

# UNTD MCNAIR SCHOLARS NEWSLETTER

## GET TO KNOW ALL ABOUT THE RONALD E. MCNAIR POST-BACCALAUREATE ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

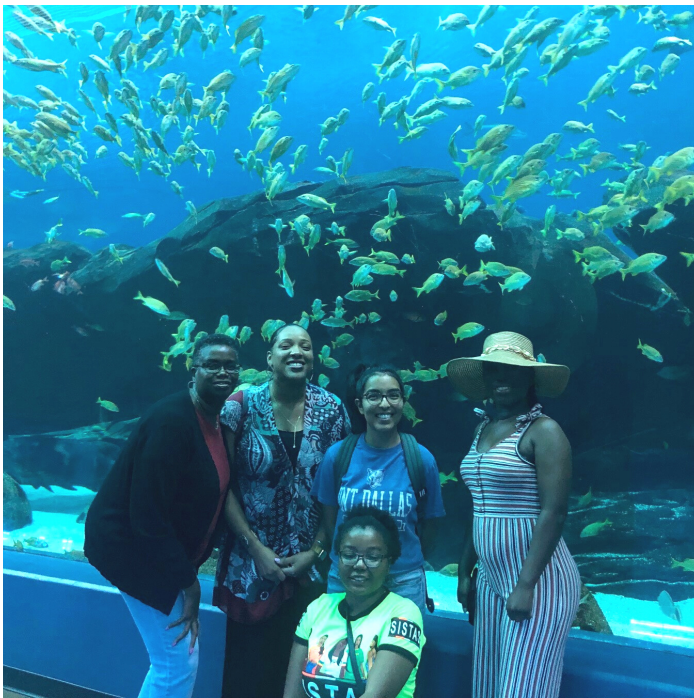
The University of North Texas Dallas McNair Scholars Program began in the 2017-2018 academic year. The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Program is a federally-funded TRIO program administered by the U.S. Department of Education and serves a diverse group of talented UNT Dallas sophomores, juniors, and seniors who are interested and invested in pursuing graduate education and earning a Ph.D. UNT Dallas' McNair Scholars Program provides enriching scholastic and holistic experiences that prepare eligible students to be successful applicants to competitive graduate programs.

### **Our Mission**

Develop Students' Academic, Ethical, Emotional, Physical, and Social Skills for Transformational Impact in Life, School, and Leadership.

### **Our Objective**

The goal of the McNair Scholars Program is to increase graduate degree awards for students from underrepresented segments of society.



Students enjoying their time at the Atlanta Aquarium after attending the SAEOPP McNair Scholars Conference. Pictured from left to right: Wanda Greenlee, and Britney King, Neema Moore. Row 2: Shaleace Towns.

## Directors' Corner



*Kimberly Riddick, Ph.D.  
Director, Ronald E. McNair Scholars*

The UNTD McNair Scholars Program has been serving the campus community for the last two years, with the University's mission at our core. While establishing programs and initiating experiences to meet the needs of our Scholars, we have had the opportunity to truly transform lives. Our work would not be fruitful without the tireless efforts of our Faculty Mentors that work intimately with their protégés and selflessly invest in the holistic development of our Scholars. We've even had Dr. James Agbodzakey stand in the gap as an interim mentor, while scholars were narrowing their focus within their respective research endeavors.

It has been a gratifying experience to expand the minds and horizons of our participants and we look forward to continuing to do so! If you are interested in challenging your present and navigating a new course into your future, don't hesitate to connect with us.

We look forward to blazing a new trail with you, while leaving a path for those that follow!

- Kimberly Riddick, PhD



*Nakia Douglas  
Executive Director, TRIO & Pre-Collegiate Programs*

It is a great honor to witness the growth and development of our Ronald E. McNairs Scholars participants and program. When we started our journey to establish our UNT Dallas McNair Scholars program; we knew we were entering into an unfamiliar educational space for our students and campus. Under the guidance and leadership of Dr. Kimberly Riddick and her team of Faculty Mentors, our UNT Dallas students are now being recognized across the state and nation for their innovative research and practices. I look forward to the continued growth of our Ronald E. McNairs Scholars Program and encourage others to take this journey with us. Empower Students. Transform Lives. Strengthen Communities.

