

02 February 2024

*Dr. McNair's Legacy at Winthrop*

Dear Colleagues,

Sunday marked the 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Challenger explosion that killed Dr. Ronald E. McNair and his fellow astronauts. Again this year, Winthrop McNair participated in the Candlelight Vigil at Dr. McNair's Life History Center in his home town, Lake City, SC. At right, Michelle Aguilar-Gaspar, (award-winning McNair researcher, Biology major, and McNair Advisory Board member) is pictured with Dr. McNair's family including his widow, Cheryl, brothers Carl and Eric, and his sister-in-law, Mrs. McNair.



*Michelle Aguilar-Gaspar, McNair Scholar, with Dr. McNair's family*

Our students, alumni, and staff work to honor Dr. McNair's trailblazing legacy through our participants' research and graduate study achievements. Since 2009, the U.S. Department of Education has provided Winthrop with TRiO McNair funding "to increase the attainment of Ph.D. degrees by students from underrepresented segments of society" "through involvement in [undergraduate] research and other scholarly activities" (<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/triomcnair/index.html>). Winthrop's McNair program is funded through September 2028. This year, \$272,364 in federal funding represents 74% of program costs. Winthrop contributes the remaining 26% of the budget with approximately \$94,930 in cash and in-kind funds.

Winthrop's McNair program is funded to serve 30 undergraduates every year. At least two-thirds of each cohort must be first generation college students from low-income families and up to the remaining 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of our participants must come from groups underrepresented in graduate education.

So far, Winthrop has served 199 McNair participants.

- 98% persisted to graduation or are currently completing their baccalaureate degree.
- 84% of our graduates enrolled in graduate programs.
- 63% of all May 2022 and earlier graduates have at least one graduate degree.
- 29 alumni have earned doctorates.



Winthrop McNair Scholars inspire me with their curiosity, persistence, kindness, humility, and noble aspirations. The expertise and support of their faculty mentors, work of the [Advisory Board](#), dedication of the McNair staff, investment of the administration, and help from our colleagues all over campus make this possible. In particular, our program could not function without the efforts of the good folks in Grants & Research, Financial Aid, Student Financial Services, Records and Registration, Residence Life, Printing Services, Accounts Payable, The Foundation & Alumni Relations, ONCA, Undergraduate Research, Eagle STEM, Honors, ASC, and many others across the institution.

Please encourage outstanding undergraduates to explore the McNair opportunity. For more information about Winthrop's Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, please check out our website (<https://www.winthrop.edu/mcnair/>). Learn more about Dr. McNair here: <https://youtu.be/C1BalnZZx9s>.

Thank you for all you do to support McNair Scholars, Mentors, and staff.  
-Cheryl

**Cheryl A. Fortner, Ph.D.**  
*Proud Director, McNair Scholars Program*  
*Professor of Psychology*

**Winthrop University**

