Now that the new grant cycle is underway, the McNair Scholars Program at Trinity University looks forward to serving as a national model for assisting graduate school-bound Scholars effectively and with great efficiency.

The cornerstone of the Program’s student services programming and its administrative procedures is the revolutionary Postbaccalaureate Access Network (PAN), an integrated system of WiFi-enabled tablet computers provided to all McNair Scholars, staff, and tutorial faculty to achieve program goals. For now, iPad minis fit the bill.

The PAN takes full advantage of Trinity’s comprehensive, high-speed wireless network as well as rapidly-developing tablet applications. Each iPad is equipped with a suite of useful applications (apps) that enhance planning and scheduling, accounting, academic counseling, GRE preparation, communication, and more.

We’re truly excited to be on the cutting edge of graduate school preparation and academic career counseling.

Beckie Ugolini Joins Program

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new program specialist, Beckie Ugolini. Beckie joined our staff on February 1, but she is no stranger to campus. She has been with Trinity University for ten years, and is committed to working in higher education. “As the first person in my family to go to college, I understand the importance of the McNair Scholars Program, and I am inspired by the drive, determination and academic excellence I see every day as I interact with our Scholars,” she says.

Beckie brings a multitude of experience with her and has eased right into this new position. She has already tackled the Scholar database, made arrangements for several upcoming events, and assisted a number of Scholars with travel plans for conferences and graduate school visits, among other things. While there’s always plenty to do in the McNair office, Beckie also stays quite busy outside of work. “The opportunities I have found at Trinity have allowed me the flexibility and time off to pursue an interest in writing. I am the author of sixteen published short stories and I am working on several full-length projects,” she explains. The next time you need editing assistance, you know who to call. We are thrilled to have Beckie on board.
Scholars Broaden Their Horizons

**During the Fall 2012 semester, three of our Scholars had the opportunity to study abroad. While we certainly missed them while they were gone, the experiences they had abroad were unforgettable.**

Junior Megan Garcia spent 21 weeks in Sydney, Australia, where she saw much more of the country than just the famed Opera House. She had the opportunity to travel extensively while abroad. “I experienced life on a country cattle farm, swam in the Great Barrier Reef, explored Australian rain forests and landmarks like the Great Ocean Road, and saw lots of native wildlife in sanctuaries and in their natural habitat,” Megan explains. “Plus I got to do cool things like try traditional foods, hike in the jungle and through swamps, snorkel stunning coral reefs, and swim with manta rays!” She further noted that her favorite trip by far was spending 10 days in Fiji. But there was still time for some serious academics, too. Along with other coursework, Megan took three Australian culture-based classes—literature, indigenous studies, and stereotype studies—which gave her the opportunity to learn Australian history and culture and really understand their society better. Although she was literally halfway across the world, Megan could not fully escape Trinity. She explains, “Not only did I experience a wonderful culture, I met great people of many nationalities and I even had the opportunity to dine with Trinity’s own President Ahlburg when he was on a visit to the universities in Sydney.”

Kimberly Simmons, senior Scholar, spent the fall semester in the Dominican Republic. “When most people think of the Dominican Republic, they think of beautiful beaches, exotic dances like merengue and bachata, and baseball. All of that stuff is great, but after living in la República Dominicana, I can proudly say that it is much more than that,” Kim exclaims. She grew to love the Dominican culture for many reasons, among them the laid-back pace of life and the delicious foods.

