



# Scholarly Times

St. Mary's University • McNair Scholars Program • Fall 2013

## Scholars In Discussion: San Antonio's newly-revised Non-Discrimination Ordinance

in the news >>>

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On October 22, 2013, the McNair Scholars hosted a discussion moderated by Dr Sonia Garcia of the Political Science department on the changes to San Antonio's Non-Discrimination Ordinance. Recently added protections by the city council now cover LGBT persons and veterans; the discussions of these additions eventually were reported on national news shows and the passage made San Antonio only the 6<sup>th</sup> city in Texas and one of more than 170 around the US to provide protection for

the LGBT community in public accommodations, housing, and city employment.

In attendance at the Scholars discussion were four people closely involved with the passage of the amended NDO: Daniel Graney, an attorney and President of CAUSA (Community Alliance for a United San Antonio); Rev. Mick Hinson of the Metropolitan Community Church of San Antonio; Lauryn Ferris, Transgender activist and



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## University of Wisconsin's 22nd National McNair Research Conference and Graduate Fair

Set in palatial Lake Geneva Resort, the University of Wisconsin hosted its 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual National McNair Research Conference and Graduate Fair. Four of our scholars, Pearl Ortega, Celina Garcia, Juan Valdez, and Hannah Redwine, were in attendance and presented this year. From workshops and panel discussions to networking activities and a fireside chat with Carl McNair, brother of the late Ronald McNair, the scholars share their experiences at the conference.



"At the National McNair conference, I learned that Hispanics seeking a Ph.D are a minority within a minority. I was aware that Hispanic scholars seeking Ph.D's were rare, but Wisconsin really opened my eyes. That did not discourage me; it empowered me. Before the conference, I was feeling a bit nervous about presenting, but when I got there, I found myself motivated to represent my culture and background. It was the best presentation that I have ever given. I feel more excited now than ever before to get a Ph.D and start making a difference. To use Plato's allegory of the cave, I must go out of the cave to get a Ph.D, and then I must go back into the cave in order to get more people out. That is the job that I accepted in becoming a McNair Scholar."  
—Juan Valdez

game day where we met students, parents, fans, and alumni pumped and ready for football. We walked through the center of campus and went through several bookstores and enjoyed the view of the lake where we took several of our windy pictures and lost feeling in our limbs from the cold. Overall the energy and beauty of the school really captured me and I look forward to applying to the graduate program. We couldn't have left Wisconsin without a taste of their famous cheese, so on our way back we stopped at a wine and cheese deli.

One of the useful seminars that I attended was the STEM Graduate Application workshop. Since we were such a small group of STEM majors (we usually are the minority in these conferences) we really got the opportunity to ask personal questions about strategically planning our applications, such as personal statements and research experiences. Since we were also such a small group, we given contact information and invited to send in our personal statements for tips and editing advice."  
—Pearl Ortega

"The trip was fun. We got to see



the UWM campus and surrounding area. It was beautiful, with a great air of camaraderie for the football

game on that day. Everyone was dressed up in school colors and football game garb.

During the fireside chat, Chad McNair stated that "Everyone has a story" and that everyone's story is important. Each person's story led them to where they are now as McNair scholars and shows that they have worked hard to get here."  
—Hannah Redwine



"My experience at the National McNair Conference 2013 in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, was amazing! I enjoyed presenting and receiving feedback from fellow McNair scholars around the nation. The most inspiring moments, however, took place at the fireside chat led by Carl McNair, the brother of Ronald E. McNair and president of McNair Achievement Programs. He shared with us some of the personal insecurities and uncertainties that Ronald felt when applying for the doctoral program in physics. I learned that Ronald McNair failed his qualifying exams three times, but he never quit. Many other McNair scholars shared their own challenges as they applied for doctoral programs. As I heard these stories, I felt inspired to continue the energy as I practice for the GRE and prepare essays for doctoral programs. I now apply and study with no fear in mind. I will continue to study and work until I earn that doctoral degree."  
—Celina Garcia



"On our way to University of Wisconsin, Madison, we were able to see the country and colors of the fall that seem to cover the state. We arrived at the university on a

Having fun! >>>

*Because all work and no play makes  
for a dull Scholar...*



Recruiting >>>

### *Scholars: Experience Speaks Volumes*

This year's recruitment crop of new applicants were treated to a Q&A session with some of our current scholars. Marco Gonzales, Oscar Gonzales, Yesenia Castaneda, and Juan Valdez shared their own motivations for becoming a scholar and answered questions from the applicants. McNair Director, Dr. Zwahr-Castro, and Assistant Director, Dr. Metta Bexar, shared the purpose for the McNair program and technical applicant qualifications.

