

2026 CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

THE NATIONAL MCNAIR SCHOLARS & UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE
Inspiring Scholarship and Leadership Excellence for Global Impact

THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2026

12:00 PM – 4:00 PM

REGISTRATION

Conference Registration Desk - Main Concourse

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

SHUTTLE SERVICE LOOP BEGINS-TOWNE PLACE SUITES

1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

SELF-GUIDED CAMPUS WALKING TOURS & CAMPUS DEPARTMENT VISITATIONS (HYBRID)

Walk to the main campus to explore the University of Maryland. Visit the main campus, academic and administrative buildings, and campus attractions.

Please arrange your individual or group visits to the department. Contact info for all UMD academic departments and programs is as follows:

University of Maryland Academic Departments and Programs Info

<https://www.umd.edu/academic-departments-and-programs>



University of Maryland Virtual Campus Research & Cultural Tour

<https://go.umd.edu/ogdiumdtour>



African-American History and the University of Maryland: A Campus Landmark Tour

<https://go.umd.edu/umdaahisttour>



Shuttle Service Schedule



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4:00 PM – 5:45 PM

OPENING SESSION

Vessey Ballroom

WELCOME FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK

Dr. Fred Smith, Associate Program Director, Academic Achievement Programs
Co-Chair, National McNair Scholars and Undergraduate Research Conference
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

INTRODUCTION OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ms. Amaya Johnson, McNair Scholar
Senior, Philosophy Major - University of Maryland, College Park

OPENING REMARKS

Dr. Jerry L. Lewis, Executive Director, Academic Achievement Programs
Chair, National McNair Scholars and Undergraduate Research Conference
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

INTRODUCTION OF THE ASSOCIATE DEAN

Ms. Sumiya Rahaman, McNair Scholar
Junior, Information Science Major - University of Maryland, College Park

WELCOME FROM THE OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

Dr. Lawrence M. Clark, Associate Dean, Office of Undergraduate Studies
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

INTRODUCTION OF THE OPENING SPEAKER

Ms. Katherine Guerrero Rivera, McNair Scholar
Senior, Criminology and Criminal Justice - University of Maryland, College Park

OPENING SPEAKER

Dr. Stanley Andrisse, Endocrinologist Scientist, Howard University
College of Medicine/Georgetown University Medical Center-Washington, D.C.

MCNAIR SCHOLARS PLEDGE

Led by **Dr. LaToya Walters**, Director, McNair Scholars Program
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

McNair Scholars

Ms. Ugonna Ejekwu
Senior, Biology and Biochemistry Major
Saint Mary's College of Maryland

Ms. Andrea Ghonda
Senior, Neuroscience Major
University of Maryland

Ms. Alena Zheng
Senior, Bioengineering Major
University of Maryland

The Pledge is at the front of the Conference Proceedings Book. Please stand.

TRANSITION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Fred Smith, Associate Program Director, Academic Achievement Programs
Co-Chair, National McNair Scholars and Undergraduate Research Conference
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

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5:45 PM – 7:00 PM

SCHOLARS' RECEPTION AND ENTERTAINMENT BY CULTURAL ACADEMY FOR EXCELLENCE Chillum, Maryland

CO-SPONSORED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK GRADUATE SCHOOL AND OFFICE OF BELONGING & COMMUNITY

Chesapeake Ballroom

WELCOME FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK OFFICE OF BELONGING & COMMUNITY

Introduction of Speaker

Dr. Jerry L. Lewis, Executive Director, Academic Achievement Programs Chair, National McNair Scholars and Undergraduate Research Conference University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

Reception Welcome Address

Dr. Georgina Dodge, Vice President, Office of Belonging & Community University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

UNIVERSITY ROLL CALL - TRANSITIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. LaToya Walters, Director, McNair Scholars Program

University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

Ms. Lynn Truong, Educational Specialist, Education Talent Search Program-North, University of Maryland- College Park

7:00 PM – 11:00 PM

HOTELS SHUTTLE LOOP RESUMES FROM-COLLEGE PARK MARIOTT

7:30 PM – 10:30 PM

TERPZONE SHUTTLE SERVICE BEGINS-COLLEGE PARK MARIOTT

7:30 PM –10:00 PM

NETWORKING SOCIAL: BOWLING, BILLIARDS/POOL & VIDEO GAMES

(A Separate Shuttle to the TerpZone departs the hotel lobby at 7:30 PM)-Stamp Student Union - Enjoy a night of bowling, billiards/pool, and basketball games on big-screen TVs, fellowship, music, and light refreshments. The last shuttle departs for the hotel at 10:30 PM.

FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2026

7:00 AM – 9:00 AM

SHUTTLE SERVICE LOOP BEGINS-HOTELS-TOWNE PLACE SUITES

7:30 AM – 5:00 PM

REGISTRATION

Conference Registration Desk - Main Concourse

7:00 AM – 7:30 AM

POSTER PRESENTATION SET-UP

Vessey Ballroom

Presentations are organized alphabetically by the presenter's last name. Please locate your assigned table based on your assigned number in the Vessey Ballroom
Poster set-up 7:00 AM – 7:45 AM and displayed through 4:15 PM.

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8:00 AM – 9:20 AM

GENERAL SESSION AND BREAKFAST

Chesapeake Room A, B, & C

DEAN'S PANEL

MODERATOR - CALL TO ORDER AND PRESIDING

Dr. Samuel Graham, Jr., Dean, A. James Clark School of Engineering,
University of Maryland, College Park

PANELISTS

Dr. Rodney T. Cohen, Assistant Dean, University of Utah Graduate School, Salt
Lake City, Utah

Ms. Miriam Okine-Davies, Assistant Dean, Student Affairs & Enrollment
Management, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Dr. Karen Panetta, Dean of the Graduate School, Tufts University
Medford, Massachusetts

Dr. Stephen Roth, Associate Provost and Dean, Graduate School,
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

Ms. Marie F. Snyder, Assoc. Vice President and Assoc. Dean of Academic
Affairs, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

Dr. Kenneth Wong, Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the
School

of Graduate Studies, University of Maryland, Baltimore, Maryland

TRANSITION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. LaToya Walters, Director, McNair Scholars Program
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

9:25 AM - 10:45 AM

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION (McNair Directors and Staff)

Patuxent Room – Presenter **Dr. Kimberly Jones**, President of COE

INTRODUCTION AND MODERATOR

Dr. Jerry L. Lewis, Executive Director, Academic Achievement Programs
Chair, National McNair Scholars and Undergraduate Research Conference
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

9:25 AM – 10:25 AM

WORKSHOP SERIES

MCNAIR GRADUATE STUDENT PANEL

Room 2110

MODERATOR

Ja'Kala Barber, Ph.D. student, University of Maryland, College of Education,
School Psychology, McNair Graduate Assistant

PANELISTS

Kianna Big Crow, Master's Student, University of Maryland,
School of Public Policy, McNair Alumni: University of Minnesota, Morris

Lindsay Dieudonne, Ph.D. Student, University of Maryland
School of Public Policy, McNair Alumni: Suffolk University (AM Only)

Andrew Lowe Mohammed, Ph.D. student, University of Maryland, School of
Communication, Rhetoric, & Political Culture, McNair Fellow & Alumni:
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

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9:25 AM – 10:25 AM

Manny Zapata, Ph.D. student, University of Maryland, College of Education
McNair Fellow & Alumni: Syracuse University

**GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS FOR Ph.D. APPLICANTS –
OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIES (STEM FOCUS)**

Morning Session Only

Room 2115

PRESENTER

Dr. Francis DuVinage, Director, National Scholarships Office
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

**RECLAIM YOUR CAREER AND LIFE: *I WOULD RATHER DIE
DANCING THAN SITTING AT MY DESK***

Room 2101-2102

PRESENTER

Dr. Marcal Graham, Director, Educational Opportunity Center
Author of *MOVEME*
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

HOW TO FULLY FUND YOUR Ph.D.

Room 2116

PRESENTER

Dr. Vicki Johnson, Author and Fellowship & Graduate Admission Expert
Founder & CEO ProFellow, Inc.
Portland, Oregon

**STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING A COMPETITIVE GRADUATE
SCHOOL PERSONAL STATEMENT**

Room 2106

PRESENTER

Mr. Brent Hernandez, Director, Graduate Student Services
The Graduate School
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

**LEADING WITH PURPOSE: SCHOLARS WHO LEAD WITH
CONFIDENCE VISION, AND ACTION**

Room 2111

PRESENTER

Dr. Kimberly Whitehead, Acting Chief Academic Officer
University of Maryland Global Campus

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9:25 AM – 10:25 AM

UNDERSTANDING THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Room 2112

PRESENTER

Dr. Linda C. Macri, Director, Academic and Professional Development
The Graduate School
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

