



GRADUATE COLLEGE

Undergraduate Research  
Opportunities Consortium



# MCNAIR MENTOR HANDBOOK HANDBOOK HANDBOOK HANDBOOK

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# ¡SOMOS MCNAIR!

## OVERVIEW

The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program (McNair Scholars Program) is a two-year undergraduate research and mentoring program granted through the U.S. Department of Education, Federal TRIO programs.

As a five-year grant, funds are awarded to institutions of higher education to prepare eligible participants for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities.

At the University of Arizona, McNair is housed within the Graduate College's Undergraduate Research Opportunities Consortium (UROC).



## MISSION

McNair is on a mission to transform academia. A federally-funded TRIO program, we empower visionary First Generation, Low-income (FGLI) and Underrepresented students to thrive in graduate school through transformative mentorship and rigorous academic support.

## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

McNair is an interdisciplinary doctoral degree preparation program.

Every Scholar must conduct and present original research under faculty guidance. Additionally, Scholars apply to graduate programs in the Fall of their Senior year, with the primary goal of direct matriculation into graduate school and ultimate goal of earning a PhD within 10 years.



# CURRICULUM

The McNair Scholars Program is primarily a two-year program beginning in the Spring of the Scholar's second year. In some cases, exceptional third-year Scholars can participate in the expedited one-year program option\*.

## TWO-YEAR TIMELINE

Year	Semester	Activity	Course	Credits	Description
Soph	Fall	Apply	None	0	
	Spring	Pre-McNair	GRAD 495a Foundations of Academic Research: Crafting the Research Proposal	3	Research Proposal
Soph/ Junior	Summer	UROC Summer Program	GRAD 492	3	Directed research
	Summer		GRAD 495b Foundations of Academic Research: Writing and Communicating Scholarly Work	3	Research Project
Junior	Fall	Second Summer applications	None		Monthly 1:1 meetings, Cohort workshops
	Spring				
Junior/ Senior	Summer	Second Summer (off-campus)	Depends on program		
Senior	Fall	Graduate applications	GRAD 496a Preparing for Graduate School	3	Grad School Applications
	Spring	Post-UA preparation	GRAD 496b Preparing for Graduate School	1	Planning for Graduate School

## \*ONE-YEAR TIMELINE

Year	Semester	Activity	Course	Credits	Description
Junior	Fall	Apply	None	0	
	Spring	Pre-McNair	GRAD 495a Foundations of Academic Research: Crafting the Research Proposal	3	Research Proposal
Junior/ Senior	Summer	UROC Summer Program	GRAD 492	3	Directed research
	Summer		GRAD 495b Foundations of Academic Research: Writing and Communicating Scholarly Work	3	Research Project
Senior	Fall	Graduate applications	GRAD 496a Preparing for Graduate School	3	Grad School Applications
	Spring	Post-UA preparation	GRAD 496b Preparing for Graduate School	1	Planning for Graduate School



“The community is so supportive in McNair. I've never felt alone in the challenges I have faced in my research or as a Scholar...My mentor was super supportive of me from the start, even when I felt like I wasn't making meaningful contributions. He never let me forget how much I accomplished and contributed to the lab.”

Aaliyah, '25

# MENTOR GUIDELINES & EXPECTATIONS

Faculty Mentors are expected to skillfully socialize Scholars into their academic disciplines, empowering them to embody the role of burgeoning researcher. This can include guiding Scholars through summer research projects, offering asset-based feedback, and helping Scholars uncover the hidden curriculum of higher education.

## MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

- Build a supportive and responsive relationship that extends throughout the Scholar's undergraduate career
- Provide consistent guidance for research projects while connecting Scholars' skills, interests, and values to research-intensive academic pathways
- Maintain predictable communication patterns: weekly meetings during summer research and monthly during the academic year

## RESEARCH SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT

- Support the development of Scholar's academic identity and sense of belonging in their field
- Encourage participation in relevant conferences and professional communities
- Advocate for Scholar within academic spaces and graduate programs
- Engage with program staff and attend key events to build community support

## GRADUATE SCHOOL PREPARATION

- Help Scholar identify graduate programs aligned with their academic interests, personal values, and career goals
- Provide transparent information about graduate school requirements, application processes, and expectations
- Connect Scholar with appropriate fellowship and funding opportunities
- Discuss both challenges and rewards of graduate education to help Scholar make informed decisions

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Collaborate with Scholar to develop and refine their research proposals, projects, and presentations
- Provide discipline-specific feedback while respecting Scholar's autonomy and growing expertise
- Guide Scholar in effectively communicating their research to diverse audiences
- Create psychologically safe environments for intellectual risk-taking and growth

