



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY
CORPUS
CHRISTI

MCNAIR
SCHOLARS
PROGRAM

McNair Scholars Program Newsletter

2024-2025



▲ McNair Scholars

Top left to right: Bailey Otter, Jon James, Daniel Qayyum, Camran Cupp, Ivan Sotelo, Joseph Garza, Abigail Martinez

Middle left to right: Abigail Vasquez, Faith Runyon, Jolin Acosta, Sabrina Silva, Camila Avantes, Aracely Garcia

Bottom left to right: Veronica Garcia-Salinas, Sophia Ortegon, Sofia Ibarra, Giselle Murillo

Welcome McNair Scholars 2024-2025

Jolin Acosta
Psychology

Camran Cupp
Biology

Katelynn Ferrell
Biology

Aracely Garcia
Biology

**Veronica-
Garcia Salinas**
Education

Sofia Ibarra
Psychology

Jon James
Psychology

Araceli Longoria
Psychology

Emily Lunbery
Psychology

Abigail Martinez
Chemistry

Sophia Ortegon
Biology

Daniel Qayyum
Bio-Medical
Sciences

Faith Runyon
Bio-Medical
Sciences

Sabrina Silva
Psychology



Ronald E. McNair

Congratulations McNair 2024-2025 Graduates!!

Fall 2024

Alejandra Mendez
Isabelle Morales
Bailey Otter
Natalia Pellum-Mackey

Spring 2025

Camila Avantes
Ryce Hailes
Hilliary Herrera
Layla Rayburn
Dat Tran
Abigail Vasquez
Cindy Vaquero
Jared Vieyra

Page 1	New McNair Scholars 2024-2025
Page 2	McNair Fall Graduates Acknowledgements
Page 3	McNair Scholars Graduation & Induction Ceremony
Page 4	McNair Scholars Research Conference at Baylor University 2025 Symposium for Student Innovation, Research, and Creative Activities
Page 5	Scholar Graduates: Where are they Headed? Scholar Spotlight: Jared Vieyra
Page 6	Give us an Update Alumni News

TRiO
RONALD E. MCNAIR
POST-BACCALAUREATE
ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

McNair Fall Graduates 2024



Congratulations to the Fall 2024 McNair Graduates

Alejandra Mendez
B.S., Bio-Medical
Sciences
Fall 2024

Isabelle Morales
B.S., Biology
Fall 2024

Bailey Otter
B.A., Sociology
Fall 2024

Natalia Pellum-Mackey
B.S., Biology
Fall 2024

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the individuals and groups who are an integral part of our success as program, that includes our faculty mentors, seminar presenters, and McNair supporters who go above and beyond to help our scholars' success. McNair would not be a successful program without their dedication.

Thank You!

McNair Faculty Mentors 2024-2025

Dr. Hussail Abdulla
Dr. Keisha Bahr
Dr. Chris Bird
Dr. Daniel Coffey
Dr. Lisa Comparini
Dr. Erica Filep
Dr. Tracy Harper
Dr. Mark Hartlaub
Dr. Shawn McCracken
Dr. Ruby Mehrubeoglu
Dr. Jenifer Pollack

Dr. Scott Pool
Dr. Darcey Powell
Dr. Collin Scarince
Dr. Frauke Seeman
Dr. Steve Seidel
Dr. Jeffery Spirko
Dr. Matthew Streich
Dr. Benjamin Walther
Dr. Michael Wetz
Dr. Lin Zhang

