



EMU McNair Challenger



November 2019 Edition: Eastern Michigan University McNair Scholars Program



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The Future is McNair!!

Upcoming Events:

**Late Night at the Detroit
Institute of Arts**

November 15th, 5:30-10 pm

Thanksgiving Feast

November 22nd

Thanksgiving Recess

November 27th – December
1st

**Team Challenge Papers
due**

December 2nd

Presentations

December 6th

**End of the Year
Celebration**

December 6th

Final Exams

December 16th – December
20th

SO MUCH TO BE THANKFUL FOR!

In this month's issue, we interviewed **Dr. Toni Stokes Jones**, who has mentored many McNair scholars over the years, about her experiences at EMU. We also have updates from EMU McNair alumni **Victoria Fields**, **Jesse Smith**, and **Ashley Beals** about their graduate school experience.

Interview with Dr. Toni Stokes Jones



**Dr. Toni Stokes
Jones**

After twenty years of service to EMU, Dr. Toni Stokes Jones is retiring from the Department of Teacher Education. She earned her Master of Education degree and Doctor of Philosophy degree in Instructional Technology from Wayne State University. Dr. Jones' research includes the examination of the use of rapid prototyping methodology to design instructional materials, an in-depth review of technology access by college students, and in particular, African American female students as well as the effects of infusing SmartBoard and telecollaborative technology in early elementary and middle school classrooms.

Dr. Jones is the former co-PI on the Wayne County U.S. History GIS Project, a Michigan Department of Education – Teacher Quality funded grant that facilitates teachers' efforts to infuse ArcGIS Online technology when teaching US History. She is also the author and co-author of many publications and presentations related to educational technology. She taught undergraduate and graduate Learning Technology & Design methods courses and Educational Psychology-Life Span Human Development and Growth, and has taught EDST 800 Introduction to Educational Studies: Scholarship, Teaching and Learning in the EDST Ph.D. program.

In addition to teaching at EMU, Dr. Jones has held several administrative positions. Most recently she served as the interim associate dean in the EMU College of Business. She has also held the position of interim associate dean in the EMU College of Education Office of Academic Services, Director of the Office of Academic Service Learning, and Faculty Associate in the EMU Graduate School. Dr. Jones is a member of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Innovation & Technology Committee, a [former] long-time member of both the EMU Honors College Advisory Board, and the McNair Advisory Council. She is the recipient of the 2017 MI-ACE Network Distinguished Woman in Higher Ed Leadership Award.

Dr. Jones takes great pleasure in mentoring others to reach their full potential. She was awarded the EMU Athletics Most Valuable Professor Award in 2016. Dr. Jones mentored a McNair Scholar and many Honors students, along with other undergraduate and graduate students at EMU, believing that it is important to lend a helping hand to others. She created the Stokes Educational Success Scholarships for McNair students.

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Updates from EMU McNair Alumna Victoria Fields!

We recently caught up with Victoria Fields, who graduated from EMU in April 2019.

Hello Victoria! What program are you in?

I am in the Masters of Communications program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



Victoria Fields

So how are things in grad school?

I absolutely love being at Illinois. I am learning so much about myself, my research and the world around me. I also LOVE teaching!! The research I worked on over the summer with my advisor/mentor at Illinois has been accepted into a national communication conference. The conference will take place in Portland, Oregon in May 2020! Also, I have been awarded a travel grant from another conference that I will be attending in November!!! My grant will be in addition to the travel funding I receive from my department. Altogether I have been accepted into three national conferences this year for three different academic papers! In November I will be heading to Virginia Beach to present the research I published with my mentor from Ohio State. The week after, I will be presenting an extension of my McNair Research in Baltimore, Maryland. Then in May of next year, I will be presenting in Portland, Oregon.

Dr. Jones has been happily married to Dr. Louis E. Jones, SAA Fellow, Archivist and Labor Historian at Wayne State University, for over 23 years. They have one son, Emmanuel S. Jones, who is a student at Eastern Michigan University studying to be an early childhood/elementary educator.

How did your studies prepare you to successfully navigate our complex world?