# TIMELINE & COMMITMENTS

## SPRING SEMESTER (PRE-MCNAIR)

- Conduct at least two structured meetings to:
  - Discuss and establish shared expectations
  - Explore the Scholar's interests within your field
  - Develop an appropriate research question for the summer experience
  - Guide preliminary literature review
  - Review and approve proposal components

## SUMMER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE (10 WEEKS)

- Meet weekly to provide consistent feedback and guidance
- Support the Scholar in executing a small-scale, well-defined research project that:
  - Fits within the program timeline
  - Includes original contributions beyond literature review
  - Aligns with the Scholar's developing interests
- Provide timely feedback on drafts and presentations
- Evaluate work using clear, transparent criteria

## FALL SEMESTER & BEYOND

- Continue providing mentorship appropriate to the Scholar's academic stage and development
- Advise on graduate school preparation and planning, including reviewing potential summer research opportunities, graduate programs, and prospective advisors
- Providing strong, specific letters of recommendation that highlight research experience and graduate school potential

# COMPENSATION

Faculty mentors who are eligible for supplemental compensation will earn a one-time \$1000 stipend per mentee at the culmination of summer programming. Please note that eligibility is determined by the Graduate College and Mentor's departmental business offices.

If your Scholar is primarily supported by graduate students or other lab members, we strongly encourage mentors to consider splitting the stipend in the way that feels most equitable to them.

# SCHOLAR EXPECTATIONS

- All UA McNair Scholars are expected to:
  - Dedicate themselves full-time to the summer program. Therefore, students are not able to take other classes during the 10-week summer program or have part-time jobs during the summer.
  - Participate meaningfully in the co-creation of the McNair Scholarly community. This includes engaging fully in all mandatory McNair and UROC events and workshops.
  - Scholars are expected to communicate with their mentor their availability around program events and a draft/final schedule will be given to the mentor as they are finalized.
  - Discuss their research interests with their faculty mentor and devise a summer research project that can be reasonably executed during the 10-week summer research program. The McNair Program Director will look to the student and faculty mentor to devise the content of their summer research project.
  - Document their summer research in a written research report. The McNair Curriculum is created to help scaffold the student through the reading and writing required to draft the report. As a part of this, students will also build their corresponding oral presentation (Power Point) and research poster with the assistance of their peers and the McNair Teaching Team.
  - Present their summer projects at a national conference.

“After my first mock presentation in class, I felt like I had absolutely failed and that I wasn't cut out for McNair. But talking to my mentor about imposter syndrome really helped. She reminded me it's okay to not know everything, especially at the beginning.”

Leelu, '25



# MENTORING BEST PRACTICES

Great mentoring can change lives, but there's no single formula for being an exceptional mentor. Here are some tips and strategies that you can adapt to strengthen your mentoring relationships.

## INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

- Center trauma-informed practices that promote safety, peer support, trust and transparency, collaboration, equity, and empowerment
- Recognize and respect diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and learning styles
- Adapt mentoring approaches to address unique challenges faced by first-generation and underrepresented students
- Create opportunities for Scholar to incorporate their cultural backgrounds and lived experiences into research

## SCHOLARLY COMMUNITY

- Help Scholar build their “Mentor Universe” by introducing them to departmental colleagues and graduate students
- Facilitate peer connections among researchers in your lab/research group
- Encourage participation in academic communities and affinity groups
- Create opportunities for Scholar to present work within supportive departmental settings

## SCAFFOLDING RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

- Design projects with progressive levels of complexity and independence
- Provide explicit instruction on discipline-specific research methodologies
- Offer constructive feedback that balances encouragement with rigorous standards
- Help Scholar recognize and celebrate meaningful progress and milestones
- Guide Scholar in developing transferable research skills applicable across settings

## ASSESSMENT & REFLECTION

- Model iterative reflection by engaging in regular self-assessment of mentoring effectiveness
- Create meaningful feedback loops by soliciting feedback from Scholar about their mentoring experience and adjusting approaches based on Scholar feedback and evolving needs
- Document successful strategies and areas for growth in mentoring



## BOUNDARIES & COMMUNICATION

- Use the [Mentor Agreement Template](#) to explicitly discuss expectations and needs early in your mentoring relationship
- Demystify the [hidden curriculum](#) by making implicit academic norms and expectations explicit
- Address misunderstandings promptly through open, constructive dialogue
- Maintain [appropriate boundaries](#) while providing holistic support
- Communicate with McNair staff if concerns arise about a Scholar's progress or wellbeing