While Kim was certainly focused on the “study” part of study abroad, she “wanted to make some sort of a positive impact as well” while in the DR. She volunteered once a week at a daycare center for women who worked in the free trade zone. She also participated in one of the two work retreats offered during the semester. The retreat took place in a very rural part of the country where Kim helped build latrines for some of the local families in the neighborhood. “Someone from the States might look at their lifestyle and feel sorry for them because they have barely any electricity and have to use the restroom in a latrine. However, the weekend that I stayed with some of the members of that community I realized they were some of the happiest and most humble individuals I have ever met,” Kim remembers. Although she learned a lot about the island during her time there, she learned a lot about herself, too. “Deciding to study abroad in the Dominican Republic was the absolute best decision I have ever made, and it is an experience that I will never forget.”
Senior Samantha Gonzalez found her calling in Salvador, Brazil, after she was accepted to SIT Brazil: Public Health, Race, and Human Rights, a very competitive study abroad program. “From the beginning, I knew this experience would truly open my eyes to what public health is in a global context,” Samantha stated. While in Brazil, she not only took a number of courses related to public health, but also shadowed and interviewed community health agents (CHAs), patients, and a clinic manager to analyze the effectiveness of a program aimed at reducing infant mortality rates among Brazilian clinics. This gave her the opportunity to note the differences between the country’s public universal healthcare system and the private sector, as well as the demographic differences among the patients for both. She further asserts, “My time in Brazil gave me a complete understanding of just what is involved in how healthy a community is.” From last summer’s research project and completion of the program in Brazil, Samantha is now more committed than ever to obtaining a Master of Public Health after graduating from Trinity.

In addition to the academic and research aspects of the program, Samantha also had the opportunity to go on a number of excursions and learn even more about Brazilian history and traditions. She didn’t even let a broken leg early on stop her from completely immersing herself in the Brazilian culture. Samantha was specifically intrigued by the alternative religion of the area, called Candomblé. She attended several events where traditional food was used as a ceremonial offering. “The belief is that each deity has his or her own food, hence all the yummy things in the picture,” she explains.

Scholars Participate in MLK Day Activities

Thanks once again to the generosity of Soi Inthavong, coordinator for diversity and intercultural relations with the Office of Campus and Community Involvement, and with assistance from engineering science professor and former tutorial faculty Wilson Terrell, McNair Scholars were able to participate in a number of MLK Day activities on Thursday, January 17. This year’s special guest was Boyce Watkins, Ph.D., author and financial scholar. The celebration kicked off with a student meeting from 4–5 p.m., where a small group of students was able to enjoy an intimate question and answer session with Watkins. Afterward, there was a special VIP reception from 6–7 p.m., followed by the commemorative lecture at 7:30 p.m. in Laurie Auditorium. Watkins’ talk, “Five Ways to Bring Dr. King’s Dream Back to Life,” was both thought-provoking and awe-inspiring. All of the Scholars certainly enjoyed meeting Watkins and appreciated his counsel. Christian Tovar-Vargas, a sophomore Scholar, was particularly moved. “Today was one of a kind. I’d like to thank the McNair Scholars Program for allowing me to hear the inspirational and enlightening words of Boyce Watkins. His words have really reassured me in my path and gave me a good boost of motivation that I have already used in impacting the lives of the people around me. There’s a lot of positive energy going on in my sphere of influence and it feels amazing.” Many Scholars also participated in the MLK Jr. March—the largest of its kind in the nation—the following Monday with over 300 other Trinity faculty, staff, and students.
We’ve Got Culture, Yes We Do!

Our Scholars have been busy making the rounds to all the great cultural experiences San Antonio has to offer.

On Sunday October 28th, a group of 12 scholars and two staff members spent the day enjoying an al fresco pre-theatre luncheon at Paesano’s on the San Antonio Riverwalk, followed by the matinee performance of Catch Me If You Can. Recounting a dramatized version of the exploits of Frank Abagnale, Catch Me If You Can provided attendees an opportunity to discuss cultural icons of the 1960s (such as Pan American Airways, and NBC’s “Presented Live in Living Color” tagline). The story narrative, which traces Abagnale’s path impersonating a Pan Am pilot, emergency room physician, attorney, and finally online fraud consultant for the FBI, raised a number of academic questions such as how closely the story followed the facts and whether it would be possible for someone to get away with such schemes today. On a pure enjoyment basis, all of the attendees were very impressed with the level of both the singing and dancing. I personally enjoyed the way the set designers used a large video screen to project relevant images and graphics. This supplemented the on-stage props and furniture, and reinforced the mid-century time period of the story Live in Living Color.