FUTURE READY: HOW TO USE AI TO DESIGN YOUR GRADUATE SCHOOL AND CAREER PATH

Room 2104

PRESENTER

Dr. Justin Grimes, a proud Little Rock, Arkansas, native, is an accomplished educator, author, and consultant, and the founder of Apply to Graduate School and of 20 Questions to Answer Before You Apply to Graduate School.
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

10:30 PM – 12:30 PM

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL FAIR

CO-SPONSORED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK DIVISION OF RESEARCH

Chesapeake Main Foyer & Art Gallery (Lower Level)

12:35 PM – 2:00 PM

GENERAL SESSION AND LUNCHEON

Chesapeake Room A, B, & C

COLLEGE PRESIDENTS' CONVERSATION: MCNAIR SCHOLARS AND THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

MODERATOR-CALL TO ORDER AND PRESIDING

Dr. Raymond Herrera, Associate Vice Provost, Dean, Graduate School,
PI/Director, McNair Scholars Program
Washington State University, Pullman, Washington

PANELISTS

Dr. Andres Acebo, President, University of New Jersey, Trenton, New Jersey
Dr. Valerie Sheares Ashby, President, University of Maryland Baltimore County, Baltimore, Maryland

2:00 PM -2:15 PM

15 MINUTE BREAK

2:20 PM – 4:00 PM

STUDENT RESEARCH POSTER PRESENTATIONS SPONSORED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK-DIVISION OF RESEARCH, THE BURROUGHS WELCOME FUND

-(POSTER GALLERY)-Vessey Ballroom-Presentations are organized alphabetically by the presenter's last name—poster **set-up 7:00 AM – 7:45 AM and displayed through 4:15 PM**. An evaluator will critique posters. **Please break down poster presentations at 4:15 PM**. - Poster boards and binder clips are on each Vessey Ballroom table.

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4:05 PM – 5:05 PM

WORKSHOP SERIES

MCNAIR GRADUATE STUDENT PANEL

Room 2110

MODERATOR

Ja'Kala Barber, Ph.D. student, University of Maryland, College of Education, School Psychology, McNair Graduate Assistant

PANELISTS

Kianna Big Crow, Public Policy Master's Student, University of Maryland, School of Public Policy, McNair Alumni: University of Minnesota, Morris
Katia Destine, NSF Graduate Research Fellow, Sociology Doctoral Student, University of Maryland, Department of Sociology, McNair Alumni: University of Central Florida (PM Only)

Saul Flores, Ph.D. student, University of Maryland, Biochemistry Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, McNair Fellow & Alumni: University of Maryland (PM Only)

Andrew Lowe Mohammed, Ph.D. student, University of Maryland, School of Communication, Rhetoric, & Political Culture, McNair Graduate Fellow, McNair Alumni: University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

Manny Zapata, McNair Graduate Fellow, University of Maryland, Urban Education Doctoral Student, College of Education, McNair Alumni: Syracuse University

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING: STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS' SUCCESS IN THE POST-COVID COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT

PM Only

Room 2115

PRESENTER

Asia Malik, LCPC Clinical Psychologist
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

RECLAIM YOUR CAREER AND LIFE: *I WOULD RATHER DIE DANCING THAN SITTING AT MY DESK*

Room 2101-2102

PRESENTER

Dr. Marcal Graham, Director, Educational Opportunity Center
Author of *MOVEME*
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

HOW TO FULLY FUND YOUR Ph.D.

Room 2116

PRESENTER

Dr. Vicki Johnson, Author and Fellowship & Graduate Admission Expert
Founder & CEO ProFellow, Inc.
Portland, Oregon

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4:05 PM – 5:05 PM

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING A COMPETITIVE GRADUATE SCHOOL PERSONAL STATEMENT

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The Graduate School
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

UNDERSTANDING THE LITERATURE REVIEW

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Winston-Salem, North Carolina

LEADING WITH PURPOSE: SCHOLARS WHO LEAD WITH CONFIDENCE VISION, AND ACTION

Room 2111

PRESENTER

Dr. Kimberly Whitehead, Acting Chief Academic Officer
University of Maryland Global Campus

