

FAQs

Frequently asked questions about the McNair Scholars program

Q. Who is Ronald McNair?

A. Dr. Ronald E. McNair, a laser physics expert, was one of the Challenger astronauts who died in 1986. Congress authorized the funding of the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program that same year. The first McNair Scholars programs began in 1989; Cal Poly Pomona's McNair program was funded in 1999. These programs are administered by the U.S. Department of Education and are part of the TRIO family of programs.

Q. Is this a scholarship?

A. This is a research internship. Compensation is a research scholarship of as much as \$2800 paid out over a year's time and based on achieving certain goals and accomplishments.

Q. Can anyone apply?

A. Yes, but not everyone is eligible. Those who are eligible are full-time Cal Poly Pomona juniors and seniors with a 3.0 or higher GPA; U.S. citizens or permanent residents; AND first-generation college students with a demonstrated financial need, or members of an underrepresented group in graduate studies. The most qualified candidates will possess a strong desire to earn a doctoral degree.

Q. Are all majors eligible?

A. Our target colleges are Agriculture, Engineering, Science, CEIS, and CLASS. If a student from another major has a strong interest in research and has a faculty member experienced in research willing to mentor her or him, that student's application will be considered. The research project for the program should involve statistical analysis.

Q. How long can someone be a McNair Scholar?

A. One to two years.

Q. Can a student participate in other internship programs while being a Scholar?

A. Yes, as long as there is no duplication of services, and as long as it does not conflict with the requirements of a McNair Scholar Candidate. For example, students in the HHMI program cannot be paid twice for the same research.

Q. What is involved in being a Scholar?

A. During the winter and spring quarters, Scholars attend the McNair research class several times a quarter, work with the faculty mentors preparing the research proposal and literature review, and begin the research. During the summer, the Scholar participates in an intensive six-week summer research program, which includes a symposium at Cal Poly Pomona where scholars present their research and usually culminates with the McNair Symposium at UC Berkeley. During the fall quarter, Scholars again attend the research class and participate in workshops designed to assist them in applying for graduate school.

Q. Can a student take summer classes while being a Scholar?

A. We strongly discourage students from taking classes during the summer because the program is so intensive. A first-year Scholar may take no more than one class that does not conflict with the workshops. A second-year Scholar's request to take classes will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Q. What is required of faculty mentors?

A. Faculty mentors usually meet with their scholar candidates for ten hours per quarter on average, and more during the summer. In order to receive payment, mentors must also go to the Cal Poly Pomona Foundation to fill out appropriate tax paperwork and will need to keep track of their hours with Kronos, the Foundation online time clock.

Q. What if the faculty mentor is not available during the summer?

A. Another mentor should be considered because each mentor must participate and be available while the Scholar conducts the research and prepares for the symposium.

Q. How many letters of recommendation are required?

A. Three faculty letters are required, and two must be from faculty in the student's major.

Q. What else is required to apply?

A. All other questions can be answered during the information sessions.