

## **University of Minnesota TRIO McNair Scholars Application Process Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

Dear Prospective McNair Scholar,

Thank you for your interest in the University of Minnesota's [TRIO McNair Scholars Program](#). This document highlights frequently asked questions and is one of many resources (along with our website and social media) to help demystify the McNair program and application process.

Thank you for your time and please reach out as you have questions.

The McNair Team (click [here](#) for contact info)

### Document Layout for Quick Reference

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While prospective students are required to submit all application material, the McNair selection committee particularly takes into consideration and prioritizes program eligibility, personal statement and alignment of academic goals with program intent, major GPA trends, and recommendations from faculty in the scholars' discipline area.

### **What is the University of Minnesota TRIO McNair Program?**

The U of M TRIO McNair program is a summer AND academic year program geared towards preparing students for graduate school. The U of M McNair program consists of three strands:

1. Direct research experience
2. Graduate School Preparation
3. Leadership & Resiliency Development

Programming consists of direct research with a faculty mentor, weekly seminars on the research process, graduate school preparation, and leadership and resiliency development. Phase One of the program is participation in a ten-week summer program where scholars spend roughly 40 hours a week dedicated to above objectives (roughly 30 hours of research and 10 hours of seminars and individual advising). Phase Two consists of continued academic year support towards finding additional research experiences, graduate school preparation and application support, leadership and resiliency development opportunities.

### **What are the dates of the 2019 summer programming?**

The ten-week summer component of the 2019 McNair program is slated to start on Thursday, May 30 and end on Saturday, August 10.

## Eligibility

### **Is the McNair program open to students from other colleges and universities?**

Yes. The TRIO McNair Scholars Program is a University of Minnesota (U of M) program housed in CEHD. The U of M McNair Program serves students from all colleges on the Twin Cities Campus and coordinate campuses (Crookston, Duluth, Morris, and Rochester). Additionally, the U of M McNair program serves students attending other Minnesota state and private institutions to include: Carleton College, Macalester College, Metropolitan State University, University of St. Thomas, etc. Students attending institutions hosting a McNair program (Augsburg, Bemidji State, St. Olaf and St. Scholastica) are not eligible to apply to the U of M McNair program. Please connect with your home college's McNair program. In some instances, scholars are admitted from institutions outside of Minnesota.

### **For this scholarship, is the LGBT+ community considered an "underrepresented" group?**

The federal legislation guiding McNair defines underrepresented based on ethnicity and first generation and low income. A benefit of meeting with us is that we can determine if you are eligible for the program. If ineligibility is determined, we are happy to make a number of referrals, as we believe that all students should have access to quality research and graduate school preparation.

### **Are international students eligible for the McNair Program?**

McNair legislation requires that scholars are U.S. citizens or permanent resident holders of the United States. International students are encouraged to consult with their academic/program adviser(s) and contact the [International Student and Scholar Services Office](#) to explore other research and graduate school opportunities.

### **I am a low-income student and a veteran in the U.S. Armed Forces, and while I am not legally considered a first-generation college student, am I still eligible for the McNair Scholars Program?**

We encourage student veterans in the U.S. Armed forces to meet with the McNair staff. We will ask follow up questions to help determine eligibility.

### **I am a non-traditional, low-income student pursuing a bachelor's degree. My mother has recently gone back to school to obtain an undergraduate degree. Am I still eligible for the McNair Scholars Program?**

This is considered on a case-by-case basis. Please reach out to the McNair staff.

### **I am a senior and scheduled to graduate spring semester. Am I eligible to apply to McNair?**

Students must be enrolled the academic year prior and after the McNair Scholars Summer Program component. This is mandated by the McNair grant and is important

because the U of M McNair program is a summer **and** academic year program. Please see the McNair eligibility guidelines on the website and application.

**What if my biological parents do not have a college degree, but one of my adoptive parents has completed their 4-year degree. Am I still considered first generation?**

This consideration addressed on a case-by-case basis. Due to the uniqueness of this situation the student is encouraged to make an appointment with a McNair staff member.

## **Admission Process**

**Please share more about the McNair Admission Process**

The McNair application process consists of three phases:

Early Admission before priority deadline:(Option for up to 5 spaces): Students w/ all A's and B's in courses commensurate to major; no "I's" or "S/N" grades, strong referral from faculty and program partners, student involved in leadership opportunities, clear identification of barriers, and evidence of strong writing skills. Additional considerations are students in STEM disciplines, students demonstrating goal of earning doctorate, and academic paths where direct matriculation to graduate school is encouraged.

Priority Deadline: Monday, January 21, 2019. Applications, including supporting material, are due. Scholars are encouraged to submit applications early.

Rolling Admissions after priority deadline: As a federally funded program, McNair has set eligibility requirements that include income eligibility, first generation, underrepresented, along w/ a set number of students required to be from STEM majors, etc. McNair program will continue strategic outreach and application consideration until program enrollment objectives met.

