

# The Challenger

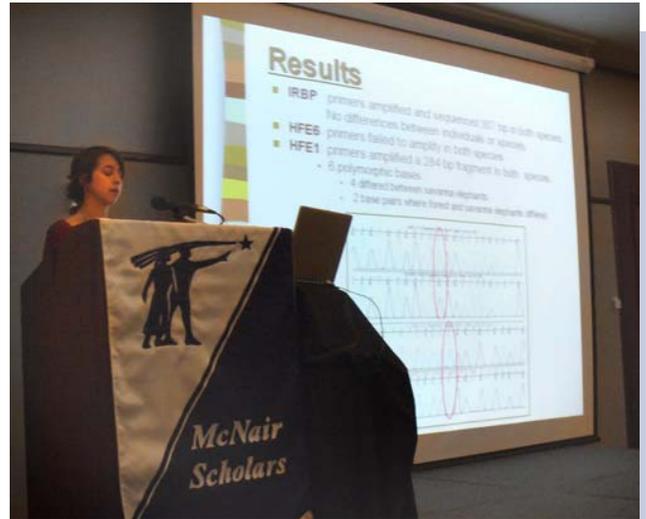
The Newsletter of the MU McNair Scholars Program

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## Presenting with PowerPoint

Microsoft PowerPoint has become a major tool for presenting. However, anyone who has ever sat through a long and boring lecture knows that even PowerPoint can make things more complicated. Below are a few suggestions and pointers to keep your audience engaged and make sure your extensive research is presented in a clear and concise manner.

- Use short sentences or phrases. The slides are there to help lead the audience along. If you put every detail on the slide, why should the audience listen to you?
- Limit each slide to six lines, too much can be overwhelming.
- Balance text, graphics and space. Having areas to pause relaxes the viewer's eye and allows better flow for the material you are presenting.
- Keep within your margins. Just as a paper will have margins, make sure you keep some space around the entire area. Often times the bottom of a projector can be blocked, especially to those in the back row.
- If "auto-fit" gets overwhelming in Powerpoint 2007 go to "Paragraph > More Options > Text Box > Autofit" and choose the appropriate option.
- For a small dark room, a dark background with light lettering works better. For a well lit, larger room, a light background with dark text works better.
- Use contrasting color. Red on black looks horrible when projected. As does yellow on green. Make sure the colors are not annoying to the eye. This only gets exaggerated when projected.
- Tables and charts tell information in a concise way and much better than explanatory text.
- Make sure your heading and text is large enough to be seen. Typically nothing smaller than 24 point font for the actual text, and 40 point for the header.



2007-2008 McNair Scholar Diana Ortiz presents at the 19th Annual McNair Scholars Conference, April 2008.

- Use the master slide function in PowerPoint. This allows you to make quick changes much easier.
- Check your presentation on the computer and projector you will use in the actual room you'll be presenting in. Come early to troubleshoot.
- Use the backgrounds and templates that PowerPoint offers. These were developed by graphic designers and work well. However, feel free to tweak the designs and make them your own.
- Think about how much time you want to spend on each idea. Don't get bogged down in your background and introduction. The audience wants to see your results.
- Write specific details you want to touch on in the notes area. Then print out each slide using "Notes Page" to use as you present.
- Start early and edit ruthlessly. The more eyes that see the presentation before you give it, the better.