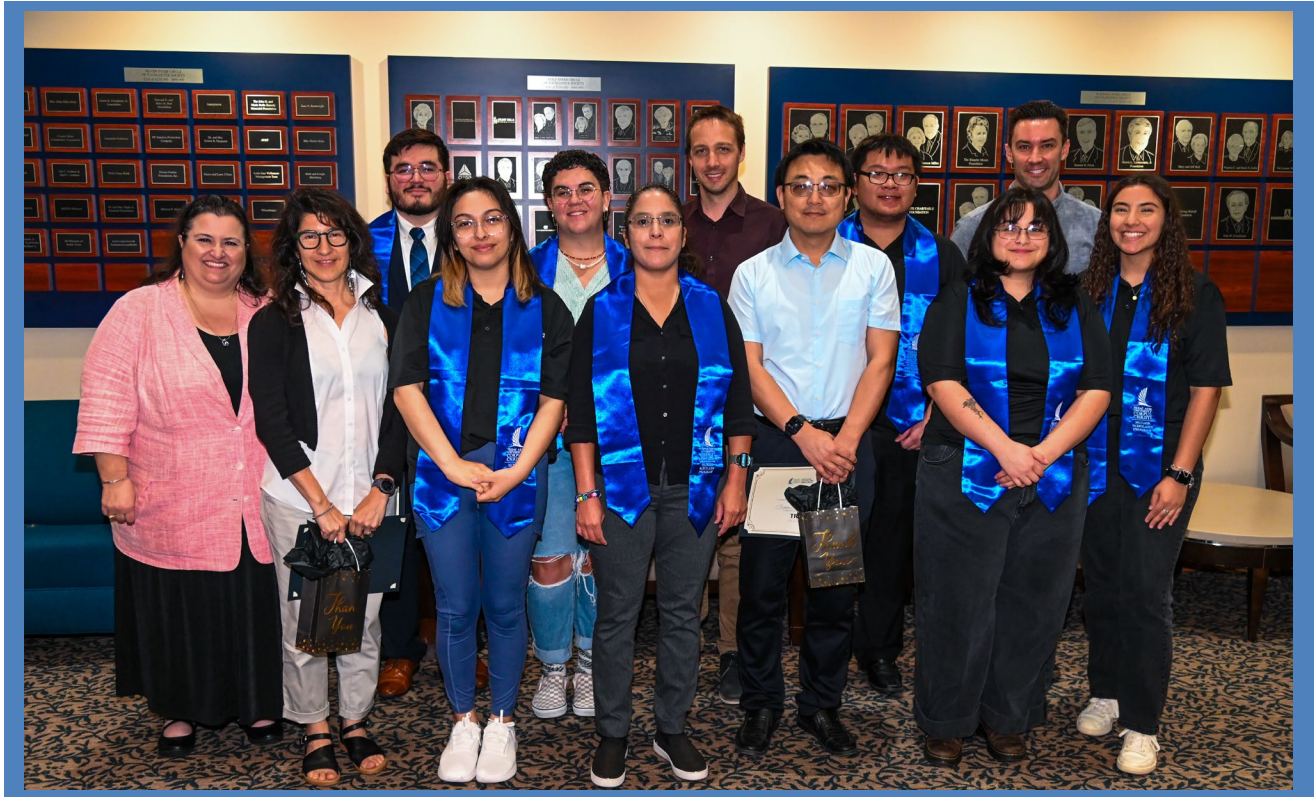
Presenters 2024-2025

Steven Thomas, MSU SROP Program
Coordinator
Jackie Chu, University of Iowa
Graduate College Coordinator
Dr. Chris Bird
Sebastian Garcia
Dr. Steve Seidel
Dr. Michael Sollitto
Sharon Magnuson
Dr. Janet Donaldson
Cynthia Lopez
Dr. John Scarpa
Sarah Pons
Librarian Lorin Flores
Dr. Barbara Szczerbinska

McNair Supporters

Dr. Janet Donaldson
Professor Michelle Evans
Mr. D'Angelo Sands

McNair Scholars Graduation & Induction Ceremony



The McNair Scholars Program at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi hosted the Graduation and Induction Ceremony on Friday, May 2nd to honor the McNair Scholars graduating in the Spring. The program also inducted the scholars that are now part of a larger McNair community. The graduating scholars received customized stoles that represent their commitment, investment, growth, and achievement during their service to the program. The scholars that were inducted were also pinned by the McNair director.

