

2025 McNair Spring Gathering



INSPIRING THE FUTURE AND CHANGING LIVES SINCE 1995



Thursday May 22nd, 2025 · 4:30-7:30 pm · The Spokane Club



Event Program

WELCOME, PROGRAM UPDATES 5:00 PM

Dr. Rebecca Clark, McNair Director

KEYNOTE SPEAKER 5:10 PM

Dr. Isaura Gallegos, EWU McNair Alumna 2009

WELCOMING NEW SCHOLARS 5:20 PM

Cori Jaeger, McNair Academic Advisor

KEYNOTE SPEAKER 5:30 PM

Dr. Lateasha Meyers, EWU McNair Alumna 2013

RECOGNITION OF MCNAIR MENTORS 5:40 PM

Dr. Rebecca Clark, McNair Director

RECOGNITION OF CONTINUING SCHOLARS 5:45 PM

Dr. Rebecca Clark, McNair Director

KEYNOTE SPEAKER 5:50 PM

Dr. Laura Zamudio Orozco, EWU McNair Alumna 2015

RECOGNITION OF EMERGING SCHOLARS 6:00 PM

Cori Jaeger, McNair Academic Advisor

RECOGNITION OF GRADUATING SCHOLARS 6:05 PM

Cori Jaeger, McNair Academic Advisor

MCNAIR GRADUATE STUDENT REMARKS 6:15 PM

Richard Murphy, McNair Alumnus 2024

SCHOLAR REMARKS 6:20 PM

Raúl Segura, McNair Scholar

RECOGNITION OF MCNAIR STAFF, FACULTY, AND ALUMNI PAST 6:25 PM

Cori Jaeger, McNair Academic Advisor

CLOSING COMMENTS 6:30 PM

Dr. Rebecca Clark, McNair Director

MCNAIR SCHOLAR PHOTOS & NETWORKING 6:35-7:30 PM

Thank you for joining us!

EWU MCNAIR PROGRAM FACTS - 2025

Over 375 Total Scholars Served since 1995

17 Presented Research at Conferences or Symposiums

14 Graduate School Acceptances

44 Scholars currently in graduate school

60 PhD's & Over 150 Master's Degrees Attained



**Share your
Spring
Gathering
photos
with us!**

McNair Staff



Dr. Rebecca Clark
Director



Cori Jaeger
Academic Advisor



Bakima Ssebanakitta
GSA



Reyna Rivera
GSA

**Want to see more amazing work by
EWU McNair Scholars?**

**Check out our website:
inside.ewu.edu/mcnair/**

Reach us any time at mcnair@ewu.edu

Letter from the Director

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US IN CELEBRATING OUR MCNAIR SPRING GATHERING & 30TH YEAR!

This year marks an incredible milestone for us: 30 years of the McNair Scholars Program at Eastern Washington University. As we celebrate three decades of academic excellence, research prowess, and personal transformation, we are incredibly proud and grateful for the extraordinary community that made this journey possible.

Since its founding in honor of Ronald E. McNair—physicist, astronaut, and advocate for justice—McNair Scholars has stood as a beacon for students who aspire to pursue doctoral studies but may not have access to them. Imagine if young Dr. McNair, who was turned away at the library because of the color of his skin, had accepted it, complied, and gone home, unable to access all the knowledge he had every right to explore. But he did not and all of you sitting here tonight are his legacy, and your success is the measure of our mission.



Dr. Rebecca Clark, Director

Tonight, we celebrate the impact that all of you and those before you have had on our world. EWU McNair Scholars have fostered countless hours of research, scholarship, and mentorship. To our current and graduating scholars, you carry forward a powerful tradition. To our Alumni, you continue to inspire us. To our faculty mentors: your guidance and dedication have been vital every step of the way.

As we reflect and celebrate the past 30 years, we look to our future with hope and promise. The need for programs like the McNair Trio is as urgent and essential as ever. As powers attempt to dismantle and undercut our students' paths, it is paramount that our support remains strong and our commitment unwavering.