**If the McNair program is so competitive, why is the minimum GPA requirement 2.75?**

The average GPA of admitted students is significantly higher than 2.75. Due to the unique life and academic journeys of the each student, we recognize some students may have struggled their first year of college due to a myriad of reasons. This GPA minimum reflects the McNair program's holistic approach to application review. For example, if a student starts out in a major that was not the right fit and had very low grades, however, resets and demonstrates a very strong upward grade trajectory in their new major (as determined through multiple semesters) the admission committee takes this into consideration.

**I have classes that conflict with all of the McNair information sessions. Is there a way for me to get the information I need for application?**

The McNair program hosts weekly Open Houses/Information Sessions as can be seen on the [McNair website](#) and varies the time to accommodate a wide range of schedules.

These open house allow prospective scholars to meet staff and other students. These sessions are particularly helpful because a fellow student may ask a question that leads to information benefiting all participants.

Prospective students are also encouraged to view the upcoming events list on the main page, too, as there are a number of campus events the McNair team provides information. Examples include presenting at various college career services events, the President Emerging Leaders Conference, at North Star STEM Alliance Events, and to student groups.

In the event none of the above options work, we encourage scholars to stop by room 40 Education Sciences (East Bank) or call 612-625-0772 to schedule a time to meet with a McNair staff. The McNair team also welcomes drop-ins.

**What if I am not sure if I want to go to graduate school immediately after graduation?  
Does this impact consideration of my application?**

A U of M McNair program objective is 40% of scholars will matriculate directly to graduate school. This makes sense for some programs who encourage direct matriculation. We also recognize a number of graduate and doctorate programs encourage students to get some life experience (what we call a post-bac experiential year) related to field of study. All students with the intent of going to graduate school and meet program eligibility requirements are encouraged to apply.

**What if I am unsure if I want to pursue graduate school or medical school?**

We encourage scholars to register for a McNair Information session or schedule a meeting with a McNair staff to discuss potential options. The McNair program primary goal is to provide eligible college students with effective preparation for graduate school and doctoral study with the goal of diversifying college faculty.

## **Application materials**

**Am I able to complete an application without attending a TRIO McNair information session?**

Yes...but before completing an application....

### **Consider these CRITICAL factors:**

**1. Data Security:** Applications and all supporting material must be submitted in A SIGNED AND SEALED envelope if not mailed through the US Postal Service (see application cover). You are responsible for protecting your personal data! Do NOT email sensitive information (e.g. tax documents, social security number, etc.)

**2. What is the University of Minnesota TRIO McNair Program?** To be clear---The McNair Scholars program is a federally funded program focusing on increasing the rate of academic PhDs among first generation, low income and/or underrepresented populations. The U of M McNair program consists of direct research experience with a faculty mentor on their research, graduate school preparation, and leadership and resiliency development. Programming takes place during a paid 10-week summer experience and complemented by academic year support. *(Note: students pursuing profession degrees: JD, MD, PA, DPT, DDT, PharD, are not academic tracks. However, scholars considering joint degrees, such as MD/PhD, PharD/PhD, etc. are encouraged to apply).*

**3. Eligibility:** As a federally funded program, applicants **are required to meet specific eligibility requirements:** 1) must be from families that meet US department of Education income guidelines (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/incomelevels.html>) and where neither parent has completed a four-year college degree or 2) students may be undergraduate from ethnic groups that are underrepresented in graduate school in the field they wish to study. Must be a U.S. Citizen or Permanent Resident to apply.

We cannot stress enough the importance of applicants making time to attend a McNair information session and/or connect with [McNair Team](#). Information session will provide:

**Tips on completing a strong application:**

- Verify program eligibility requirements
- clarify intent of the McNair program
- develop rapport and application support with McNair team
- provide appropriate referrals if not eligible

## Program benefits

**What does the stipend mean? Is McNair a job or internship?**

U of M McNair is a summer and academic year program. The summer consists of a ten-week intensive research and graduate school experience requiring scholars to commit 30-40 hours a week. Limited funding is available for a set number of scholars to live on campus based on need. Based on the intense nature of programming, the McNair stipend (issued as a check) is used to offset costs associated with conducting research rather than working. Stipends are contingent on meeting program objectives (see syllabus/stipend schedule on our website). Students are eligible for \$3,000 over the summer and an additional \$500 stipend for completing academic year tasks related to research and graduate school preparation. McNair scholars are also eligible for application fee waivers and McNair specific graduate funding/fellowships.

**How will McNair benefit me in the long run when applying for graduate school?**

McNair offers many long-term benefits. In addition to gaining valuable research experience under the guidance of a faculty mentor, McNair provides weekly seminars

and individual advising to assist with the graduate school admission process. Scholars are also welcomed into a strong university and national community of support and become eligible for McNair specific fellowships, opportunities and application fee waivers.

Additional benefits include: growing your personal and academic support network; strengthening your writing skills; completing a graduate school portfolio; GRE preparation; head start on finding additional funding and research opportunities; developing new life-long friends; become eligible for McNair specific graduate school funding; develop a strong personal statement and curriculum vita; be part of the McNair national directory where graduate programs will also be reaching out to you, etc.

