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The Our Lady of the Lake University McNair Scholars Program Newsletter

**Embrace his legacy.
Create your own.**



McNair Scholars Program
OUR LADY OF THE LAKE UNIVERSITY



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

By: Director Dr. Jessica M. Quintero

Hello Scholars,

I want to give a heartfelt thank you to all those who shared their journey with us. It was wonderful getting to know you a little better and the work you have been doing since leaving OLLU. We learned that so many of you want to give back to the program, to pay it forward to current scholars, and that some would benefit from guidance as you begin the application process for graduate school. Plans are in the works to identify ways to remain engaged with our alumni, starting with a restructuring of this newsletter. As always, we remain open to your feedback.

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ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

April 18, 2024

This April, the McNair Scholars Program hosted multiple sessions (poster, oral, and panel) as part of this years' Undergraduate Research Symposium. The panel, *From McNair Scholars to Ph.D. Students*, consisted of three OLLU McNair alumni who shared their experience with transitioning from an OLLU graduate to doctoral student.

Brisa Rodriguez Alcantar, earned her B.S. in Kinesiology in 2017, her Master of Public Health from The University of Texas at El Paso in 2020, and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Public Health from the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Her current research focuses on developing physical activity interventions for the effective management of type 2 diabetes in Latino males while addressing cultural barriers and beliefs.

Alyssah Gonzalez earned her B.A. in Political Science in 2020, her master's degree from The University of Texas at San Antonio in May of 2022, and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Texas at Austin. Her primary research interests are at the intersection of education and crime, specifically for at-risk youth.

Sheccid Rosales earned her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Bachelor of Social Work with a Biliterate certification in 2021, with an emphasis in Hispanic Families and Communities, and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Social Work from Our Lady of the Lake University. Sheccid is currently a victim advocate with an immigration and legal services department and assists victims of crime, domestic violence, sexual assault, etc. in obtaining legal status in the United States.



Brisa Rodriguez Alcantar (C/O 2017)



Alyssah Gonzalez (C/O 2020)



Sheccid Rosales (C/O 2021)

ALUMNI SUPPORT

Navigating the Graduate Gauntlet: Benefits of Returning to College

By: Dr. James Hernandez

As the number of graduate students rises, understanding both the challenges and the rewards of this path becomes essential for those considering it. However, as a McNair Scholar, you are uniquely positioned and supported for success in graduate school and beyond! Below are benefits and resources that will assist you when you decide to pursue the rewarding experience of your graduate degree:

The Benefits

1. **Career Advancement:** The most compelling reason many return for a graduate degree is the potential for career advancement. Higher qualifications often open doors to senior roles, specialized fields, and increased earning potential.
2. **Skill Enhancement:** Graduate programs offer an opportunity to deepen knowledge and hone skills. This advanced learning can make professionals more competitive in their field by equipping them with the expertise to tackle complex problems and innovate within their industry.
3. **Networking Opportunities:** Graduate programs often provide unparalleled networking opportunities. Connecting with professors, industry experts, and fellow students can create valuable professional relationships.
4. **Flexibility and Adaptation:** Many institutions now offer flexible learning options such as online courses and part-time programs, making it easier for professionals to integrate studies into their lives.

Resources for Success

1. **Financial Aid, Scholarships, and Grants:**
 - **FAFSA:** Apply for federal financial aid to help cover tuition costs.
 - **Websites like [Scholarships.com](https://www.scholarships.com) and [Fastweb](https://www.fastweb.com)** can help find scholarships.
 - **Research Grants:** Grants are funding opportunities that you do not pay back.
2. **Academic Support:**
 - **Writing Centers:** Most universities have writing centers offering help with academic writing and research.
 - **Library Resources:** University libraries often provide access to extensive databases, journals, research materials and dedicated research librarians.
 - **Mentorship:** Seek out faculty mentors and former McNair scholars who can guide your research and provide valuable feedback and support.

(Continued on pg. 4)

McNair-Specific Benefits

1. Fee Waiver for applying to graduate school: Most graduate programs require a fee for every application. Not for McNair Scholars! A benefit of being a McNair scholar is never needing to pay for graduate school applications.
2. Mentorship from former and current McNair Scholars in graduate school: OLLU McNair is currently building a robust network of former McNair graduates.
3. Publication Guidance: Since McNair prepares scholars for success in research, we have access to professionals that can guide you in the publication/revision process.
4. Research Workshops: McNair is currently planning workshops for current and former scholars with a focus on the graduate application process.

If you are interested in serving as a mentor to other alumni or in receiving mentorship, attending or presenting to current undergraduate scholars, please contact us at mcnair@ollusa.edu today! We look forward to hearing back from you!

ALUMNI UPDATES

We are proud of the work our alumni are doing. Whether you are sharing your talents as a researcher, practitioner, or maybe both, your successes demonstrate what is possible. The OLLU McNair Scholars community is rooting for you!

