


The Challenger

The Newsletter of the MU McNair Scholars Program

November/December 2008

McNair Scholars Attending Conferences

McNair Scholars from over all across the country participated in the 17th Annual National Ronald E. McNair Research Conference and Graduate School Fair at the Lake Lawn Resort in Delavan, Wisconsin October 31st to November 2nd.

This conference is designed to provide scholars the opportunity to explore graduate programs through the graduate school fair, partake in workshops that will aid in the graduate school process, network and interact with graduate school faculty and administrators and present their McNair research projects in the form of oral or poster presentations.



McNair Scholars from left to right, Jenniffer Stetler, David Aguayo, Shanetha Washington, Brittany Smotherson, Rebecca Schneider, Valesak Araujo, Si Yil Yi, and Shannon Arnold pose for a picture before a keynote address at the 17th Annual National McNair Research Conference.

Attending from MU were four current scholars, Rebecca Schneider and Shanetha Washington and Si Yol Yi, and five continuing scholars, seniors, David Aguayo, Valeska Araujo, Shannon Arnold, Brittany Smotherson and Jenniffer Stetler. In addition to networking with scholar from around the country, the four continuing scholars were also able to present their research in both oral and in poster form. David Aguayo's oral presentation on latina/o college students continued on the research that he began as a McNair Scholar. Jenniffer Stetler and Shannon Arnold also presented individual oral presentations on Lyme Arthritis and the SARS disease, respectively. Valeska Araujo and Brittany Smotherson, also presented their posters on higher education expenditure and on teacher pedagogy.

The conference also included a fireside chat by Carl McNair, the brother of Dr. Ronald McNair. The scholars were able to hear first hand accounts of what Dr. McNair was like and what cultivated his passion for a higher degree. The scholars were also impressed by the keynote speaker Richard N. Pitt, Assistant Dean of the Graduate School at Vanderbilt University, who motivated students to be successful in graduate school and beyond.

In late October two scholars, Catera Wilder and Shanetha Washington, attended the 15th Annual Institute on Teaching and Mentoring sponsored by the Compact for Faculty Diversity in Tampa, Florida. This Institute, a gathering of eight different nationally recognized scholar programs, is designed to give minority students insights and survival tips for success in graduate work, build community among themselves and faculty representatives and enrich their research and teaching strategies. The scholars were also able to meet with such keynote speakers as Dr. Orlando Taylor, Vice Provost and Dean Howard University and Donald Asher, an acclaimed author and speaker specializing in careers and higher education

The networking groundwork the scholars laid down at each of these conferences will prove to be invaluable in the years ahead. The MU McNair program is truly looking forward to next year's conferences and hope that many of our scholars will consider taking part in these unique and wonderful experiences

Scholar Spotlight: Valeska Araujo

In the summer of 2007 I became part of the McNair Scholar's Program. This provided me with the opportunity to conduct economic research under the guidance of Dr. Bradley Curs Assistant Professor with the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. Specifically, Dr. Curs and I studied the impact of public higher education expenditure on U.S. states economic growth. Previous literature mainly studies the relationship of total volume of public higher education expenditure and state economic growth, leading many scholars to find a negative relationship between the two. Such negative results have the policy implication of reducing public higher education expenditure which therefore forces students to cope with a larger share of their education costs.

We decomposed public higher education expenditure into three main areas of expenditure: research, instruction and miscellaneous, to identify which areas are better investments. This was different from any previous literature. We also decomposed public higher education expenditure based on channels of investment: institution appropriations, and student appropriations, also looking for possible differential effects.

The purpose of our research was to find an alternative solution to simply reducing public higher education expenditure. Based on our results, a more efficient pattern of investment would be for states to invest a larger share of higher education funds through institution appropriations, and for institutions to allocate a larger share of funds into research activities.

In this past year, I had the opportunity to present this project in four occasions. My first experience was an oral presentation given in Kansas City, at the 11th Annual McNair MKN Heartland Research Conference. My second was a poster presentation given in the Undergraduate Research and Creative Forum at the University of Missouri. During this same term, and along with all the scholars of my McNair cohort, I made an oral and poster presentation in the Annual McNair Conference held at the University of Missouri, Columbia. Finally, I attended the 17th Annual McNair National Conference held in Delevan, Wisconsin where I made my fourth and last poster presentation thus far.

Now as a senior I look back and find myself unable to express how grateful I am for the day I decided to apply to the program and become part of a great group of

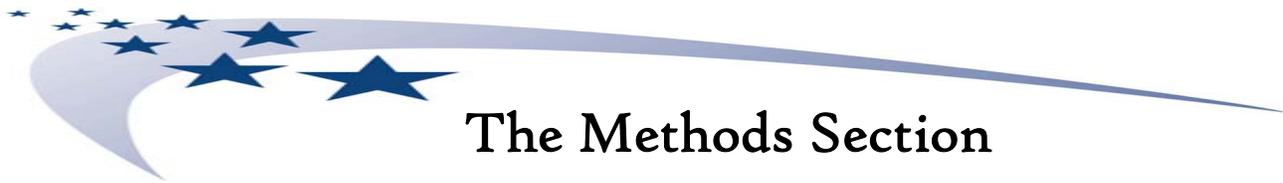


scholars. McNair provided me with great opportunities that helped me grow as a scholar as well as a person. Moreover, McNair not only gave me the research experience but helped me realize the real passion and drive I have for the field of economics and research. McNair introduced and taught me about the virtues of going to graduate school, and today continues to guide me through the complex process of applying to graduate programs and shape me into a better candidate. Last but not least, the McNair Program introduced me to a group of people who, even with diverse fields of interest, share my same goals and aspirations, creating a strong supporting net that makes the process of research and applying to graduate school a lot smoother and enjoyable.