Gratitude is extended to Cori Jaeger, our intrepid Academic Advisor, who views a barrier as nothing more than an inane and bothersome nuisance, and to our enthusiastic Graduate Student Assistants, Reyna and Bakima, who are always ready to jump in when needed.

Thank you for being part of this remarkable program. Here is to 30 years of excellence—and to many more to come.

With gratitude and hope,

Rebecca Clark

Director, EWU McNair Scholars Program



Keynote Speakers



EWU MCNAIR ALUMNA 2009

**ISAURA J. GALLEGOS,
PH.D., ED.M.**

Isaura J. Gallegos, Ph.D., completed her doctorate at Harvard University under the mentorship of Dr. Eric Mazur. Her research investigates how to promote collaborative learning in undergraduate science classrooms. She is interested in merging the learning sciences and physics education research to examine how social and cognitive processes shape group learning in active-learning STEM environments. In particular, her dissertation offers new insight into the developmental dynamics of how trust in teamwork is built through effective team management, productive peer interactions, and process-oriented learning.

In addition, Dr. Gallegos's academic work bridges research and practice. Beginning during the COVID-19 pandemic, she has co-led the Physics of Living Systems Teacher (PoLS-T) Network. Today, the network connects hundreds of teachers around the world to improve secondary physics education. As part of this work, she also facilitated a community of practice for high school physics teachers engaged in classroom-based research to improve student learning—an initiative rooted in her own early research experiences as a McNair Scholar.

Her contributions to teaching and scholarship have been recognized with the Harold T. White Prize for excellence in physics teaching by the Harvard Department of Physics. She also served as editor and co-chair of the Harvard Educational Review (2018–2020).

Dr. Gallegos also holds an Ed.M. in Mind, Brain, and Education from Harvard University, an M.S. in Genetics and Cell Biology from Washington State University, and a B.S. in Biology from Eastern Washington University.

Faculty Research Mentors

COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS - CONT.

Dr. Alexandros Paparas, Assistant Professor of Information Systems & Business Analytics

Mentee: Christopher Nava

Dr. Jillene Grover Seiver, Associate Chair and Senior Lecturer of Psychology

Mentee: Justin Edney, Zaid McCurdy

Dr. Jason Scully, Director and Associate Professor of Urban and Regional Planning

Mentee: Jasmine Joy Paloma

Thank you to the McNair Advisory Committee
which reviews all prospective McNair applicants to advise on the selection of our scholars and helps get the word out about McNair!



Left to right, top to bottom: Dr. Judd Case, Biology; Dr. Martín Meráz García, Chicana Studies; Dr. Kayleen Islam-Zwart, Dept. Chair, Psychology; Dr. Miguel Novella, Spanish; Dr. Ryan Parrey, Disability Studies

Faculty Research Mentors

COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

Dr. Kelley Cullen, Faculty for Information Systems & Business Analytics

Mentee: Vanessa Sanchez

Dr. Shanna Davis, Associate Professor of Psychology

Mentee: Eleanor Strathmore

Dr. Timothy Hilton, Professor of Social Work

Mentee: Judith Silva Garcia

Dr. Keely Hope, Program Director and Professor of Clinical Counseling (Graduate)

Mentee: Jocie Torres

Dr. Habib Islam, Assistant Professor of Business Management

Mentee: Christopher Nava

Dr. Kayleen Islam-Zwart, School of Psychology Chair, Director, and Professor of Psychology, EWU Psychology at BC Program Director

Mentee: Mai Peregrina

Dr. Nick C. Jackson, Professor of Psychology

Mentee: Bryce Drager

Dr. Sarah Johansson, Assistant Professor of Clinical Counseling (Graduate) and Applied Psychology

Mentee: Jazmine Sargent-Jardine, Raúl Segura

Keynote Speakers



EWU MCNAIR ALUMNA 2013

**LATEASHA MEYERS,
PH.D.**

Dr. Lateasha Meyers is a scholar and advocate for educational equity and student success. An alumna of the McNair Scholars Program at Eastern Washington University, she holds dual bachelor's degrees in Children's Studies and Sociology (2013), a Master's in Educational Leadership from Washington State University (2015), and a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Miami University with emphasis in Leadership, Culture, and Curriculum, as well as a certificate in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (2020).

