

# McNair Scholars Program

NEWSLETTER  
WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY

## TRIO BREAKFAST WITH PRESIDENT GARRISON

The WVU McNair Scholars and staff were warmly received by the university president, Michael Garrison, at the TRIO Breakfast on Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup> at the president's house. President Garrison was a first-generation college student and therefore understands the obstacles faced by TRIO students in higher education. The president encouraged students to stay the course. The warm reception was much appreciated by the McNair students. The scholars presented the new president with a special McNair shirt. After a very satisfying meal, all joined together for a group photo.



Left: McNair Scholars and staff pictured with WVU President Michael Garrison at the TRIO breakfast.

Right: 2007 Scholar Adam Cagle (R) presented a McNair t-shirt to the president (L).



## DECEMBER GRADUATION



December 2<sup>nd</sup> marked the arrival of the 2007 McNair Scholars graduation dinner held at the Waterfront Place Hotel. Alee Robins and Sewit Araia, both 2006 McNair Scholars were the guests of honor. Alee received her Bachelor's degree in psychology, and Sewit received hers in chemistry. Both have applied to graduate programs in their respective fields and are awaiting a reply. Congratulations and good luck to both! (L to R: Alee Robins, Program Director Anita Mayer, and Sewit Araia)

## WE DID IT AGAIN!!!

Jennis Taylor, 2001 Scholar, paid the McNair staff a surprised visit on November 26. Much has happened to Jennis in the past two years. She is now not only Jennis Biser, but Dr. Jennis Biser at that having recently received her Ph.D. in economics from George Mason University. All McNair Scholars join the staff in offering Dr. Biser and her husband our warmest congratulations on the occasion of two such momentous events. Good luck to both!

In her dissertation, Dr. Biser acknowledged the McNair Scholars Program for her success in achieving her doctorate, "Dr. Betty Mei and the McNair Scholars Program at WVU helped me to develop the skills necessary for graduate study."

Dr. Biser also has encouraging words for current scholars:

"I have so many options with the Ph.D. and many days of uncertainty about what I want to be when I 'grow up'. Some days I want to teach; other days I want to go to Disney! The latter is actually an alternative when you consider the army of accountants, attorneys and, yes, economists required to create the magic of the Mouse. I can now choose between so many options that I did not have before grad school, before McNair. When Dr. Mei found me in the 'Lair, I had potential without direction. I now have a GED and a PhD. Thanks McNair!!

My advice to current and future McNair Scholars is to take full advantage of everything that McNair has to offer. Sitting through seminars for the stipend is a waste of time for you and the McNair staff. Dr. Mei, Ms. Mayer, the staff and your advisors really do know what it takes for you to succeed. If you want it, it's yours for the taking. If you aren't willing to be on board for the full ride, step aside for others who were turned down for the program. The McNair experience will change your life, if you let it. Success has nothing to do with luck. It's all about choices."



Dr. Jennis Biser (R) surprised Dr. Mei with a visit to her alma mater.

## WELCOME BACK BRIE

Brie Frey, a 2001 McNair Scholar, has returned from two years in Ghana working for the Peace Corps. Brie tells us that [The experience was] "very difficult at times but sooo positive most of the time. I have made long-lasting relationships and gained priceless job experience. Many people, including those in the West Virginia University McNair Scholars' office, supported me on the long rough journey of my education. In Ghana, I was able to help a community and several people along the way to improve their lives. I would like to encourage McNair Scholars to consider the Peace Corps as an option because they have funding for Master's projects and Ph.D. programs through the Peace Corps Fellowship program. The Return Peace Corps Network is strong too!" We are all thankful for her service and glad she is home safe and sound.



## CALLING FOR 2008 McNAIR SUMMER RESEARCH INTERNS

After many months of anxious anticipation, the waiting is over! The West Virginia University McNair Scholars Program recently received federal funding for the next four years. Given the application and selection process, this is no small achievement!

Ever since the news had arrived, Dr. Betty Mei and graduate assistants Lani Browning and Anna Stasick hit the circuit once again in an attempt to get the word out to qualified students. The trio set up tables in the lobbies of various campus departments, pitched to a number of classes, advertised in as many publications as possible and populated many a hallway with flyers.



**Dr. Mei and Leilani Browning answering students' questions about the program**

Here's what we're looking for:

- U.S. citizens or permanent residents
- First-generation and income-eligible **OR** African American, Hispanic American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Native American
- CGPA 3.0 or higher
- Will have completed sophomore year by May '08
- Interested in pursuing graduate degrees

Applications will be taken until all slots are filled. Please refer eligible students to the McNair Scholars office at 109 Student Services Center or call 293-4316 for more information.



## FALL CULTURAL ACTIVITIES



The McNair Scholars and staff were treated to a fine and always exciting dinner at Hibachi, the local Japanese steakhouse, and then it was off to an excellent concert by jazz trumpeter Winton Marsalis at the Creative Arts Center. Marsalis and his band played two strikingly different but pleasing sets, and all-in-all, it was a most delightful evening.



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## MORE ALUMNI NEWS

The McNair staff recently heard from Ehren Cruz, 2005 Scholar, who is a first-year doctoral student at Ohio State University. Ehren has this to say about graduate school:

“Graduate school is extremely difficult. Thank the lord for the McNair program! Without the research experience, the degree of proficiency and skill needed to complete the reading and papers would have certainly taken me under. Yet with the skills I learned from McNair in critically analyzing materials, managing my time, and keeping everything organized, I was able to pull through my first semester with all A's. Hope this year's cohort is performing at top notch. There certainly is no room for slackers in grad school.”

Elvis Liew who has worked for the McNair program helping to keep the computer systems functioning properly and the staff sane by the use of his technical knowledge is leaving us. The good news however, is that he has been accepted into the mechanical engineering master's program here at WVU and has received an assistantship. Thanks for everything Elvis, and don't be a stranger.