a few specific suggestions for helping your McNair scholar be successful during their application process:

- 1) Suggest quality PhD programs to apply for and any connections you might have at other institutions. Ask the student for a list of PhD and MA/MS programs they are selecting and review the caliber of programs.
- 2) Review the students’ Statement of Academic Purpose and other writing samples to help develop academic writing skills.
- 3) Check in with the student often. Make sure that you celebrate and congratulate the student as they complete benchmarks in the graduate school application process.