Her dissertation, *Seeing Education Through a Black Girls' Lens*, utilizes Black feminist and Black Girlhood Studies to explore how Black adolescent girls shape their identities and educational experiences through participatory photovoice research. While at Miami University, Dr. Meyers taught undergraduate courses and co-developed the D.I.V.A. Institute, empowering adolescent girls to advocate for social change. Her scholarship focuses on race, equity, and social justice in education, including contributions to a chapter on racism in Washington State.

Previously, she served as the STEM Student Support Services Coordinator at Washington State University and as an Assistant Professor at California State University, Chico. Dr. Meyers is currently an independent scholar working on her first book inspired by her dissertation work.

Keynote Speakers



EWU MCNAIR ALUMNA 2015

**LAURA ZAMUDIO
OROZCO, PH.D.**

Dr. Laura Zamudio-Orozco is an EWU McNair Scholar alumna dedicated to education, research, and advocacy for equity in STEM. She earned her Ph.D. in Mathematics Education: Curriculum and Instruction from Florida International University. Her dissertation, *Dominant and Critical Mathematics: A Multi-Case Study Examining Mathematics Teachers' Equitable Teaching Practices*, reflects her deep commitment to social justice in math education.

A first-generation college graduate, Dr. Zamudio-Orozco began her academic journey at EWU where she earned a BA in math education with a minor in Spanish. As a McNair Scholar, she completed two research internships in mathematics education under the guidance of Dr. Gayle Milsaps. She later returned to EWU as the Interim McNair Academic Advisor in early 2020, where her recent Ph.D. experience and expertise in equitable online learning made her an invaluable resource to McNair scholars during the transition to virtual programming at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Zamudio-Orozco then served at Heritage University as an Associate Professor of Mathematics and McNair Program Coordinator. She guided students through the graduate application process, supported them in securing summer research opportunities, and helped implement critical writing and research support. Currently, she serves as an Associate Professor of STEM Education at Heritage University, where she designs and teaches inquiry-based STEM courses for future K-12 teachers. Over the course of her career, she has prepared and mentored over 400 preservice teachers, championing inclusive and equitable approaches to mathematics instruction.

Faculty Research Mentors

COLLEGE OF ARTS, HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Dr. Kristin Edquist, Chair and Professor of Political Science and International Affairs

Mentee: Brasin Benjamin

Dr. Edwin Elias, Director and Assistant Professor of Chicana/o/x Studies

Mentee: Jennifer Dawson

Dr. Thomas Hawley, Professor of Political Science

Mentee: Maria Sarmiento

Dr. Kassahun Kebede, Associate Professor of Sociology and Justice Studies

Mentee: Addiswa Tadesse

Dr. Mimi Marinucci, Professor of Philosophy and Gender, Women's & Sexuality Studies

Mentee: Violet Berry

Dr. Tracey McHenry, Professor of English

Mentee: Aura Moreno

Dr. Julia Smith, Department Chair of History, Anthropology, and Modern Languages & Literatures

Mentee: Ryan Finner

Dr. Jacki Hedlund Tyler, Director of Social Studies Education, Assistant Professor of History

Mentee: Julianna Amante

Faculty Research Mentors

McNair Faculty Research Mentors are an invaluable component of McNair. Mentors provide guidance, boost confidence and belonging, and their letters of recommendation can be the biggest asset to a scholar's graduate applications. They facilitate the scholar's research from conception to completion and provide insight and support on the path to doctoral success.