We are happy to announce for 2014 that we will have eleven incoming scholars.



## *Dear Mentor*



**Q:** *Did you have good mentors in graduate school? How important is the mentor role? What recommendations would you have about selecting a good mentor?*

**A:** *The most important thing I tell my students is that success in academics is not a solo endeavor—you must find a person to be a mentor, to be willing to go to bat for you, to be the person who can intervene with the 'system' on your behalf. That makes a huge difference in college!*

*I had very good mentors in undergrad, but finding them in grad school can be a challenge. Depending on the program, you may not have very viable prospects—in my graduate school career, TAs and RAs served as each others' mentors frequently, working in groups, reading, commenting, rereading papers, and even acting in interview and dissertation defense enactments for practice. Eventually, you will find someone who understands your drive, approach to study, and desire—but you have to be willing to look beyond your own field. This means taking courses not directly in your path—as an American Literature major, I took many classes in literatures and cultures beyond the US to find a general mentor: in Irish studies. As a great mentor does, she kept me honest with myself and on target when my tendency was to wander. Her openness, honesty, and intelligence, as well as her knowledge of the academic maze, were all essential attributes for a mentor.*



**Samadhi Metta Bexar, PhD**

*McNair Assistant Director  
St. Mary's University*

# food for thought...

*The important thing is not to stop questioning.  
Curiosity has its own reason for existing.*

—Albert Einstein

Dear scholars, mentors & friends of McNair:

Congratulations on another outstanding semester. The program has experienced some big changes this semester as we've welcomed our new Assistant Director, Dr. Samadhi Metta Bexar. Dr. Sam came home to us after serving as a professor and administrator in Yuma, Arizona. As a St. Mary's alumna, Dr. Sam brings a unique perspective to our program. As a native of San Antonio who chose to pursue an undergraduate degree at St. Mary's before earning her graduate degree at the University of Iowa, Dr. Sam would have been a McNair success story if we'd just had the program a bit earlier. Because of her journey through higher education, I know that she will help our scholars to succeed.

Congratulations also go out to Melina Cavazos, who is our lone December 2013 graduate! We know that she will be a great success and we look forward to seeing where she and our May 2014 graduates will be headed for graduate school. For those scholars currently applying to graduate school, persevere with those applications because you are almost done. In addition, remember all have to apply for at least one REW/SROP summer program away from the St. Mary's campus for Summer 2014!

TRIO Day will be upon us soon, and the staff is planning on working with other STMU TRIO programs (like Upward Bound) for the event. Stay tuned for more.

Yours Truly,

Dr. Zwahr Castro

## Scholars in Discussion cont...

member of CAUSA; and Eduardo Juarez, an attorney with San Antonio's EEOC. Each panelist gave an account of his or her part in the work done, including the experience debating the issue with opponents. Students in attendance had many questions for the panel, including definitions and clarifications of terms used, such as transgender & transsexual. Rev. Hinson was queried on the virulent response of some local religious, and Mr Graney and Mr Juarez both answered questions on the history of the ordinance and the attempts prior to this that had been unsuccessful in changing the NDO. All remarked on the strong support of the majority of the council, especially Diego Bernal and Mayor Julián Castro. Though the recall efforts on the part of those opposed were mentioned, none of the panel nor the students seemed to believe a recall would be successful.

At the end of the discussion, panelists and students were able to mingle and talk over refreshments provided courtesy of Dr. Sonia Garcia and Women's Studies. All agreed it would be a wonderful idea to have the panel again in Spring and see what has become of the council and city in the meantime.



McNair Scholars

St. Mary's

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