Our next trip to the Majestic Theatre was to see the holiday classic, The Nutcracker, on November 30. The San Antonio Ballet did a wonderful performance of this Tchaikovsky favorite. For some, this was their first trip to this National Historic Landmark, and for many, it was their first professional ballet. “It was such a privilege to have the opportunity to go and experience fine performing arts,” said scholar Anthia Liu. “My favorite part in the show was when the little ballerinas were doing all sorts of flips and tumbles. I had a great time with the other McNair Scholars and really enjoyed the company of Teresa and Kim as well. All in all, it was a successful night.”

We started the spring semester off right with a trip to the Witte Museum for “Mummies of the World: The Exhibition” on Sunday, January 27. Professor Rocio Delgado, tutorial faculty, led a group of six scholars, and each participant was able to listen to their own personal audio tour. Although it was extremely crowded, as it was the last day of the exhibit, everyone was pleased, and sometimes shocked, with what they saw.

We had a special Valentine’s Day treat when professor Jennifer Mathews (sociology and anthropology) invited us for a private, behind-the-scenes tour of “The Modern Maya: Photographs of Macduff Everton.” Mathews curated the exhibit, which was on display in Trinity’s Michael and Naomi Niedorff Gallery from January 16-February 16. From Mathews and...
two of her interns, we learned about all the hard work that goes into setting up an exhibit of this sort, including having to choose just a select few photographs to display out of literally hundreds. We also learned that the entire staff had been able to discuss and defend their choices with Everton, as well as get his permission on what to print in color and what to print in black and white. We gained a lot of background knowledge about the Mayan culture and how that information was reflected in the photographs.

Professor Delgado volunteered to take a group of the Scholars to the 26th Annual Asian Festival at the Institute of Texan Cultures on Saturday, February 16. It was a gorgeous day to explore the wide variety of events, booths, performances, and crafts, as well as to sample all sorts of delicious Asian food. Scholar Victor Rodriguez (junior) was particularly fond of the bubble tea. This is one of the most-loved cultural events of the spring semester, and Scholars were glad to have the opportunity to attend again this year.

Among those attending the trip to the Witte Museum were, left to right, Jena Daggett (SR), Terrin Blackmon (Jr), Si Ying Li (SR), Alyssa Parra (So), and professor Rocio Delgado (tutorial faculty).

Fall 2012–Spring 2013 Conference Presentations


Terrin Blackmon | Temperature Dependent Behaviors in the Texas Spiny Lizard (Sceloporus olivaceus) | 2013 Society for Integrative & Comparative Biology Annual Conference | San Francisco | Jan. 3-8, 2013

Christina Cooney | “Developing a Student Employee Leadership Program” | National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association 2013 Annual Conference and Exposition | Las Vegas | March 4-6, 2013


Melissa Delcunt | “The Role of MICU1 in Astrocytosis Metabolism-mediated Neuroprotection” | 42nd Annual Meeting of the Society for Neuroscience | New Orleans | October 12-16, 2012


Jonathan Gallegos (SR) presents research with his mentor, psychology professor Kevin McIntyre, at the fourteenth annual meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology.
revising the entire graduate orientation pro-
gram to inviting lectures for academic develop-
ment and social events like tailgates at UIW
football games. It really made me appreciate
what you guys did for us at Trinity.” At UIW,
she received the Nutrition Department Grad-
uate Student Excellence Award and graduated
with honors with a perfect 4.0 grade point
average when she earned her Master of Science
in nutrition science in December 2012.
This past August, Nancy began a Ph.D. pro-
gram in biomedical science with an emphasis
in biochemistry at the University of Texas
Health Science Center at San Antonio, where
she is receiving a generous stipend, plus tuition
and benefits. She recently selected her disserta-
tion lab after four, 6-week rotations and will
be studying atherosclerosis. She plans to com-
plete her doctoral program in August 2016.
“If all goes as planned,” she is really looking
forward to her next 4-5 years, and her goal is
to find a tenure-track professorship at a small
liberal arts school like Trinity.
Nancy’s advice to current Scholars? “The
Ph.D. degree is quite flexible. Even if you find
that you are not quite as interested in what
you studied, there are other opportunities.
Although I am nowhere near done with mine,
I recognize that pursuing a Ph.D. teaches you
how to think critically and become an inde-
pendent problem solver. You will also learn
how to present your ideas eloquently and suc-
cinctly. These skills can be adapted at any uni-
versity or company.” We wish Nancy the very
best and know we’ll continue to hear about
her future successes.