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING & MATHEMATICS

Dr. Rebecca Brown, Professor of Biology

Mentee: Makenna Tabino

Dr. Melissa Graham, MESA Director and Senior Lecturer of Mathematics

Mentee: Monique Tori Castellano/s

Dr. Ben Lundgren, Assistant Professor of Biochemistry

Mentee: Monique Tori Castellano/s

Dr. Charlotte Milling, Assistant Professor of Biology

Mentee: Makenna Tabino

Dr. Yves Nievergelt, Professor of Mathematics

Mentee: Tiago Correia

Dr. David Syphers, Associate Professor of Physics

Mentee: Chris Abruscato

Dr. Robin O'Quinn, Professor of Biology

Mentee: Kayla Dickson



Our Mission

Eastern's TRIO Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program prepares low-income, first-generation, and/or racially underrepresented undergraduates for success in doctoral programs. McNair provides opportunities for scholarly activities and community engagement that empower participants to become agents of positive change in a culturally diverse world.

Recent McNair Alumni Degrees

ELVIN CABRERA, PHD IN CHEMISTRY
Washington State University, 2024

RICARDO ELY, PHD IN EARTH AND ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCES
Indiana University-Bloomington, 2024

**ISAURA GALLEGOS, PHD IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT,
LEARNING, AND TEACHING**
Harvard University, 2025

JAIMIE KENNEY, PHD IN ENTOMOLOGY
University of California-Riverside, 2024

CHRISTINA RAMELOW, PHD IN NEUROSCIENCE
Emory University, 2025



McNair Alumni Degrees

**IAN CAMPUZANO, MASTER'S IN RESEARCH PSYCHOLOGY:
NEUROSCIENCE**

Seattle Pacific University, 2024

ALEXANDRIA CORONADO, MASTER'S IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
University of Alabama, 2024

SETH MCCULLOUGH, MASTER'S IN BIOLOGY
James Madison University, 2024

MARIA RIVERA-DIAZ, MASTER'S IN PUBLIC HEALTH
Central Washington University, 2024

SAMANTHA SANCHEZ-GARCIA, MASTER'S IN SOCIAL WORK
Eastern Washington University, 2025

**BAKIMA SSEBANAKITTA, MASTER'S IN CLINICAL
MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING**
Eastern Washington University, 2025

MARIXZA TORREZ, MASTER'S IN EDUCATION
University of California-Irvine, 2024

QUENTIN YOUNG, MASTER'S IN ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP
Eastern Washington University, 2025



Graduating Scholars



Eleanor Strathmore, mentored by Dr. Shanna Davis, graduated with a BA in Psychology Fall 2024. She was accepted to UMass Dartmouth's MA in Psychology and three other Master's programs. She is currently pursuing entrepreneurship with her own business in hypnotherapy.

Makenna Tabino, mentored by Dr. Rebecca Brown ('23-'24) and Dr. Charlotte Milling ('24-'25), is graduating with a BS in Biology. She plans to pursue a graduate degree so she can make an impact in environmental and wildlife conservation.



Mai Peregrina, mentored by Dept. Chair Dr. Kayleen Islam-Zwart, graduated Winter 2025 with a BS in Applied Developmental Psychology and a Minor in Industrial-Organizational Psychology. She is currently working as a behavioral health specialist in Spokane, with dreams of running her own clinical practice one day!



Graduating Scholars



Julianna Amante, mentored by Dr. Jacki Hedlund Tyler, is graduating with a BA in History. She was accepted to Wayne State University and plans to attend an MLIS program focusing on archival studies.

Tiago Correia, mentored by Dr. Brandy Wieggers (CWU NSF REU, '23-'24) and Dr. Yves Nievergelt ('24-'25), is graduating with a BS in Mathematics. He was accepted to Masters at Tufts, University of New Mexico, UW, and a PhD at Tulane. He will attend Tulane University's Ph.D. Program in Mathematics starting Fall 2025.



Raúl Segura, mentored by Dr. Sarah Johansson, is graduating with a BA in Psychology. He was accepted to Master's at University of Minnesota and University of Oregon, EdS at CWU, and a PhD at Howard University. He will attend Central Washington University's Ed.S. Program in School Psychology starting Fall 2025.