# RESOURCES

## THE MENTOR INSTITUTE

- The [MENTOR Institute at the University of Arizona](#) has a plethora of resources to support you. Their [Mentoring Toolkit](#) and [One-on-one Mentoring Agreement](#) are excellent frameworks to start your relationship with your Scholar strong

## TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES IN ACADEMIA

- Barnard College | [Trauma-Informed Pedagogy](#)
- University of Wisconsin | [Trauma-Informed Teaching Practices](#)

## ADDITIONAL MENTORING RESOURCES

- [The Science of Mentorship Podcast](#) by The National Academy of Sciences
- [National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity \(NCFDD\)](#)
- [The Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research \(CIMER\)](#)
- [National Research Mentoring Network \(NMRN\)](#)
- [Much Ado about Mentoring](#) webinar series through the University of New Mexico Mentoring Institute



“During my time in McNair, I found out how important support is for my success. I had never felt such a welcoming and safe community before I was able to learn, apply what I've learned, and ask any questions with confidence because of this support.”

Melissa, '25

# MEET THE TEAM



**CAITLIN ROSARIO KELLY**  
**SHE/THEY**

**Assistant Professor of Practice | McNair Director**

Caitlin is the Director of the McNair Scholars Program and an Assistant Professor of Practice. A philosopher of education, she earned her MEd in Education, Culture, and Society from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education and is a PhD candidate in Education Equity Studies at the University of Washington's College of Education. When not in the classroom, you can probably find her in the garden, curating a delightfully weird playlist, or exploring Tucson's epic epicurean scene with her husband (Joe) and dog (Lua).



**TORI JUVERA**  
**SHE/HER**

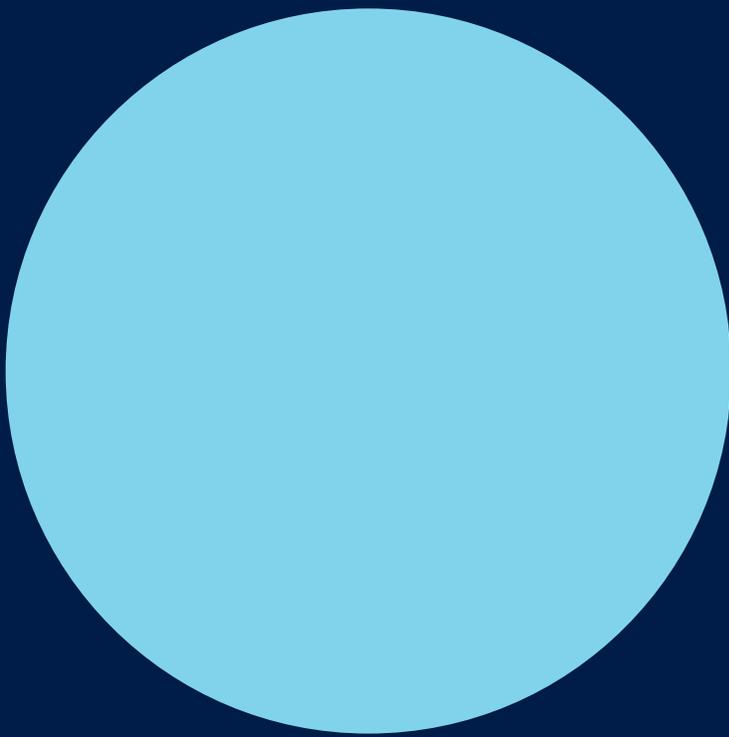
**Administrative Assistant**

As the Administrative Assistant for the McNair Scholars Program, Tori works on travel, programming, and data management for the McNair Scholars and Staff. Outside of work she can most often be found going on a run or at the craft store. Searching for her next crafting project.



**ASTRID LIU** Graduate Teaching  
**SHE/THEY** Assistant

Astrid Liu is a third-year MFA Creative Writing candidate who writes multimedia poetry and fiction. She was born and raised in San Francisco, and received her BA in Psychology at UC Berkeley. Her work has been awarded the 2024 University of Arizona Minnie Torrance Award, a 2024 Carsons Scholar Fellowship, and appeared in the Academy of American Poets, [terrain.org](https://terrain.org), the International Queer Women of Color Film Festival, and other homes.



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*The Ronald E. McNair Achievement program is sponsored through a federal grant (#P217A220105) through the US Department of Education, Federal TRIO Programs.*