Research



Raul Gutierrez (C/O 2022)

Alumnus Raul Gutierrez is currently working as a research assistant at UT Health San Antonio. Raul is part of a team that recently published the article *Microglia, Trem2, and Neurodegeneration*. “The article reviews the role of microglia and their receptor Trem2 in Alzheimer’s Disease (AD). Microglia maintain brain health but can cause chronic inflammation when dysregulated. Studies have found that Trem2 enhances microglial activity, aiding in clearing amyloid-beta aggregates, and mutations in Trem2 increase AD risk. Therapeutic strategies targeting Trem2 show promising results, but further research is needed to fully understand its therapeutic potential.” Visit <https://doi.org/10.1177/10738584241254118> to read the full article visit. Raul is in the process of applying to MD/Ph.D. programs with a focus in neuroscience with the goal of serving as a physician scientist.

ALUMNI UPDATES (CONT.)

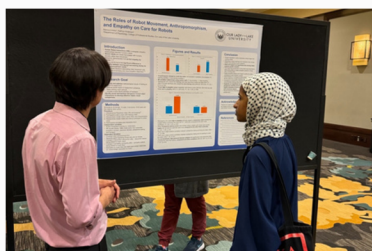


Dr. Eden Robles (C/O 2006)

Dr. Robles, an assistant professor at the Worden School of Social Service and an OLLU McNair alumni, presented at this year's Annual Dean's Scholarship Celebration. In 2023, she worked diligently to set up her own virtual research laboratory named the Health Equity Research and Observation (HERO) lab where she focuses on promoting equity for diverse populations, specifically Hispanics, and diversity in science. Through her lab, she provides mentoring and guidance to doctoral students in health equity research. Collectively, her students and Dr. Robles have published one manuscript and presented at six

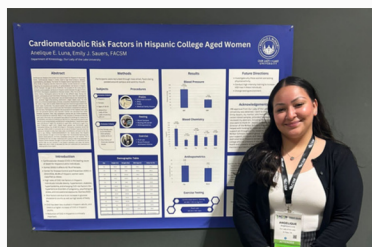
national conferences in psychiatry, social work, and general social sciences, in addition to countless other scholarly activities. During this year's Worden School celebration, Dr. Robles and Javier Segovia, a doctoral student in her lab, were awarded the Outstanding Faculty Award and the Outstanding PhD Student Award, respectively. In the upcoming year, the HERO lab will be focused on implementing a qualitative study of health services and help-seeking for mental health and substance use among Hispanic women. Together, they will continue to submit manuscripts for publication and scientific conferences, engage in research training and mentoring, and seek funding to help advance health equity for diverse populations.

Conference Presentations



Marcus Antu (C/O 2023)

Marcus presented his research “The Roles of Robot Movement, Anthropomorphism and Empathy on Care for Robots” at the 2024 Southwestern Psychological Association Convention in March and the World Social Science Association in April.



Angelique Luna (C/O 2023)

Angelique presented her research “Cardiometabolic Risk Factors in Hispanic College-Aged Women” at The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) National Conference in Boston, MA. Angelique is the first Kinesiology student in OLLU’s history to present at the National ACSM conference.

GRADUATE STUDENT HIGHLIGHT



JESSICA CORONA (C/O 2023)

Jessica is currently an MA Fellow at The University of Texas at San Antonio. She is a collaborator on The Fuerza Feminista Memory and Intimate Archive project, which is dedicated to recovering and documenting the history and impact of the human rights movement against gender violence. Her article “Digital feminist movements: The feminist struggle in the Americas” which closely relates to her efforts with the Fuerza Feminista project and her Master’s thesis was recently published in the *Sexuality, Gender & Policy* journal. You can read an introduction to the article by visiting <https://doi.org/10.1002/sgp2.12096>.

Her thesis intertwines cultural aspects with cases of gender-based violence reported in newspapers from El Paso, and San Antonio, Texas, dating back to the early 20th century. Using a feminist transborder digital humanities methodology, her project involves creating a comprehensive database by identifying and critically curating archival material incidences of gender-based violence against Latina women from the 1900's to the 1980's. The newspapers she analyzes include news from both sides of the U.S. and Mexico border, providing a unique cross-border perspective that fills a gap in existing studies; which predominantly focus on the Mexican side. By incorporating digital technologies, the project makes the data and metadata accessible to a broader audience through digital maps, visualizations, and archives. This April she, along with her co-presenter from UTSA presented “Sharing Our Narratives: A Conversation of Latina/o/x’s Graduate Scholars and Language Identity” at the Latina/o/x Studies Association Conference in Arizona. In February, she served as a panelist on “Embracing Borderlands Identity: The Significance of Latina Graduate Student Discourse in Academia,” at the 11th National Symposium on Spanish as a Heritage Language, in San Antonio, Texas. In March, she presented her research at the College of Liberal & Fine Arts Research Conference and Showcase, 2024, in San Antonio, Texas. Last November, she served as a panelist on “Acciones feministas: Investigación, pedagogía y praxis de los movimientos sociales en contra de la violencia de género y los feminicidios,” at the VI Encuentro de Humanistas Digitales, in San Luis Potosí, Mexico. This semester, Jessica was selected as part of the Humanities, Arts, Science and Technology, Alliance, and Collaboratory (HASTAC) Scholars Program 2023-2025 Cohort. As a HASTAC fellow, Jessica is immersing herself in collaborative endeavors alongside fellow scholars through activities such as writing blog posts, hosting online forums, scholar dialogues and participating in book reviews.