-Nakia Douglas

# MEET OUR SCHOLARS

## Spring 2020 Scholars

### Jacqueline Calderon-Soto

**Major:** Sociology

**Faculty Mentor:**

Dr. Steven Arxer

**Research Area:**

How Does Urban Revitalization  
Impact Symbolic Displacement?  
A Case Study of UNT Dallas  
Alumni

### Neema Moore

**Major:** Business and Psychology

**Faculty Mentor:**

Dr. Jesseca Lightbourne

**Research Area:**

A Blind Eye to Black Women: A  
Study on Non-Primary Partner  
Violence on African American  
Homeless Women

### Alexandria Pryor

**Major:** Criminal Justice

**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. Mario Bartula;

Dr. J. Eric Coleman

**Research Area:**

The Educational Value of YouTube

### LaSherrell Hayes

**Major:**

Interdisciplinary Studies

**Faculty Mentor:**

Prof. Yolanda Graham

### Ysidro Motta

**Major:** Psychology

**Minor:** Sociology

**Faculty Mentor:**

Dr. Mario Casa de Calvo;

Dr. Jessica Cintron

**Research Area:**

Another Prescription  
Filled: Observing the  
Impact of Medication  
on Veteran Health

### Jennifer Valverde

**Major:** Biology

**Faculty Mentor:**

Dr. Aubrey Frantz

**Research Area:**

Invitro Effects of Sodium  
Nitrate on the  
Human Gut Micobiota



Pictured from left to right: Jennifer Valverde, Ysidro Motta, and Jacqueline Calderon-Soto.

## SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT



JENNIFER VALVERDE

Our spring Scholar Jennifer Valverde is excited to take on the semester. As a McNair Scholar, she has been able to present her research at conferences around the U.S. in places such as New Mexico, Florida and Georgia. A biology major, Jennifer is currently researching "Invitro effects of sodium nitrate on the human gut micobiota." Her research presentations at these conferences has led her to win multiple awards, along with prize money. She has won Certificate of Achievement awards at the Florida International University Conference, ABRCMS 2019 and at the SAEOPP McNair Scholars Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. In fact, at the UNT Dallas Research Symposium last year she won two awards: Honorable Mention and People's Choice Award.

### What would you say to prospective students that are curious about joining the program?

Join! If research grabs your attention, even in the slightest, join. As a researcher and scholar, you learn a great deal about yourself and a lot about how research is conducted. It is a wonderful program that motivates you and pushes you to be the best version of yourself. Through this program I have eradicated my fear of public speaking because it pushed me out of your comfort zone. I have made a lot of connections and networked at plenty events. Overall, it is an amazing program with amazing staff that are dedicated to helping you and your future goals.

### What inspired you to "do something different" and join the McNair Scholars program?

I was inspired to join the McNair Scholars program because of other peers. Scholars who were already part of the program told me about how much McNair had helped them, so I decided to research for myself. I learned that the goal of the program is to help first-generation, income-limited students get into a PhD program, and immediately I started filling out my application because as a Hispanic woman, no one in my family was going to be able to guide me through the grad school process, so McNair was perfect.

# MEET OUR ALUMNI

## Fall 2018 Graduates

### Blanca Acosta

**Major:** Biology

**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. Aubrey Frantz

**Research Area:**

The Effect of Lotion Composition on Skin Microbiota

### Lorenzo Cruz

**Major:** Biology

**Minor:** Chemistry

**Faculty Mentor:**

Dr. Muhammed Yousufuddin

**Research Area:**

Tungsten Based Hydrogen Storage

### Donna Pryor

**Major:** Psychology

**Faculty Mentor:**

Pof. Elizabeth Casa de Calvo

**Research Area:**

Consensual Non-Monogamous Families Parental Influences on Intimate Relationship Choices for Children

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



DONNA PRYOR MONTGOMERY

## Spring 2019 Graduates

### Brianna Bentley

**Major:** Biology

**Minor:** Chemistry

**Faculty Mentor:**

Dr. Donna Hamilton

**Research Area:**

Remote Camera Survey of Terrestrial Vertebrate Species Present in an Urban Texas Park

### Kayla Briggs

**Major:** Biology

**Minor:** Sociology

**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. Kelly Varga

### Ofelia Chapa

**Major:** Psychology & Sociology

**Faculty Mentor:**

Dr. Steven Arxer

**Research Area:**

Identifying Higher Education Social Capital Resources for Hispanic American Women

### Darnell Davis

**Major:** Biology

**Minor:** Psychology

**Faculty Mentor:**

Dr. Kelly Varga

**Research Area:**

The Impact of C.roseus Secondary Metabolites on Microfungal Species

### Whitney Faggins

**Major:** Criminal Justice

**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. Julie Siddique

**Research Area:**

An Analysis of Race and Gender Disparity in Officer-Involved Shootings in Dallas

### Bethlehem Haile

**Major:** HSML

**Minor:** Spanish

**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. Mara Vaughn

**Research Area:**

Two-Way Dual Language Immersion in Early Childhood Education

### Edinho Lopez

**Major:** Information Technology

**Minor:** Business Foundations

**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. Saif Alsultan

**Research Area:**

Improving Programming Pedagogy: A Hybrid Approach to Teaching

### Krystal Toney

**Major:** Biology

**Faculty Mentor:**

Dr. Donna Hamilton

**Research Area:**

Competition for Resources and Space Between a Native and Non-Native, Invasive Species in an Urban Texas Park

Fellow alumni Donna Pryor Montgomery was recently selected as a recipient of the Rising Star Scholarship at SMU. This \$12,600 scholarship is awarded to highly promising incoming students based on prior academic merit, leadership, engagement, and counseling related professional or volunteer experience.

