

Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program (McNair)

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Headquartered in the Student Academic Services Center (SASC), the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program (McNair) is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. UCB McNair is one of 179 programs across the nation funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act. UCB's program has successfully competed for refunding every three years since 1995. Funding for 2005-06 is \$240,043. Competition for McNair grants is intense; in 2004 the Boulder McNair staff and SASC wrote a successful proposal to renew UCB's grant from 2005 through 2008.

McNair programs are designed to prepare low income, first generation college students and others who come from backgrounds underrepresented in the college professorate for doctoral study. Two-thirds of participants must be *both* low income and first generation. To enter the McNair program a CU student must be a junior (i.e., have earned at least 60 credits); meet the income, first generation, and/or underrepresented criteria; have at least a 2.8 cumulative GPA; demonstrate strong interest in pursuing a Ph.D.; and be recommended by at least two faculty members. The McNair program admits only 20 students per year.

Students in McNair must do the following:

- work with a faculty mentor
- work with graduate student mentors
- take two 3-credit seminars that teach research methods, require development of a research prospectus, and introduce students to the culture and expectations of graduate school
- do a research project under the supervision of a faculty member and present this research at a symposium
- receive 9 months of coaching from McNair staff and mentors while preparing the research project
- endeavor to publish their research
- take two 1-credit teaching practicum and internship workshops
- attend scholarly presentations and meetings
- prepare for and take the Graduate Record Exam (paid for by McNair)
- participate in McNair community activities and service
- apply for graduate school with guidance and assistance from the McNair staff

In addition to direct instruction and support from the McNair staff, McNair students have full access to the tutoring, upper division core curriculum writing course, professional staff, and facilities of SASC. Promising students from SASC's other college level programs—McNeill Academic Program and Academic Excellence Program—are encouraged to apply for McNair, as are students from other campus LEAD programs who are contemplating graduate school.

Preparing the McNair scholars for graduate schools is a campus-wide effort. The McNair program receives monetary and in-kind support from these campus entities:

- volunteer faculty mentors from numerous academic departments
- part-time instructor funding from the Graduate School
- part-time instructor funding from SASC
- \$20,000 per year in undergraduate research funding and a graduate part-time instructor from the University Research Opportunities Program (UROP)
- \$4,500 in summer tuition supplements from the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
- Graduate Record Exam (GRE) instructor from SASC
- graduate student mentors from many departments
- significant support from the Faculty Teaching Excellence Program, Graduate Teacher Program, Career Services. Office of Diversity and Equity

Staffing: McNair's two professional staff members—the director and academic advisor—are paid for by the federal grant. SASC provides a 60%-time administrative assistant.

Number of Students Served: At the beginning of the Fall 2005 semester McNair is serving 29 students. These include juniors in their first year of the program and seniors in their second year. By January additional juniors will be recruited.

LEAD Financial Aid: The LEAD Alliance provides \$1,000 scholarships for ten McNair seniors, based on good standing with the program and performance of service to the McNair and campus communities

Other Financial Aid: The McNair grant pays each participant a stipend of up to \$2,000, in increments as they complete different stages of the graduate school preparatory program. These funds may be used for tuition and living expenses. The goal is to enable students from low income backgrounds to work at jobs for fewer hours and instead devote time to academic preparation and research.

McNair Results: The most recent program report to the U.S. Department of Education was for 2003-04. (The 2004-05 report is due in January 2006.) During that reporting period 12 McNair students completed their baccalaureate degrees and 10 (83%) of these entered graduate school. Eight students were still working to complete their BAs. Recent McNair graduates are pursuing PhDs at the Universities of California at Berkley, Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara, and Los Angeles and the University of Connecticut. Four are in PhD programs on the Boulder campus. One earned his PhD from Stanford last year.

Critique and Recommendations: The McNair program perennially has difficulty recruiting its full quota of students. Low income, first generation students, even those with high academic potential, are reluctant to commit to the 4-8 additional years of schooling required to earn a doctorate. The program would benefit from any assistance the campus can provide in identifying and recruiting students. Like other programs in SASC, the McNair program endures cramped quarters, sub par for carrying out its mission.