CONGRATULATIONS DR. CASSIE CORTEZ

Recent graduate of the University of Texas at Austin Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.)



DR. CASSIE CORTEZ (C/O 2020)

Dr. Cassie Cortez earned her Doctorate in Audiology at the University of Texas at Austin. Audiologists strive to provide treatment for individuals with hearing loss, in addition to educating their community on ways to protect their hearing. Audiologists also perform various tests to determine vestibular (balance) function of the ears. Audiologists work with other medical professionals, such as Ear Nose Throat (ENT) doctors, physical therapists, and speech language pathologists to provide patients with evidence-based care to improve quality of life.

The Audiology department at UT provides these services to community members through the Speech and Hearing Center, including those of low socioeconomic status. Important services provided are objective tests called Cervical Vestibular Evoked Myogenic Potentials (cVEMP) and Ocular Vestibular Evoked Myogenic Potentials (oVEMP), which are used to measure the function of the vestibular (balance) system. VEMPs are great screening tools to differentiate causes in patient's dizziness symptoms. Dr. Cortez completed a capstone titled "VESTIBULAR EVOKED MYOGENIC POTENTIALS: NORMATIVE DATA USING THE 2005 IHS USB SYSTEM" aimed to establish normative values for young adults with the equipment used in the clinic and compare obtained data to standardized norms.

Dr. Cortez collected data on healthy participants with normal hearing and no history of head injuries or ear-related trauma. Her study found significant differences between responses obtained from participants and those of the standardized norms. Overall, her study emphasized the importance of collecting normative data for specific equipment used in individual clinics to ensure correct interpretation of test results, especially when these results can help to differentiate the cause of patients' dizziness symptoms.

SCHOLAR ALUMNI ADDED

SPRING 2024 GRADUATES JOIN THE ALUMNI COMMUNITY

Eight scholars join the ranks of alumni. Destiny Arenas received her BS in Biology and plans to continue her research while studying to take the MCAT. Her ultimate goal is to attend medical school and become a surgeon. Naomi Casanova received her BA in Psychology and BA in Criminal Justice and plans to enter the workforce. Alyn Manzo received her BS in Kinesiology and BA in Psychology, and will attend the University of Southern California for her Doctorate of Occupational Therapy. Kimberley Carrizales received her Bachelors in Social Work and BA in Psychology. She plans to peruse her Masters in Social Work from Baylor University's online advance standing program while working as a CPS worker. Isis Esparza-Valdez received her BA in Psychology and plans to enter the workforce and continue the graduate school application process. Fransico "Frankie" Saldaña received his Bachelors in Social Work and will be attending OLLU for his Masters in Social Work. Fransico Frade received his BS in Cyber Security Systems and will be attending OLLU for his Masters in Cyber Security. Stephanie Sandoval received her BS in Speech-Language Pathology and will be attending The University of Kansas for her Masters and Ph.D. in speech Language Pathology.



From Left to Right: Francisco Saldaña, Destiny Arenas, Stephanie Sandoval, Isis Esparza Valdez, Naomi Casanova, and Alyn Manzo

PLANS FOR SUMMER 2024

This summer, we are making intentional efforts to both engage and support our alumni. We will spend the summer developing a plan to incorporate mentorship and advisory opportunities that is respectful of your time and mutually beneficial. If you would like to be a part of these efforts, please let us know by completing this brief [Volunteer with Us](#) form.

Additionally, we are working on an initiative to support the efforts of those who are ready to begin the application process and need support. We understand that revisiting graduate school applications may be overwhelming, especially if you have some time away from academia. To address this, we are collaborating with St. Mary's University, Trinity University, and University of Texas at San Antonio's McNair programs to host a webinar series designed to support your efforts in applying to and preparing for doctoral studies. If you would like more information visit [Tell Us How You're Doing](#) and indicate that you would like to apply.

STAY CONNECTED

There are several ways to stay connected with us. Follow us on Instagram, tell us how you're doing, and contribute to our Scholar Support Fund. This fund is set up to offset costs accrued by scholars not covered by the Department of Education, such as professional organization and GRE fees. Share your talents, sign up as a coach, connector, speaker, advisory board member, etc. Tell us how you're doing. As a grant recipient, the Department of Education requires that we provide information on your progress to Ph.D. Additionally, current scholars need to see what is possible for them, and it is important to celebrate your success! We want to highlight alumni in all future issues of The Phase.

You are always welcome to reach out via phone at 210-431-4099, email us at mcnair@ollusa.edu, or stop by our offices located in Lower Level Moye.

[Click here to access our link tree](#)