**What if I want to go to graduate school then professional school? How will McNair help me get there?**

McNair is designed to help scholars matriculate directly to a graduate school program that are on an academic and research tracks. Some examples are GRE practice tests and seminars, navigating graduate assistantship funding, and connecting with graduate school students. Participation in McNair has opened the eyes of many scholars to opportunities not previously considered as faculty and researchers.

**Is there academic credit tied to the McNair experience?**

No. Credit is not granted for McNair participation and will not impact your GPA. Scholars are advised to work with their major adviser to see if/how the research and graduate school preparation component may be incorporated into meeting a major course requirement.

## **Research**

**Do I select the professor I would like to work with or does the program match me with someone to work with?**

The McNair Team works closely with newly admitted scholars to pair them up with a faculty that most closely matches their interests. Often students work with faculty mentors that they indicate they have an interest working with. However, there are cases where the faculty are either unavailable to work and/or the scholar would benefit working with another mentor. For instance, if a graduate program requires a strong quantitative background that a scholar may currently lack, the McNair team will work to find a mentor that will best position a scholar for success. The McNair program considers many factors when working with a scholar when pairing with a faculty mentor.

**What if I don't really know my research interests?**

McNair staff can help you identify an area of research interest. Additionally, applicants can look at [past scholar research topics](#) and review the profiles of University of Minnesota faculty to help identify areas of interests. Prospective scholars should also

utilize available resources such as their academic adviser, professors and [career services](#).

### **I know what I want to research, why can't I pursue my own independent research project?**

The U of M McNair Program model is premised on students working on their faculty mentor's research--**not** the student's research. Scholars will have the opportunity to create and conduct independent research during the academic year. U of M McNair faculty mentors volunteer their time and the summer structure of the McNair program does not allow adequate time for scholars to get through the IRB and other procedural process to protect human subjects. The initial ten-week intensive research and graduate school summer experience is designed to give scholars exposure to the different phases of the research and writing process. Mentor projects in progress already have Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, research teams, timelines set, and ample opportunity for scholars to directly and meaningful contribute to the mentor's research project. A number of scholars every year are listed as co-authors in peer-reviewed journals submitted by their mentors.

The McNair program requires scholars to pursue independent and/or additional research opportunities during the academic year.

### **I've already started a research project. Can I apply to McNair and be funded to complete it?**

This depends. If this project is under the guidance of a faculty mentor, part of the mentor's research, and there is clear direction of progressing research/growth---this may be an option. Please talk to a McNair staff. In consultation with the proposed faculty mentor we will evaluate.

## **Additional Resources**

### **What are additional resources that can assist as I apply to be a McNair Scholar?**

- TRIO McNair staff, [website](#), and printed resources included with application packets
- Professors
- [The Center for Writing](#) (Nicholson Hall)
- [SMART Learning Commons](#) (Walter Library)
- Career Counselors
- Academic Advisors
- [Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence \(Appleby Hall\)](#)
- [McNair Alumni](#)

### **Sample Scholar Testimonials:**

“McNair has shown me that if I’m really positive about something I have to work hard and give it my best effort. My motivation to go to graduate school has greatly increased and I feel more prepared.”

“This program has shown me how important it really is to make yourself stand out in order to get into your desired graduate program.”

“My experience in McNair helped motivate and prepare me for the challenges that I will face when I enter graduate school.”

“My time was really valuable in not only preparing me for graduate school and helping strengthen my research skills, but also helped me learn more about myself and help me work through some of my bad habits---such as better utilizing my time and not procrastinating.”

“My McNair faculty mentor and the McNair Team approached the challenges of research and graduate school preparation with positivity which kept me motivated.”

“My McNair experience helped me strengthen my research skills, provided GRE test support, connected me with a new friends and mentors and exposed me to a larger support network that I will be leaning on throughout my academic journey from now until I complete my doctorate.”

“Great, priceless experience. Quality staff and support provided---life changing.”

“I believe that my participation in McNair created the support and genuine community I was lacking. McNair holds me accountable for future endeavors and allows me to increase my motivation and decrease counter anxiety---I know that I’m not alone in pursuing my personal and dreams.”

### **Sample Faculty Testimonials**

“I have been very impressed by the high academic standards to which these students aspire and have developed a deep respect and appreciation for the McNair staff.”

-[Dr. Samuel L. Myers Jr.](#) (26 year McNair faculty mentor), Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota

“As a former UofM scholar now a STEM faculty at UofM I work with a variety of undergraduate research scholars. The McNair scholars that I mentor are the most prepared, organized and productive. The McNair program is truly invaluable in teaching students how to prepare for research, organize and prioritize their work, optimize their productivity, and communicate effectively with their research mentors.”

-[Dr. Evelyn Davies-Venn](#), Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences, University of Minnesota

“As a first generation, low-income student who became a PHD and Professor at UMn, I am aware of the challenges with no role models close at hand...I work with many internship



programs, but McNair staff is organized, knowledgeable and totally committed to the program and make the experience most enjoyable.”

-[Dr. Joanne L. Slavin](#), Department of Food Science and Nutrition, University of Minnesota