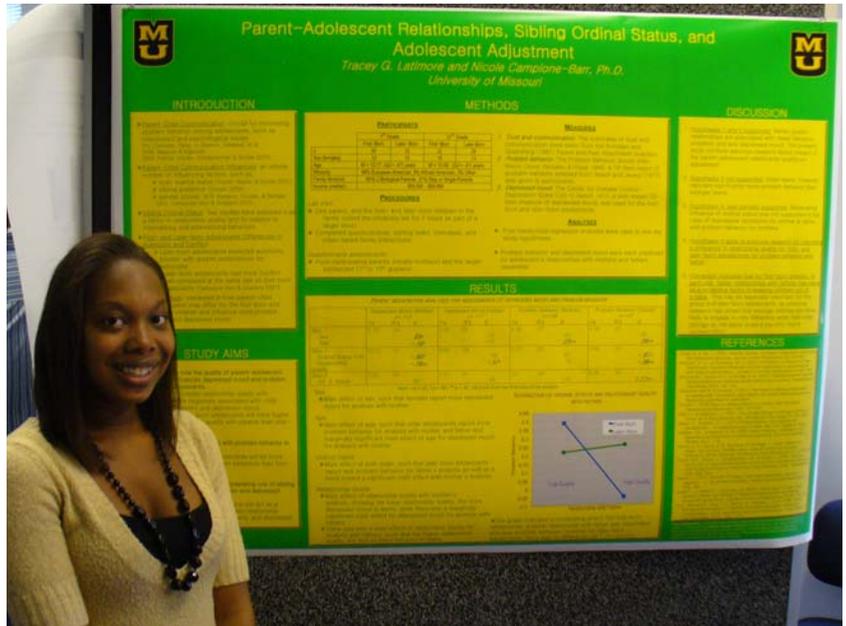
Adapted from materials by Lea Lichty

# Scholar Spotlight: Tracey Latimore

As a junior psychology major, I had the opportunity to conduct my own research through the McNair Scholars program under the guidance of Dr. Nicole Campione-Barr, Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences. Investigating the effects of sibling ordinal status, this project tested how differences in parent-child communication between first-born and later-born children, as compared at the same age, influenced adolescent adjustment (depressed mood and problem behavior). With further investigations for my Senior Honor's Thesis, we examined the moderating effect of sibling ordinal status on the relationship between observed parent-child conflict and cohesion and adolescent adjustment. In addition to providing me with hands-on experience with the research process, these projects have cultivated my critical reading/writing/thinking skills and communication skills, as well as assisted with making me a strong candidate for some of the best School Psychology doctoral programs in the nation.

Because I knew I was such a strong candidate and knew where I wanted to be, I only applied to three schools: University of Missouri, University of Wisconsin-Madison and University of Oregon. After attending interviews at Missouri and Wisconsin, I was accepted and offered funding. I was solid in my consideration for these two schools so I declined my invitation for a campus interview for Oregon. Although I was offered funding at both schools, I still applied for an external fellowship with the American Psychological Association Minority Fellowship Program.

Albeit my dedication, discipline, and drive aided in my success, I attribute a large portion of my success to the dedication of Jeremy Bloss and NaTashua Davis and the McNair Scholars Program



in untapping my potential. Throughout this process, they played a key role in the development of my essays for graduate school and the fellowship, interview preparation, and travel arrangements for my interview at Wisconsin. Additionally, they kept me on task and reassured me that the end result would be worthwhile. As a whole, the program has helped make my dream of becoming a school psychologist a reality and I am forever grateful.

## Prepare for the Interview

- Outline your specific goals, experiences, skills and qualifications relating to the field of study you are pursuing. Note the things that make you a good match for the program.
- Do your homework. Review information regarding the program and the research of the faculty, particularly those you would like to work with. Become familiar with any special facilities, projects or opportunities the program has to offer.
- Be sure to review your application packet and your personal statement before you arrive. The interviewer may ask you specific questions concerning your application and personal statement. Also, remember to bring a copy of all your submitted materials with you.
- Be prepared to address any "blips" in your academic record.
- Be prepared to explain your specific interest in the school you are visiting.
- Be prepared to discuss, in detail, any research or projects you have completed. Also, give some thought to a potential dissertation/thesis topic.
- Practice the interview with someone who can offer you good feedback. Be yourself. Do not exaggerate your scholastic achievements or activities.
- Dress appropriately. If you have concerns about what that is, don't be afraid to call the department and ask.
- Plan to arrive early. Nothing is worse than being late to an interview, so make sure you have your attire planned out, you know where you're going and how to get there.
- After the interview, send a letter or e-mail thanking the interviewers for the visit and interview.



# The Graduate School Interview

Not all graduate programs require an interview before making final admittance decisions. However, for those that do, receiving notice requesting your appearance for an interview is a clear signal that the program you applied to is seriously interested in you. Because the interview process is costly and time consuming, you have undoubtedly submitted an impressive application that has placed you on the “short list”. So first, take a minute to congratulate yourself in getting one step closer to the possibility of being admitted into the graduate school of your choice! Now that the moment has passed, it’s time to start preparing for the interview.