Clarissa Terrell began participating in the
McNair Program in the spring 2010 semester.
She worked with psychology professor Jane
Childers in the Children’s Research Laboratory
as both a research intern and a lab coordina-
tor. She also worked as a first and fourth grade
teacher for the Saturday Morning Experience
with the education department, volunteered as
a reading tutor for San Antonio Youth Literacy
and a nursery worker for a local church, and
served as a peer mentor for the Upward
Bound Program at Trinity. Clarissa graduated
cum laude in May 2011 with a Bachelor of
Arts in psychology and religion.
In August 2011, Clarissa began a Ph.D pro-
gram in school psychology at the University of
Texas at Austin, where she is currently finishing
her second year. Clarissa has supplemented her
graduate school funding by earning the
Alexander Caswell Ellis Fellowship in Educa-
tion for the 2011-2012 academic year, as well
as the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award in
July 2012. She is currently working on an in-
dependent research project to examine teacher
perceptions of “tootling,” which is “a peer-
monitored, group contingency classroom
management intervention that uses teacher
scaffolding and student accountability to assist
in decreasing disruptive behavior while in-
creasing positive behavior. My research goal
is to determine how feasible teachers believe
such an intervention will be to implement in
the classroom, as well as whether or not they
believe this intervention will result in better
classroom outcomes when compared to an-
other behavior management intervention,”
Clarissa explains. This project will also serve
as her qualifying document for doctoral candi-
dacy. Her plans after earning her Ph.D. include
working in the school system providing therapy
to students and their families and consulting
with teachers and administrators regarding
best practice within the classroom regarding
academics and overall classroom manage-
ment strategies.
Clarissa has offered a number of helpful
suggestions for current Scholars. First, she says
not to feel overwhelmed or alone if you have
not yet found your passion. “Take small steps
toward finding what interests you. Volunteer,
join a research team, or find a new hobby;
you’ll be surprised by how the smallest experi-
ences can grow into dreams and goals you
never knew you had,” Clarissa asserts. She also
noted that it’s important to set manageable
and realistic goals, as well as understand the
essential need for time management and pri-
orities. With this, she further adds, “Do not
overcommit yourself. Doing one thing to the
best of your abilities is better than doing 10
things at a mediocre level.” Clarissa also be-
lieves that “your peers can be your most help-
ful resources” and that you should ask them
plenty of questions. Finally, Clarissa advises,
“Remember to take care of yourself and take
time out to sit back and breathe. Always re-
member to breathe.” Clarissa has certainly
taken all of this to heart, as she is doing very
well at UT and we wish her continued success.

Nancy Nguyen

“Bienestar is a Texas Education Agency approved
school food program for the prevention of
diabetes and obesity. The research I conducted
served as the basis for my master’s thesis on
the validity and reliability of a novel dietary
assessment method,” Nancy explains. She
taught a class on experimental foods and was
the graduate assistant for all of the nutrition
science labs. Nancy also served as the graduate
assistant for the Graduate Support Center,
where she “helped develop activities and
programs to help Hispanic Americans in the
graduate program. We did everything from
revising the entire graduate orientation pro-
gram to inviting lectures for academic devel-
opment and social events like tailgates at UIW
football games. It really made me appreciate
what you guys did for us at Trinity.” At UIW,
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pendent problem solver. You will also learn
how to present your ideas eloquently and suc-
cinctly. These skills can be adapted at any uni-
versity or company.” We wish Nancy the very
best and know we’ll continue to hear about
her future successes.

Clarissa Terrell
No trip to UT is complete without the “Hook ’em, Horns.” Pictured above in the front row are Vanessa Ortiz, Camilah Powell, Ambreen Hooda, Terrin Blackmon, and Rocio Delgado (tutorial faculty). In the back row are Valerie Martinez, Victor Rodriguez, Megan Garcia, Katy Yachinich, Shalee Wallace, and Shay Atkins.