**How has the transition from undergrad to graduate school been?** My transition has been great. Classes have started and I am doing well. I spent the entire year of 2019 applying to programs and was denied quite a few times. I never gave up...then I was accepted by one of the best schools in the state/country. I also received a \$12,600 scholarship.

**How do you believe the McNair Scholars program helped you prepare for the transition?** The McNair program prepared me for everything really....the application process, the writing, the research. I was prepared mentally for what I would experience going through the application process and being denied. Without that preparation I would have given up.

**What inspired you to "do something different" and join the McNair Scholars program?**

Dr. Riddick inspired me when I went to the first meeting to talk about the program. It felt like she was speaking to me. Everything she talked about applied to me. I had never heard of the program until I saw advertisements around campus.

## Fall 2019 Graduates

### Randolph Brewster

**Major:** Human Resources/

Org Behavior

**Faculty Mentor:**

Dr. Elizabeth Muniz

**Research Area:**

Predictors of Career Readiness

### Warren Carter

**Major:** Biology

**Minor:** Psychology

**Faculty Mentor:**

Dr. Aubrey Frantz

**Research Area:**

The Effectiveness of Sodium Nitrate as a Food Preservative

### Wanda Greenlee

**Major:** Psychology

**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. Priya Eimerbrink

**Research Area:**

Academic Entitlement and the Influence on Student Performance

### Britney King

**Major:** Biology

**Minor:** Psychology

**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. Aubrey Frantz

**Research Area:**

The Sensitivity of Six Bacterial Species to Different Concentrations of the Common Food Preservative Sodium Nitrate in vitro

### Laquze Morris

**Major:** Biology

**Minor:** Spanish

**Faculty Mentor:**

Dr. Muhammed Yousufuddin

**Research Area:**

Crystallization and X-Ray Crystallography: An Examination of Next Energy Technologies, Inc. Prototypes for Energy Conserving Window Tints

### Shaleace Towns

**Major:** Psychology

**Minor:** Sociology

**Faculty Mentor:**

Dr. Syeda Jesmin

**Research Area:**

The Freshmen Fifteen and Minority College Students' Mental Health: A Cross-Sectional Study



# BECOME A MCNAIR SCHOLAR



Dr. Cynthia Bennett

**What is your field of expertise?** I have my Ph.D. in experimental psychology. My work has focused mainly on physiological and behavioral measures of welfare of captive animals. I also have experience studying various vertebrate species in the field.

**What do you enjoy most about being a mentor?** The scholars. It is very rewarding to get to know the scholars as they learn and grow. I also learn a tremendous amount from them. They keep you on your toes and that makes it challenging and exciting for everyone.

**What would you say to prospective mentors that are curious about joining the program?** It is time consuming and challenging, but very rewarding. I am proud to be a part of a program that plays such an important role in helping scholars acquire and use the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully advance their academic careers.

**What is the best advice anyone has ever given you?** I have received lots of great advice from many different and very wonderful people over the years. Most recently, I keep thinking about some advice given to the McNair Scholars at an end of semester celebration "practice saying yes." There are a lot of implications in that simple thought. I personally took this advice to heart.



Dr. Aubrey Frantz

**What is your field of expertise?**

Microbiology and Mucosal Immunology. My students and I study the effects of environmental factors on the composition of the human microbiota.

**What do you enjoy most about being a mentor?**

I enjoy introducing students to the research process. I think my students quickly realize that research is not just the laboratory experiments, but also learning how to think critically and ask questions.

**What would you say to prospective mentors that are curious about joining the program?**

The McNair Scholars program at UNTD provides motivated research students with resources, opportunities and experiences that they may not have elsewhere. For prospective mentors that can commit their time, you will make a significant impact on the academic and career paths of these scholars.

**What is the best advice anyone has ever given you?**

Take good notes.

# BECOME A MCNAIR SCHOLAR

## SERVICES WE PROVIDE:

*Academic, career, and financial aid counseling*

*Faculty mentorship*

*GRE preparation*

*Graduate admission requirements advising*

*Enriching Scholastic Experiences*

*Graduate fellowship/ Scholarship preparation*

**Let us help you develop the skills you will need in order to be successful in graduate school!**

**We can help you work on your:**

- Self-Advocacy
- Self-Confidence
- Presentation Skills
- Research Development Skills
- Critical Thinking Skills
- Creative Problem Solving Skills

## Connect with Us!

Email:

McNairScholar@untdallas.edu

Website:

<https://aa.untDallas.edu/Ronald-e-mcnair-scholars>

Instagram:

UNTD\_McNair

Office:

DAL 1 Room 301NB

**Authorized Grant Budget: \$727,433.00**

## **McNair Application Instructions**

Please visit

[aa.untDallas.edu/ronald-e-mcnair-scholars](https://aa.untDallas.edu/ronald-e-mcnair-scholars) to download an application. Or stop by our office located in DAL 1 Room 301NB. Open to all disciplines.