As an undergraduate, I studied to be a secondary business education teacher, which helped me to be organized, a good time manager, able to network, very skilled with technology, and willing to learn to use new technology. My graduate degrees are both in instructional technology, which helped me to be systematic in my thinking, be even more comfortable with technology, especially emerging technologies, and be able to design instructional innovations that integrate said technologies. I also acquired the skills necessary to be a consultant to assess challenges, brainstorm possible solutions, and design instructional innovations to move businesses forward. In short, all of my studies prepared me to successfully navigate our complex world.

How should our scholars think about the role of education in their lives?

Education should prepare you to be comfortable in new settings with unfamiliar people. It should also prepare you to stretch beyond your comfort zone because when you leave EMU, you leave with having had a good education that has prepared you for our global and complex world.

Education is something no one can take from you. Use it to your advantage. It is a means to an end... you must decide what the end is.

- Dr. Toni Stokes Jones



Updates from EMU McNair Alumnus Jesse Smith!

We also heard from Jesse Smith ('18), who is currently in his second year of a Doctoral Biochemistry program at Texas A & M.



Jesse Smith

Research is going very well. I have turned in my NSF-GRFP application a couple of weeks ago and should be applying for the Ford Fellowship in December. I have been mentoring undergraduates working in our lab for my whole Ph.D. The current undergrad I am working with is actually doing very well in our lab, and hopefully if we can convince her to get some work done this upcoming summer, she can finish next year with a small publication. As far as my research goes, I have two projects I am about to wrap up. One is working on developing a catalyst to activate various substrates to make new carbon-carbon bonds, and another project working with anion transporters across a membrane.

I expect to take my preliminary exam this upcoming spring. I have passed all of my cumulative exams (4) and am currently fighting through a physical organic class. Since I am an inorganic Ph.D., I actually did not need to take the class, but I wanted to improve my abilities in organic. As far as the preliminary exam goes, inorganic students have to give 3 presentations: first, an open-door seminar, which serves as an introduction to their research, a second open-door outlining their proposal, and then a closed-door exam with my committee going through my proposal. I am pretty nervous, but I have a fair committee and I think my advisor, Dr. François Gabbaï, has prepared me well.

As far as outside of school I am still running in Brooks and Saucony shoes. I have a Turkey Trot and then half marathon coming up later this month, and in December. I just got back from Laredo, TX, which is practically 10 minutes away from the Mexico border, for an LSAMP conference. I came in 1st place for the Ph.D. students presentations. Ironically the one night we were in Laredo, Snoop Dogg was as well so we went to his concert! Bad show, but we had a lot of fun!

We are recruiting new McNair Scholars!

Requirements:

- 2.85+ GPA
- 24+ Completed credits
- At least one year away from graduation

Benefits Include:

- Personalized Advising
- Support with Applying to Graduate Programs
- Graduate School Visits
- Free GRE Preparation Course
- Research Opportunities with Faculty Mentors on Campus
- Funding for YOUR Research
- Publication of YOUR research in the McNair Scholars Research Journal
- Travel to Professional Research Conferences across the Country!



Interview with EMU McNair Alumna Ashley Beals!

We also interviewed Ashley Beals who graduated from EMU in April 2019, and is currently in a program in Public Health at the University of Michigan!



Ashley Beals

What program are you in now, and what's your current research interest?

I am in the Master's of Health Informatics program at the University of Michigan, and I'm currently interested in research revolving around improving the patient experience and decreasing health disparities through technology and community health informatics.

What was your biggest challenge in transitioning from undergrad to grad school?

My biggest challenge is the change from a theory-based field to a skill-based field. During my undergraduate degree I studied health behavior and now I am learning skills such as programming. I really value the power of data and technology, but hold a strong passion for community health, so I want to combat this challenge by exploring ways in which these two combine.

What has been the best and the worst of your grad school experience so far?

The best experience has been meeting other graduate students; everyone has such a diverse background with their own interesting experiences. I wouldn't say there has been any terrible experience, but I hope to build a strong support system like the one I had at Eastern.

What advice would you give to our current McNair scholars?

I would continue to focus on opportunities to build skills and add to your resume. Those experiences and skills make you a strong candidate for competitive schools and can increase the likeliness of funding. Also, be open to many schools and fields when applying for graduate schools. Since my undergraduate degree was in Public Health, concentration on community health education, I mainly applied for health behavior/community health programs, but I am glad I also applied to and chose health informatics.



Happy Holidays from the McNair Staff!