At the outset, it is important to realize the purpose of the interview. For the most part, departments are interested in knowing more about you, the person. Though an applicant may seem like the perfect fit to the department on paper, in person that may not be the case. In addition, the interview gives the committee the opportunity to observe things that can’t necessarily be assessed on paper. The interviewers, mostly composed of faculty members, will be looking at:

- Communication skills: Can you organize and express your ideas clearly, succinctly and intelligently?
- Motivation: Do you have goals for yourself and do you seem interested in the program?
- Maturity: Are you responsible enough to be successful in the field?
- Interests: What academic, research and professional goals do you have and do they mesh with the interest of the program?
- Emotional Stability: Do you maintain composure under pressure?
- Intellectual potential: Have you demonstrated superior intellectual ability?

## What to Expect

Interview formats vary considerably. Some programs will request applicants meet for half an hour to an hour with each individual faculty member and others may have panel interviews. Some may be a full weekend of events, while others may be a half a day. Some may have you meet in small group discussions with students, faculty, and other applicants, while others may have socials and activities planned. Because of the variety of styles and situations used to interview, it is important to recognize that different approaches may be employed to gather information about you. They may ask questions in a direct, indirect or hypothetical manner or they may engage you with a more conversational method. Regardless of what

form the interview takes, it is important to remember that you are essentially “on” at all times, so continue to conduct yourself with a level of professionalism throughout the entire process and treat every encounter as though it is a vital part of the process.

## Questions to consider

As stated, no two interviews are alike; however, there are general categories that you can expect the questions to relate to. Those include: personal characteristics/skills; academic performance/experiences; strengths and weaknesses; goals; leadership/teamwork/problem solving skills; knowledge of the field; extracurricular activities. Below are sample questions related to these areas that may be helpful to consider:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- If you're not accepted into graduate school, what are your plans?
- Why did you choose this career?
- What do you know about our program?
- Why did you choose to apply to our program?
- What other schools are you considering?
- In what ways have your previous experience prepared you for graduate study in our program?
- What do you believe your greatest challenge will be if you are accepted into this program?
- In college, what courses did you enjoy the most? The least? Why?
- Describe any research project you've worked on. What was the purpose of the project and what was your role in the project?
- How will you be able to make a contribution to this field?
- What are your hobbies?
- Explain a situation in which you had a conflict and how you resolved it. What would you do differently? Why?
- Describe your greatest accomplishment.
- Tell me about your experience in this field. What was challenging? What was your contribution?
- What are your career goals? How will this program help you achieve your goals?
- What skills do you bring to the program? How will you help your mentor in his or her research?
- Are you motivated? Explain and provide examples. Why should we take you and not someone else?

(Continued on Page 4)



# The Graduate School Interview

## Questions to ask

It is important for you to keep in mind that you are interviewing them as well! You'll have the opportunity to tour the campus, see the facilities and lab/work spaces. You have the chance to learn about the school, program, faculty, and students so that you can have enough information to determine if it's a good fit for you. During the interview, you should be evaluating and assessing the program just as they are evaluating you. It is essential that you ask questions to gain a better perspective of all aspects of the program and acquire the knowledge needed to make the decision of whether or not this is the right place for you. In addition, asking questions aids in communicating to the selection committee your level of interest in the program. Here are some examples of questions to consider asking:

- What characteristics distinguish this program from others in the same academic field?

- How long does it typically take to complete the program?
- Where are recent alumni employed? What do most graduates do after graduation?
- What opportunities are available through the program to gain practical work experience? Are there opportunities such as assistantships, fellowships or internships available?
- Do most students publish an article/conduct research prior to graduation?
- What types of research projects are current students pursuing?
- What types of financial aid are offered? What criteria are used for choosing recipients?
- What is the selection timeline? When will candidates be notified about their acceptance into the program?

Resources used: <http://gradschool.about.com>, [www.wartburg.edu/pathways/gradprep/interview.html](http://www.wartburg.edu/pathways/gradprep/interview.html) & [http://advisingservices.ucdavis.edu/advising/grad/handouts/graduate\\_school\\_interview\\_tips.html](http://advisingservices.ucdavis.edu/advising/grad/handouts/graduate_school_interview_tips.html)

 <p><b>McNair Scholars Program</b> University of Missouri</p>	NaTashua Davis <i>Director</i>	Jeremy Bloss <i>Program Advisor</i>	Darlene Dixon <i>Program Assistant</i>
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<http://mcnair.missouri.edu>

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