Thanks to the McNair Scholars Program, the vague ideas I had of how to reach my career goals have been clarified. My ultimate career goal is to find ways by which poverty can be alleviated in developing countries. I will become the type of researcher that is not only capable of making important contributions to the literature but also, generate outcomes that are likely to influence policy and therefore the economic wellbeing of the poor.

I am now in the final part of the process of applying to graduate school. The list includes three Master's Programs and two PhD programs for the field of economics. The only thing left at this point is to wait and hope that one of the graduate programs I'm applying to, just like the McNair Program thankfully did, opens its doors and allows me to get another step closer to my dreams.

For my full research article, see the [Fall 2008 MU McNair Journal](#) available online.



The Methods Section

The goal of the methods section is to explain in detail the procedure for how your data was collected and analyzed. This allows for other researchers to critique the validity of your data and conclusions. This is because a key component of the scientific method is that research can be duplicated. This duplication will help support or refute the validity of your findings.

To structure your methods section, first consider in what ways was the data collected. Was a survey conducted? What resources were used or compared, using what model? In what process was the experiment conducted? For some, the methods section can be quick and follow an obvious chronology. For those in the social sciences or humanities it isn't as straight forward.

You should provide details of how you collected your data. Look at your target population. Who are they? Why are you focusing on them? What types of a sample did you take? This is where you can go into more specifics about how your survey or questionnaire may be distributed. In addition, you should include what questions your survey will ask. Although this may change as your research progresses you should still have a basis from which to develop the eventual questionnaire.

From there discuss the method of your observation. Quantitative surveys have many aspects to consider. You should discuss the areas of concern or limitations, such as how you created the questionnaire, or any anticipated problems in collecting the questionnaire.

In addition, describe the materials, measures, equipment, or stimuli used in the experiment. This may include testing instruments, technical equipments, books, images, or other materials used in the course of research. When the sources have been explained, describe the type of design used in the experiment. Specify the variables as well as the levels of these variables.

From there, describe the actual procedure your research will be using. For some, this is explaining what you had participants do, how you collected data, or the process of your experiment. Follow this chronologically and detail the order in which steps occurred.

Finally describe how you are analyzing the data. What is the statistical procedures you'll be using. How do these procedures test the hypothesis or research question you posed in your proposal?

McNair Scholars come from a variety of disciplines, so no one approach can be universal, however they do share things in common. You want to have the reader know the flow of your research. What was the process that you had to go through in order to get your final result? Using subheadings allows the logical flow to be more self evident. This also helps clarify projects that may be very complicated.

Some additional tips to consider:

- Always write the method section in the past tense.
- Avoid unnecessary detail that is not relevant to the outcome of the experiment.
- Remember to use proper format. As you are writing your method section, refer to a style guide that your field uses, whether it is Chicago, MLA, APA or another style
- List materials used, how were they used, and where and when was the work done especially if the location, time of year, or day may affect the results.
- Describe special pieces of equipment and the general theory of the analyses.
- Include figures and/or tables outlining experiment set-up and experimental factors.
- Proofread your paper for typos, grammar problems, and spelling errors. Don't just rely on computer spell checkers. Check each section of your paper for agreement with other sections. This is especially important as you combine the methods section with your final paper. If you mention steps and procedures in the method section, these elements should also be present in the results and discussion sections.

[Adapted from materials from the College of Humanities and Public Affairs at Missouri State and about.com]

Reminder:

**McNair Methods Section Due
Thursday, January 29th**



Thank you to our presenters!

The McNair Scholars Program would not be possible without the dedication of the MU faculty, staff and administrators who help present workshops throughout the year. The McNair Scholars Program extends our deepest thanks to those who presented workshops this semester.

- Goodie Bhullar, *MU Libraries*
- Rachel Brekhus, *MU Libraries*
- Norma Jackson, *Graduate School*
- Dr. Greg Foster, *The Learning Center*
- Dr. Gregory Triplett, *Electrical and Computer Engineering*
- Dr. Samuel Cohen, *English*
- Dr. Anna Bardone-Cone, *Psychology*
- Dr. Peter Tipton, *Biochemistry*
- Karen Mitchell, *Journalism*
- Cristi Ford, *Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis*
- Dr. Melissa Herzog, *Thompson Center*
- Daniel Hanneken, *Social Work*
- Daniel Graef, *Psychology*
- Tracey Latimore, *Psychology*
- Dr. George Justice, *Graduate School*
- Ken Abioye, Milton Bolden, & Isaac Posley, *Office of Financial Success*
- Christine Platto, *Graduate School*
- Dr. Alan Strathman, *Psychology*

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