The following students received pins for their dedication thus far to the McNair Scholars Program:

Jolin Acosta
Camran Cupp
Katelynn Ferrell
Aracely Garcia
Veronica Garcia-Salinas
Sofia Ibarra
Jon James

Araceli Longoria
Emily Lunbery
Abigail Martinez
Sophia Ortegon
Daniel Qayyum
Faith Runyon
Sabrina Silva



McNair Scholars Research Conference at Baylor University

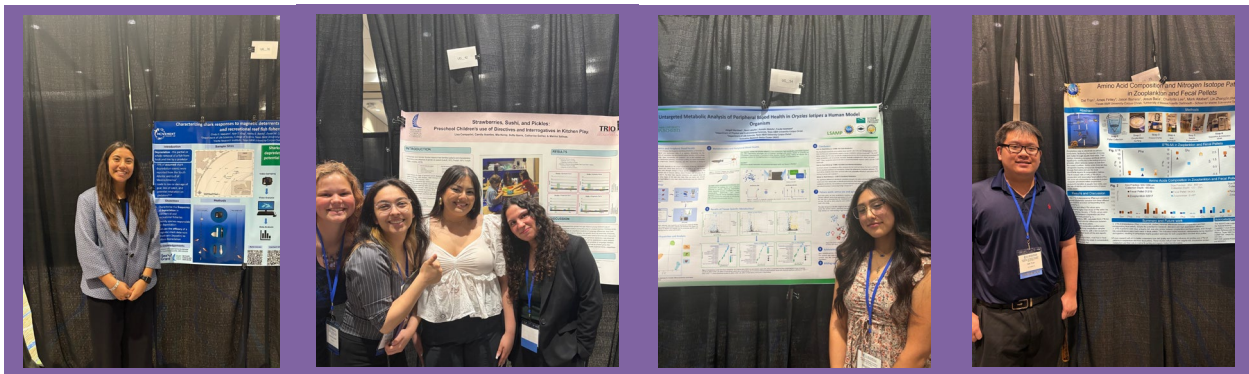
Five McNair Scholars representing Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi attended and four presented their research at the McNair Scholars Research Conference at Baylor University held August 1-2, 2024, in Waco, TX.

The following Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi McNair Scholars who presented their research included:

- **Camila Avantes**, "Exploring Preschoolers' Gendered Communication." Her mentor is Dr. Lisa Comparini.
- **Hilliary Herrera**, "Investigating the Effect of Culture on Collaboration while Completing a Cognitive Task." Her mentor is Dr. Collin Scarince.
- **Joseph Garza**, "DNA Profiling of 40-Year-Old, South Pacific Coral Skeletons." His mentor is Dr. Chris Bird.
- **Ivan Sotelo**, "AI in the workplace: exploring the Impact of Perceived AI threats on Worker Anxiety, Obsolescence, fears, and Imposter Phenomenon." His mentor is Dr. Steve Seidel.



2025 Symposium for Student Innovation, Research, and Creative Activities



Eleven McNair Scholars presented their research at the 2025 Symposium for Student Innovation, Research, and Creative Activities (SSIRCA) that was held on Friday, April 25th at the University Center in Texas A&M University Corpus-Christi. Jared Vieyra won the award for Best Presentation for a McNair Scholar.

The McNair Scholars who presented their research include:

Camila Avantes
Katelynn Ferrell
Joseph Garza
Hilliary Herrera
Sofia Ibarra
Abigail Martinez

Sophia Ortegon
Faith Runyon
Dat Tran
Cindy Vaquero
Jared Vieyra

Scholar Graduates: Where are they Headed?

We would like to congratulate the 2024-2025 cohort of graduate scholars. They have done many wonderful things during their time at TAMUCC and are representing the TAMUCC McNair Scholars Program well in their respective graduate programs.