Junior Scholars Visit UT–Austin

On March 1st, tutorial faculty Rocio Delgado and Teresa Morrison, assistant director, took 10 junior Scholars on a group graduate school visit to the University of Texas at Austin. We had a day jam-packed with a number of wonderful activities. We began with a meeting with Trinity McNair alumna Clarissa Terrell, who is currently in her second year of a Ph.D. program in school psychology at UT (see “Alumni Spotlight”). Clarissa shared her thoughts about the graduate school application process, her experience as a grad student at UT, and a number of pieces of advice for our current Scholars. We also had lunch with several other graduate students from different departments at UT, followed by a meeting with Scholars and staff from the UT McNair Program. We ended the day with a presentation on admissions and funding from the Graduate School, followed by the McNair Scholars Program office in Parker Chapel, Room 107.

Throughout the day, Scholars had individual meetings scheduled with faculty and/or staff in their area of interest. This allowed Scholars to ask questions about the program, the possible research opportunities, and in many cases, tour the labs and other facilities available. This was perhaps the most important part of the visit, as it allowed each Scholar to get personal attention and have all of their unique needs met. “I had the opportunity to meet with four professors in a department seminar in UT’s operations research and industrial engineering (ORIE) department,” said Megan Garcia. “I also was able to make connections with two professors, one of whom offered me a rare undergraduate research opportunity in his research group this summer and another who was very helpful in helping figure out how to look for graduate programs that suit my interest. The visit was very helpful in helping me better define what my exact interests are when it comes to graduate studies, and I got a great research opportunity, too!”

Grad school visits, open houses, interviews, forums, and more have kept our Scholars very busy this year. Here are all the institutions they’ve visited:

- **Jena Daggett** ▪ UNT Graduate School Visit and Peacemakers Luncheon | Dallas | Sept. 20-22, 2012
- **Melissa Delcont** ▪ University of Texas School of Medicine | San Antonio | Oct. 1-2, 2012
- **University of Texas Medical Branch (M.D. Program)** | Galveston | Oct. 4-5, 2012
- **University of Texas Medical Branch (M.D./Ph.D. Program)** | Galveston | Nov. 8-9, 2012
- **University of Texas | Houston | Nov. 28-29, 2012
- **University of Colorado Denver | Denver | Dec. 5-8, 2012
- **Texas A&M Health Science Center, Baylor College of Dentistry | Dallas | Oct. 4-5, 2012
- **Ohio State University | Columbus, Ohio | Oct. 11-16, 2012
- **Vanderbilt University | Nashville, Tenn. | Feb. 22-24, 2013

** McNair Scholars Program **

Director: Michael Soto, Ph.D. (English)
Assistant Director: Teresa Morrison, M.A.E.
Program Assistant: Beckie Ugolini, B.S.

McNair Tutorial Faculty:
- **Rocio Delgado**, Ph.D. (multicultural special education)
- **Jack Leifer**, Ph.D. (engineering science)
- **Amy Stone**, Ph.D. (sociology)

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Visit our office in Parker Chapel, Room 107

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Notable Honors, Awards, and Achievements

Anthia Liu was accepted into Syracuse University Abroad Hong Kong Program for fall 2013. Valerie Martinez was awarded 4th place in Trinity University’s Undergraduate Student Research Awards for her research, “Aztec Ceramic Figurines: An Analysis of ‘Female Holding Child’ Hollow-Rattle Figurine.” Kallie Pfeiffer received the Excellence in Art in Photography Senior Art Award. Christian Tovar-Vargas was elected new active class president for Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity. Laura Sandling was accepted to the 2013 Mississippi Delta Corps of Teach for America. Terrin Blackmon, Christina Cooney, Elena Rodriguez, and Katy Yachinich were nominated for the thirteenth edition of the Showcase of Student Academic Talent. Jena Daggett was accepted to the 2013 Rio Grande Valley Corps of Teach for America.