McNair Moments

HAPPY NEW ANNUN!

The academic coordinator, Dr. Enderson, opened her home to McNair scholars for food and conversation. That’s her, sans chair, in the photo below. Seated from left to right are Kim Cubit, Sarafina Croft and Drew Monks. In the next room are Dr. Miller, director, and Cindy Howell, secretary.

In the photo at right are Megan Musick, Roberta Edge, Jeffrey Blackman and Kristen Bailey. Then there’s the enormous cake, dwarfing Sunshine Pinell and Angela Stroupe to the left. At the bottom of the page are Drew Monks, Sarafina Croft, Terri Proctor and Steve Saunders, coordinator.

It’s shaping up to be a productive year. Anna Fitzgerald is competing for the USA Today’s All-America Academic Team. Russell Parman will be presenting his research in Prague. Our new graduates are applying to graduate schools and URSCP winners will be conducting new research (page 3). Scholars are also applying for scholarships: James Edmondson for NSF and Sarafina Croft for Talbot. We would like to welcome two new scholars: Drew Monks and Angela Stroupe. Others are in the pipeline and we will be announcing them in the future.

We’re in the process of re-designing our website homepage to make it more useful and easier to navigate. Also, with the support of the Distinguished Lecture Fund and others we will bring Carl McNair to the MTSU campus in February (page 2) to speak to scholars and the university community.

Happy New Annun!
How do I write a great personal statement?

This is a question that should be asked more often. Personal statements are typically the weakest part of a student’s grad school application. Just imagine a graduate admissions official reading dozens of applications containing dozens of personal statements, many of which are boring or go hundreds of words past the word limit or are filled with typos or do not address the questions asked.

In general, be concrete. If you make a claim, back it up with facts. For instance, if you say that you have shown leadership as an undergraduate, mention that you served as president of MCA and that you were elected to the university-wide Student Council, or whatever you have done that substantiates your claim.

Do not brag but do not be overly modest either. Some scholars are reluctant to toot their own horn, relying on letters of recommendation to do that for them, but if you have waived your right to see the recommendations, you won’t know for a certainty that a major item has been included. It is not bragging to say, for example, that you have won a highly competitive, national award. Plus, it makes for interesting reading.

If the application has a word limit, stay within the limit and do not ramble on forever. A personal statement is not a biography. Also, if you are asked to address specific questions, make sure you do. Yes, there’s a temptation to write a single personal statement and use it for all your applications to save time, but why waste time doing something that won’t help you?

If you are not asked specific questions, consider making up your own questions to help organize your statement. Ask questions from the point of view of the admissions official. That is, what would you want to know about a prospective student if you were making a decision to accept or reject that student?

Examples:
Why do you think you will succeed in graduate school?
What skills do you have that will help you succeed in graduate school?
Why is an advanced degree important to you?
What do you intend to do with an advanced degree?

Start writing a first draft of your statement well before deadline so you can set the draft aside for a few days. You might think of another good point to include during this time. You can also revise it to make it more persuasive after a break.

Finally, proofread. Not once but at least twice.

Toward the end of last year, on October 31, 12 scholars presented their research in poster form to the MTSU community.

Carl McNair, brother of Ronald E. McNair for whom our program is named, will be on campus February 28 to meet with scholars and to give a university-wide talk titled, Quitting Is Not an Option.

A rousing motivational speaker, Carl McNair is president of the McNair Achievement Programs (MAP) in Atlanta. MAP has been featured on CNN, ABC, NBC, CBS.

Joining him for various activities throughout the day will be local former NASA astronauts Rhea Seddon and Hoot Gibson.

Dr. Seddon logged 722 hours in space and Mr. Gibson logged 876 hours. Watch your email in the weeks ahead, scholars, for details on what, where and when.

Carl McNair

Rhea Seddon

Hoot Gibson

New McNair Masters: Congrats!

Nikayla Boga earned a Master of Arts in Teaching at Christian Brothers University

Melody Haley earned a Master of Education at Middle Tennessee

Danielle Larkins earned an MA in Child & Family Development at Georgia

Freneka Seay earned a Master of Science in Health at Middle Tennessee

New McNair Grads December 2005

As an intellectual exercise aimed to enhance McNair scholars’ critical and analytical skills, discussion groups in the spring under the direction of the MTSU Writing Center will focus on the following four books:

- Life of Pi, by Yann Martel
- Fast Food Nation, by Eric Schlosser
- Guns, Germs, and Steel, by Jared Diamond

Well Done!

The 6th Annual McNair Etiquette Dinner was once again rated the best seminar of the year. Meichelle Gibson, career coordinator in the Business Career Employment Center conducted the event with enthusiasm. She started off with the proper way to make introductions. If you’re introducing more than one person, you should start with the person holding the highest degree, if you know, and work your way down. Otherwise, start with the oldest. Scholars took turns introducing those at their tables.

When dinner was served, Ms. Gibson roamed the room, giving advice about which utensil to use with which course and how to hold the utensil correctly.

There’s also a correct way to pass the salt. For one thing, you should never pass it alone. It is “married” to the pepper. Pass both shakers together even if only the salt was requested. And if the requester is far away, always pass the salt and pepper to the right.

She also offered some practical advice in the case of a mishap. For instance, what do you do if you drop your napkin? You do not bend over to pick it up, particularly if it has fallen under the table. Quietly ask the server for another one. — Cindy Howell
Mr. James Floyd, Legal Assistant to the President

Bio
Mr. Floyd earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Alabama and a Juris Doctor degree from Tulane University School of Law. Before joining MTSU, he served as Assistant Commissioner and General Counsel for the Tennessee Department of Personnel and Deputy Legal Counsel in the Office of the Governor.

Vision for McNair
The goal of McNair is to increase the pursuit of doctoral study and careers in higher education by students from underrepresented segments of society. We must continually strive to promote the intellectual curiosity and cultivate the ambition of these students. For in the words of Ella Fitzgerald, “It isn’t where you came from, it’s where you’re going that counts.” This will truly make research and higher education institutions diverse academic learning communities.

Mr. John Harris, Director, Disabled Student Services

Bio
Mr. Harris earned Bachelor of Science and Master of Art degrees from MTSU. After six years with the Veteran’s Administration, he returned to MTSU in 1985 as director of Disabled Student Services. He has served as president of both the Tennessee School for the Blind Alumni Assn. and the Tennessee Assn. on Higher Education and Disabilities.

Vision for McNair
I would like to see the Advisory Board become involved in a recruiting campaign in order to make more students aware of the McNair Program. I would also like to see McNair scholars join with other groups on campus so that the McNair Program becomes better known and more highly publicized. I am impressed with the efforts I have seen from the time the program was started to where it is now.

URSCP WINNERS
These six scholars were awarded a total of $18,315 from the Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Projects. From left to right: Terri Proctor, Bethany Adams, Anna Fitzgerald, James Edmondson, Ashley Kite-Rowland, Sunshine Pinell.

Linda Selby presented her paper, “Beauty and the Beast: A Rose Is a Rose Is a Rose,” at the National Scholars Research Conference and Graduate School Fair at the University of Delaware in September.

Sarafina Croft was elected new president of the McNair Challenger Alliance on November 28, 2005.

Ashley Kite-Rowland delivered her paper, “Deconstructing the Ethnic Community,” in November at the 14th Annual McNair Research Conference in Delavan, Wisconsin.