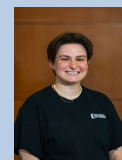
Camila Avantes: Accepted to attend St. Edwards University seeking a Master of Arts in Counseling in the Fall 2025.



Hilliary Herrera: Accepted to attend the City University of New York (CUNY) seeking a Ph.D. in Psychology Industrial Organizational in the Fall 2025.



Dat Tran: Accepted to attend Texas A&M University-Kingsville seeking a Ph.D. in Pharmacy in the Fall 2025.



Bailey Otter: Accepted to attend the University of Michigan seeking a Ph.D. in Sociology in the Fall 2025.



Jared Vieyra: Accepted to attend Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi seeking a Master of Science in Engineering in the Fall 2025.



Abigail Vasquez: Accepted to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln seeking a Ph.D. in Physics in the Fall 2025.



Scholar Spotlight: Jared Vieyra

Jared Vieyra joined the McNair Scholars Program in April 2024 and completed his undergraduate studies in Engineering this May 2025. During his tenure as a McNair Scholar, he produced a research project under Dr. Ruby Mehrubeoglu. He also presented his research project at the 2025 Symposium for Student Innovation, Research, and Creative Activities (SSRICA) at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi in April 2025. McNair staff is proud of his accomplishments and takes great pleasure in presenting him with this year's Scholar Spotlight.



I started my journey in TRIO in high school when I joined Upward Bound with the advice of one of the academic coaches that I knew. After completing four years of Upward Bound, I came to Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi where I joined Student Support Services STEM. I never really saw myself continuing my education after I graduated as an undergraduate. However, when I spoke to Dr. Hsiao Hongwei, my Robotics professor at the time, about his early research work, the idea of pursuing graduate school came at me. When I informed my advisor of this, I was told one thing: "Join McNair." Under the help of the two directors, I was able to complete an undergraduate research project with Dr. Ruby Mehrubeoglu on a SMART IoT Greenhouse. This project involved an electronically operated system with sensors and motors that optimized plant growth and water control for greenhouses. I truly believe this project has instilled in me the experience necessary for my graduate school project. I plan to work on 3D printed prosthetics, and by the end of graduate school, have a full functional arm. I am very grateful for the opportunity of being a part of the McNair family for giving me the inspiration of following my dream of designing prosthetics.

GIVE US AN UPDATE!

The U.S. Department of Education requires all McNair programs to provide Annual Performance Reports and keep track of alumni until the attainment of a doctoral degree. Alumni can update their information by completing the form below and e-mailing the information to the McNair Scholars Program at McNair@tamucc.edu.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City & State: _____ Zip Code: _____
TAMUCC Cohort Year: _____
Highest Degree Attained and When: _____
Degree in Progress: Master's _____ PhD _____ or Education Complete _____
Field of Study: _____
Expected Year of Completion: _____
School in Attendance: _____
Email Address: _____

Alumni News

Mariah K Clay (Kinesiology, 2019) obtained a Ph.D. in Kinesiology from Ohio State University in August 2024.

Leanna M De Leon (Kinesiology, 2017) obtained a Doctor of Physical Therapy from St. Augustine University in August 2024.

Megan Greige (Environmental Science, 2020) obtained a Master of Science in Environmental Science from Ohio State University in December 2024.

Esteban Guerrero-Ortiz (Psychology, 2021) obtained a Master of Arts in Professional Counseling from Texas State University in August 2024.

Amanda Moya (Communication, 2021) obtained a Master of Arts in Theology from Colorado Christian University in October 2024.

McNair Scholars Program

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Advisory Committee

Dr. Eugene Billiot

Professor of Chemistry

Dr. Janet Donaldson

Associate Vice President for
Research and Innovation

Dr. Michelle Maresh-Fuehrer

Professor of Public Relations

Dr. Ruby Mehrubeoglu

Professor of Engineering

Dr. Steve Seidel

Professor of Psychology

Dr. Michael Solitto

Associate Professor of
Communication