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5:10 PM – 12:00 AM

SHUTTLE SERVICE LOOP RESUMES-COLLEGE PARK MARIOTT

7:15 PM – 9:15 PM

THE SCHOLARS' BANQUET

Chesapeake Room A, B, & C – *(Elegant Attire: Suit/Tie/Cocktail Dress/Pantsuit)*

PRESIDING & INTRODUCTION OF KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. Fred Smith, Associate Program Director, Academic Achievement Programs
Co-Chair, National McNair Scholars and Undergraduate Research Conference
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. Josanne Francis, Award-winning steelpan musician and educator, Director,
Steelband, and Lead Community Engagement Program Coordinator, Center for
Community Engagement, University of Maryland, College Park

CLOSING REMARKS & TRANSITION

Dr. Fred Smith, Associate Program Director, Academic Achievement Programs
Co-Chair, National McNair Scholars and Undergraduate Research Conference
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

9:30 PM – 12:00 AM

SCHOLARS PARTY with D.J.

Patuxent Room - Light Refreshments Provided

9:30 PM – 10:30 PM

MCNAIR STAFF FELLOWSHIP (Refreshments will be served)

Marriott Concierge Lounge

SPONSORED BY PRO FELLOW

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2026

7:00 AM – 9:00 AM

SHUTTLE SERVICE LOOP BEGINS-HOTELS-TOWNE PLACE SUITES

7:30 AM – 1:30 PM

REGISTRATION

Conference Registration Desk - Main Concourse

7:45 AM – 9:00 AM

GENERAL SESSION AND BREAKFAST

Chesapeake Room A, B, & C

CALL TO ORDER AND PRESIDING

Devin Moore, McNair Scholar

Senior, Psychology Major - University of Maryland, College Park

**THE PROOF IS IN THE PANEL: MCNAIR SCHOLARS' SUCCESS
STORIES**

INTRODUCTION & MODERATOR

Dr. Nathalie Frédéric Pierre, Assistant Professor, Department of History,
College of Arts and Sciences, Howard University, Washington, D.C.
McNair Alumni, Howard University

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7:45 AM – 9:00 AM

PANELISTS

Dr. Alana Hacksaw, Clinical Professor and Chief Access and Success Officer
School of Public Policy, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland
McNair Scholar Alum, University of Rochester, New York

Dr. Demar F. Lewis IV, Assistant Professor
Department of Criminology and Criminal
Justice University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland
McNair Scholar Alum, University of St. Thomas, Minnesota

Dr. Yixin Ren, Senior Material Scientist
Bureau of Engraving and Printing
Washington, D.C.
McNair Scholar Alumni, University of Buffalo, New York

EVALUATIONS

Dr. LaToya Walters, Director, McNair Scholars Program
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

TRANSITION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. LaToya Walters, Director, McNair Scholars Program
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

9:15 AM– 12:45 PM

ORAL RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

SPONSORED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

**DIVISION OF RESEARCH, THE BURROUGHS WELCOME FUND
(LUNCH AND DINNER ON YOUR OWN)**

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

SHUTTLE SERVICE LOOP RESUMES-COLLEGE PARK MARIOTT

1:30 PM

Bus Tour to Washington D.C. (Prior registration required)
DEPARTING FROM COLLEGE PARK MARIOTT

1:30 PM – 9:30 PM

**GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF THE NATIONAL MONUMENTS &
SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY
AND CULTURE MUSEUM - (Prior registration required)**-The bus to
Washington, D.C., departs from the hotel lobby at 1:30 PM and leaves DC for
the hotel at 9:30 PM. Explore Washington, D.C., Shop, Dine, & Visit
Museums. The coach bus will drop off and pick up registrants at the National
Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C.
(LUNCH AND DINNER ON YOUR OWN)

SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2026

8:00 AM – 12:00 PM

SHUTTLE SERVICE LOOP BEGINS-HOTELS-TOWNE PLACE SUITES

9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

CLOSING SESSION AND BREAKFAST
Chesapeake Room A & B

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9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

CALL TO ORDER, PRESIDING, AND COMMENTS

Dr. Fred Smith, Associate Program Director, Academic Achievement Programs
Co-Chair, National McNair Scholars and Undergraduate Research Conference
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

OPEN MIC: CONFERENCE REFLECTIONS

Conference Attendees

OPEN MIC: CONFERENCE REFLECTIONS & ENCOURAGEMENT

McNair Scholars Directors and Staff

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: GIVE-A-WAYS

CLOSING REMARKS

Dr. Jerry L. Lewis, Executive Director, Academic Achievement Programs
Chair, National McNair Scholars and Undergraduate Research Conference
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland