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Introductory Materials

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We are proud to present the ninth volume of the Grand Valley State University McNair Scholars Journal. It is the culmination of intensive research conducted by our student scholars and their faculty mentors through our Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program.

The Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program, now in its 11th year here at Grand Valley State University, provides an opportunity for students and faculty to apply much of what is learned within the classroom by engaging, outside the classroom, in research activities in a particular area of scholarly interest. These research activities provide a journey through the challenges and affirmations of scholarly work and better prepare students for graduate study and the pursuit of a doctoral degree.

Thank you to the faculty mentors who have worked so closely with our McNair Scholars to propel their research skills towards the next level of educational challenges.

Congratulations to the fifteen McNair Scholars whose research is presented here. Your journey and the challenges you have met during this scholarly activity speak to your talents and persistence in pursuing both your educational and life goals. Thank you for sharing your talents with the university community and continuing the spirit of this program.

Finally, thank you to all the people behind the scenes that work to sustain this program and produce this journal. Your work is valued as well.

Nancy M. Giardina, Ed.D.
Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs
Ronald Erwin McNair was born October 21, 1950, in Lake City, South Carolina, to Carl and Pearl McNair. He attended North Carolina A&T State University where he graduated Magna Cum Laude with a B.S. degree in physics in 1971. McNair then enrolled in the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1976, at the age of 26, he earned his Ph.D. in physics.

McNair soon became a recognized expert in laser physics while working as a staff physicist with Hughes Research Laboratory. He was selected by NASA for the space shuttle program in 1978 and was a mission specialist aboard the 1984 flight of the USS Challenger space shuttle.

After his death in the USS Challenger space shuttle accident in January 1986, members of Congress provided funding for the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program. The goal is to encourage low-income, first generation students, as well as students who are traditionally under-represented in graduate schools, to expand their opportunities by pursuing graduate studies.

**Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program**

**The Purpose**
The McNair Scholars Program is designed to prepare highly talented undergraduates to pursue doctoral degrees and to increase the number of individuals (from the target groups) on college and university faculties.

**Who are McNair Scholars?**
The McNair Scholars are highly talented undergraduate students who are from families with no previous college graduate, low-income background or groups under-represented at the graduate level for doctoral studies. The program accepts students from all disciplines.

**Program Services**
The McNair Scholars are matched with faculty research mentors. They receive academic counseling, mentoring, advising, and GRE preparation. In addition to the above services, the McNair Scholars have opportunities to attend research seminars, conduct research, and present their findings orally or written via poster presentations. In the first semester of their senior year, the scholars receive assistance with the graduate school application process.

**Funding**
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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>McNair Scholars</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lyndsey Adams</td>
<td>When psychopaths go to college: Psychopathic traits and college adjustment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Averhart</td>
<td>Misuse of myth: Conscious adherence or authoritative control mechanism</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelli Brockschmidt</td>
<td>The New Guinea Campaign: A New Perspective Through the Use of Oral Histories</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanel M. Bryant</td>
<td>Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and ethnicity: A literature review</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Cruz</td>
<td>Second language acquisition programs: An assessment of the bilingual education debate</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry Fluellen</td>
<td>Infrared Laser-based Method for Measuring Isotope Ratios</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Goven</td>
<td>From the Delta to Chicago: Muddy Waters' Downhome Blues and the Shaping of African-American Urban Identity in Post World War II Chicago</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Howard</td>
<td>Between Religion and Honor: Charles Colcock Jones and a Discussion of Antebellum Southern Values</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents

Rachael Jacques
Resistance to U.S. economic hegemony in Latin America: Hugo Chávez and Venezuela ........................................ 81
Faculty Mentor: George Lundskow, Ph.D.

Derrick Kroodsma
Solid Phase Peptide Synthesis:
Analysis and Identification of Protein Kinase Substrates .............. 93
Faculty Mentor: Laurie A. Witucki, Ph.D.

Jacquelin Robinson
The relationship between parole and recidivism in the criminal justice system ..................................................... 103
Faculty Mentor: James Houston, Ph.D.

Andria Salas
Diel summer movement patterns of fish in Sickle Creek, Manistee County, Michigan ................................................ 109
Faculty Mentor: Eric Snyder, Ph.D.

Sally Sayles
Education for Democracy: Discovering Civic Engagement ........... 121
Faculty Mentor: Judy Whipps, Ph.D.

Katherine L. Schwartzkopf
The effects of infant age on parental vocalizations about object categories in a play-type setting ................................. 133
Faculty Mentor: Gwenden Dueker, Ph.D.

Kerri VanderHoff
Fast Times at Ridgemont High and Porky’s:
Gender perspective in the teen comedy .................................. 145
Faculty Mentor: Toni Perrine, Ph.D.

About the TRiO Programs ................................................................. 154