2025 New McNair Scholars

CHRIS ABRUSCATO, PHYSICS

Mentored by Dr. David Syphers (EWU), Dr. Ziaoshan Xu (UNL)
Summer Research Internship on Emerging Quantum Materials and Technology at the University of Nebraska

BRASIN BENJAMIN, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

McNair Research Internship, mentored by Dr. Kristin Edquist

VIOLET BERRY, ENGLISH-LITERARY STUDIES

McNair Research Internship, mentored by Dr. Mimi Marinucci

ALICE CHAMBERLIN, BIOCHEMISTRY

Big 10 Summer Research Opportunity Program at Penn State

JENNIFER DAWSON, SOCIOLOGY, CRIMINAL JUSTICE

McNair Research Internship, mentored by Dr. Edwin Elias

BRYCE DRAGER, PSYCHOLOGY

McNair Research Internship, mentored by Dr. Nick C. Jackson

JUSTIN EDNEY, APPLIED DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

McNair Research Internship, mentored by Dr. Jillene Seiver

RYAN FINNER, INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES, ANTHROPOLOGY

McNair Research Internship, mentored by Dr. Julia Smith

JUDITH SILVA-GARCIA, SOCIAL WORK

McNair Research Internship, mentored by Dr. Timothy Hilton

ZAID MCCURDY, APPLIED DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

McNair Research Internship, mentored by Dr. Jillene Seiver

NOEMI, MUSIC TECHNOLOGY, INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates: Collaborative Site Program on Immigration

2025 New McNair Scholars

JASMINE JOY PALOMA, SOCIAL WORK

McNair Research Internship, mentored by Dr. Jason Scully

JAZMINE SARGENT-JARDINE, PSYCHOLOGY

McNair Research Internship, mentored by Dr. Sarah Johansson

MARIA SARMIENTO, POLITICAL SCIENCE

McNair Research Internship, mentored by Dr. Thomas Hawley

ADDISWA TADESSE, PSYCHOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY

McNair Research Internship, mentored by Dr. Kassahun Kebede

JOCIE TORRES, PSYCHOLOGY

McNair Research Internship, mentored by Dr. Keely Hope

Emerging Scholars

EWU McNair's Emerging Scholar program serves talented students who show incredible promise for graduate school and future McNair Scholars. Emerging Scholars meet with McNair staff throughout the year getting tips on preparing for graduate school, building strong faculty relationships, and pursuing research experience.

EDGAR ACOSTA, PSYCHOLOGY, CRIMINOLOGY

ALEXANDREA NIXON, TESOL, ANTHROPOLOGY

RACHAEL PECHIE, PRE-NURSING

ALEX PUTZ, ANTHROPOLOGY

BRAYAM SANCHEZ, SPANISH

Continuing Scholars

Our continuing Scholars have been hard at work this year applying to external summer research internships, scholarships, presenting at conferences, researching schools, leadership and work experiences, getting an early start on graduate application materials, and more!

PAOLA CAMPOS, EXERCISE SCIENCE (PRE-PT)

Mentored by Dr. Fahed Mehyar, 2024-26

MONIQUE TORI CASTELLANO/S, TESOL

Mentored by Dr. Ben Lundgren, 2024-25

Mentored by Dr. Melissa Graham, 2025-26

KAYLA DICKSON, BIOLOGY, BIOCHEMISTRY

Mentored by Dr. David R. Gang (WSU), 2024-25

Mentored by Dr. Robin O'Quinn, Dr. Katherine Frels 2025-26

Applied Plant Sciences Summer Research Opportunity at the
University of Nebraska, 2025-26

AURA MORENO, VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN

Mentored by Dr. Tracey McHenry, 2024-26

**CHRISTOPHER NAVA, MARKETING; INFORMATION
SYSTEMS & BUSINESS ANALYTICS**

Mentored by Dr. Habib Islam, 2024-25

Mentored by Dr. Alexandros Paparas, 2025-26

NICOLE NEMETH, PRE-NURSING

Mentored by Dr. Donna Bachand, 2024-26

VANESSA SANCHEZ, DATA ANALYTICS, DATA SCIENCE

Mentored by Dr. Kelley Cullen, 2024-26