

**Report Prepared for the USC Office of the Provost & U.S. Department of Education
USC Office of Undergraduate Programs: McNair Scholars Program, 1995 - 2014**

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The USC Office of Undergraduate Programs, through the McNair Scholars Program, promotes student success through faculty mentorships, research experiences, graduate school preparation, professional development, and a series of academic skills building initiatives. The McNair Program has university-wide support from deans, faculty, and students. Annual assessments indicate that the program's academic services, experiential activities, and supplemental scholarships are all contributing to USC's objective of providing a rigorous and distinct undergraduate education. McNair Scholars are awarded competitive funding throughout their involvement in the program and they receive a variety of academic services. Between 2008 and 2014, the program awarded over a half-million dollars (\$600,000) in aid to a total of 170 students by way of research stipends, scholarships for graduate school preparation and professional development, and travel grants to present research at conferences or to visit prospective graduate programs. Since 2008, the program has selected 20 to 26 new students annually; throughout the year the program serves 40 to 50 participants (new and former participants). The program awards every newly selected student the following: a \$2800 research stipend, \$1500 housing subsidy, \$1000 for a GRE Preparation Course, and a \$500 grant for research conference attendance or for visiting prospective graduate programs. Continuing students have access to the grant, workshops, and advisement.

In 2014, a total of 10 USC McNair Scholars were offered admission to doctoral programs (8 were admitted to Ph.D.'s & 2 to professional doctorates). This same year, another 10 were offered admission to masters programs. Nearly 75% of former program participants have graduate school experiences (e.g., completed a degree or currently enrolled in graduate school). Since the inception of the USC McNair Program (1995 – 1996), participants have earned approximately 150 masters degrees and just over 50 doctoral degrees. From 2008 - 2014, at least 120 students involved in the program presented their projects at major research conferences across the state and country.

The McNair Program is a U.S. Department of Education (DOE) federally-funded TRIO grant initiative. Currently, there are around 150 McNair Programs in the country. The grant limits the work to underrepresented minority (URM) undergraduates and other populations considered first-generation and low-income. The ultimate aim of the program is to engage undergraduates in research, with faculty mentorships, and supplemental funding opportunities, as well as to diversify the graduate student body, particularly at the Ph.D.-level, and the professoriate. USC is recognized as having one of the most comprehensive and successful McNair Programs. These are the core components of the USC McNair Program: a Spring Research Methods Course; Year-round Academic Writing Seminars; Summer Institute on Research Training, Graduate School Preparation, & Professional Development; Summer Housing & Residential Life Program; Annual Research Symposium & Poster Session; GRE Preparation Course; Travel Grants for Conference Attendance & Prospective Graduate School Visits; Year-round Academic & Career Advising; and Publishing Opportunities in the USC McNair Undergraduate Journal.

The McNair Program works with students from all university majors. Most participants come from the Dana & David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences; Keck School of Medicine; Viterbi School of Engineering; and Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. A few students also come from the Price School of Public Policy and Marshall School of Business, among others. Student must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 or higher to become eligible for the program (most selected students have 3.3 to 3.7 GPA's). Over the last 19 years, the McNair Program has served around 440 USC undergraduates (including 2014 students). From the program's inception in 1996 to 2008, around 20 students were selected annually. From 2008 to the present, the program maximized financial and human resources and reorganized its service plan in order to serve 40 – 50 students annually. Over the last seven years, at least 60% of the participants have been juniors, 30% seniors, and 10% sophomores. Annually at least 25% of the students come from the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), the remaining students come from the social, behavioral, and economic sciences (SBE), with a few from professional fields such as business and journalism. During the first-year of participation in the program, the students receive most of the program services and available supplemental scholarships. At least 85% of the students served have been underrepresented minority students; the remaining students have been from other backgrounds (Non-URM's). At least 75% of the program participants, regardless of ethnic background, have been first-generation and low-income.

The USC McNair Program is a highly successful diversity and academic affairs initiative. Over the last seven years, 100% of the students have graduated with a bachelor's degree within 4 to 5 years, with the majority graduating with GPA's of 3.4 or higher and with some type of honors. Nearly 75% of former USC McNair Scholars have graduate school experiences; that is to say, they are currently enrolled in graduate programs or have acquired a graduate degree. To date, approximately 70 participants are currently pursuing a graduate education. Participants have earned approximately 150 masters degrees and just over 50 doctoral degrees. Graduate majors pursued by USC McNair Alumni span across all academic and professional field. Masters degrees acquired by program alumni include the M.A., M.S., M.Ed., M.S.W., M.P.P., M.F.T., and M.B.A. Doctoral degrees earned include the Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., M.D., Pharm.D., D.P.T., and O.T.D. The Ph.D. degree constitutes about half the doctoral degrees earned. In 2014 alone, 10 students were offered admission to various doctoral programs.

USC received a McNair federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) for the first time during the 1995 - 1996 academic year. After this initial award, the university secured three additional 5-year awards. The annual awards have ranged from \$190,000 to \$240,000. The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs (Gene Bickers) has been the PI of the grant program since the 2005 – 2006 academic year. In 2008, a new McNair Scholars Program Director was appointed (Dr. Richard Andalon). The new director assumed full management responsibility of the program's operations budget (\$235 – 250K annually, which includes federal funding & university-based funding), personnel, policies, service plans, and grant reporting duties to the U.S. DOE. Building upon the USC McNair Program's earlier work, the director further developed the service plans; the administrative procedures; and put into place new processes relating to marketing, assessing student learning outcomes, evaluation of operations, and recruitment of students and faculty. The director introduced several new features and revamped existing areas of the program, all of which resulted in maximizing financial and human resources and facilitating a more academically rigorous experience for students that better prepared them for research, mentorships, and graduate school. For example, here are some important enhancements the program experienced under the new director (Dr. Richard Andalon, 2008 - 2014).

- The research methods course curriculum that every program student was required to take was redesigned and significantly improved. New readings, lessons, and PowerPoint presentations were added, and Ph.D. students and faculty were recruited to teach in-class sessions and to advise students outside of class.
- An extensive academic writing component was added to the program, which focused on teaching students important lessons on research proposal writing, academic research writing, and writing effective graduate school admission essays and CV's/Résumé's.
- New academic workshops, graduate school preparation activities, and professional development sessions were added. Comprehensive service plans were offered during the fall, spring, and summer. The program expanded by providing services to enrolled students from previous cohorts in addition to those from the most recent cohort; therefore, serving up to 50 students annually rather than just 25.
- The Summer Institute became the Institute for Research Training, Graduate School Preparation, and Professional Development. The summer institute was expanded to include more days, courses, activities, and faculty. A new contract was organized with Princeton Review for the summer GRE Preparation course. A curriculum was designed to guide the institute's residential life summer component.
- Program marketing materials were redesigned including the undergraduate research journal where students publish their work, the website, newsletter, and student recruitment literature.
- The program's staffing was enhanced by hiring full-time experienced professionals possessing masters- and doctoral-level degrees; Ph.D. candidates were recruited throughout the year to serve as mentors, advisors, and instructors.
- Fundraising efforts with USC departments were expanded, on average \$15,000 – 20,000 was raised annually.
- Collaborations were expanded USC academic affairs and student affairs departments; collaborations were also expanded externally with universities throughout California and across the U.S.
- Greater emphasis was placed on the program's primary objective of helping undergraduates get into graduate programs, particularly at the doctoral level. Accordingly, in 2014, 10 students were offered admission to doctoral programs, with another 10 students getting into masters programs; in 2013, 7 students were offered admission to doctoral programs and another 7 students to masters programs; in 2012 and 2011, 5 students were offered admission to doctoral programs and 10 to masters programs.

Over the last decade, the USC McNair Scholars Program has been among the university's important diversity and academic affairs undergraduate initiatives. The program has assumed a critical role in promoting the academic and professional achievement of first-generation, low-income, and minority USC students. Specifically, the program has played an important role in engaging students through undergraduate research, graduate school preparation, professional development activities, mentorship experiences, and scholarship programs. The services and administrative procedures of the program have been guided by best practices; the program itself has created a number of new best practices for other USC programs and programs across the country. In light of the program's important institutional role and effectiveness over the last decade, the student, staff, and faculty affiliates submit a strong recommendation to the USC Office of the Provost and the U.S. Department of Education to continue providing the necessary funding and other support in order to facilitate the program's overall expansion.

References

University of Southern California, Student Enrollment, Degree Attainment, and Demographic Data, 1995 – 2014.

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USC McNair Scholars, Office of Undergraduate Programs, Annual Program and Financial Reports, 1995 - 2014