

2026 CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

THE NATIONAL MCNAIR SCHOLARS & UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

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 department visits.

Contact info for all UMD academic departments and programs is as follows

University of Maryland Academic Departments and Programs Info

<https://www.umd.edu/academicdepartmentsandprograms>



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



2026 CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

THE NATIONAL MCNAIR SCHOLARS & UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

4:00 PM – 5:45 PM

OPENING SESSION

Vessey Ballroom

WELCOME FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

Mr. 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

McNair Scholar

University of Maryland, College Park Maryland

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 DEAN

McNair Scholar

University of Maryland, College Park Maryland

WELCOME FROM THE OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

Dr. William A. Cohen, Associate Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies
University of Maryland, College Park Maryland

INTRODUCTION OF THE SPEAKER

McNair Scholar

University of Maryland, College Park Maryland

OPENING SPEAKER

Dr. Stanley Andrisse, Endocrinologist Scientist, Howard University College of Medicine
and Georgetown University Medical Center
Washington, DC.

MCNAIR SCHOLARS PLEDGE

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

McNair Scholar

University of Maryland, College Park Maryland

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

TRANSITION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

2026 CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

THE NATIONAL MCNAIR SCHOLARS & UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

5:45 PM – 8:00 PM

SCHOLARS' RECEPTION – ENTERTAINMENT BY CULTURAL ACADEMY FOR EXCELLENCE

**CO-SPONSORED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Chesapeake Ballroom

**WELCOME FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND OFFICE OF
BELONGING & INCLUSION**

Introduction of Speaker

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

Reception WelcomeAddress

Dr. Georgina Dodge, Vice President Office of Belonging & Inclusion
University of Maryland, College ParkMaryland

UNIVERSITY ROLL CALL - TRANSITIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

8:00 PM – 12:00 AM

8:30 PM – 11:30 PM

HOTELS SHUTTLE LOOP RESUMES FROM-COLLEGE PARK MARIOTT

TERPZONE SHUTTLE SERVICE BEGINS -COLLEGE PARK MARIOTT

9:00 PM –11:00 PM

**NETWORKING SOCIAL: BOWLING, BILLIARDS/POOL L & VIDEO GAMES
SPONSORED BY**

(A Separate Shuttle to the TerpZone departs the hotel lobby at 8:30 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 1:00 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 presenter's last name.
Please locate your assigned table based on your assigned number in the Vessey
Ballroom. **Poster setup 7:00 AM – 7:45 AM and displayed through 4:15 PM**

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THE NATIONAL MCNAIR SCHOLARS & UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

8:00 AM – 9:20 AM

GENERAL SESSION AND BREAKFAST

Chesapeake Room A, B, & C

DEAN'S PANEL

MODERATOR - CALL TO ORDER AND PRESIDING

PANELISTS

Dr. Leon C. Howard, Dean of the Graduate School, George Washington 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

Dr. Alexander Sens, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and the Marko
and Eleni Tsakopoulos Kounalakis Professor of Hellenic Studies, Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.

TRANSITION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. La Toya 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

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 21102111

MODERATOR

Dr. Nicholas C. Smith, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology
Affiliate Faculty, Maryland Population Research Center and the Department of
African American Studies
University of Maryland College Park Maryland

PANELISTS

Javon Goard, Ph.D. student Johns Hopkins University School of Education
McNair Alumni: University of Maryland, College Park

Elizabeth Solis, MPP student University of Maryland School of Public Policy
McNair Alumni: Eastern Michigan University Ypsilanti, Michigan

2026 CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

THE NATIONAL MCNAIR SCHOLARS & UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

9:25 AM – 10:25 AM

WORKSHOP SERIES CONTINUED

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

Erin Green, Ph.D. Candidate in EnglishUniversity of Maryland
McNair Graduate Fellow
McNair Alumni: University of Montevallo, Montevallo, Alabama

**GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS FOR P h.D. APPLICANTS – OPPORTUNITIES
AND STRATEGIES (STEM FOCUS) – Morning SessionOnly**
Room2115

PRESENTER

Dr. Francis DuVinage, Director, National ScholarshipOffice
University of Maryland, College ParkMaryland

**RECLAIM YOUR CAREER AND LIFE: I WOULD RATHER DIE
DANCING THAN SITTING AT MY DESK**
Room2101-2102

PRESENTER

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

HOW TO FULLY FUND YOUR Ph .D.
Room2116

PRESENTER

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

**STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING A COMPETITIVE GRADUATE
SCHOOL PERSONAL STATEMENT**
Room2106

PRESENTER

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

UNDERSTANDING THE LITERATURE REVIEW
Room2112

PRESENTER

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

2026 CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

THE NATIONAL MCNAIR SCHOLARS & UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

	USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN RESEARCH Room2104 PRESENTER Dr. Jessica Vitak , Director, PhD Information Studies, HCIL Affiliate Professor Communication Department and Joint Program in Survey Methodology University of Maryland, College ParkMaryland
10:30 AM – 12:30 PM	THE GRADUATE SCHOOL FAIR CO-SPONSORED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND , COLLEGE PARK GRADUATE SCHOOL 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 PANELISTS Dr. Andres Acebo , President, University of New Jersey Trenton, New Jersey
2:00 PM -2:15 PM	15 MINUTE BREAK
2:20 PM – 4:00 PM	STUDENT RESEARCH POSTER PRESENTATIONS SPONSORED BY (POSTER GALLERY) - Vessey Ballroom Presentations are organized alphabetically by presenter's last name Poster setup 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
4:05 PM – 5:05 PM	WORKSHOP SERIES MCNAIR GRADUATE STUDENT PANEL Room2110-2111 MODERATOR Dr. Nicholas C. Smith , Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology Affiliate Faculty, Maryland Population Research Center and the Department of African American Studies University of Maryland, College ParkMaryland

2026 CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

THE NATIONAL MCNAIR SCHOLARS & UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

PANELISTS

Javon Goard, Ph.D. student, Johns Hopkins University School of Education
McNair Alumni: University of Maryland, College Park Maryland

Elizabeth Solis, MPP student, University of Maryland School of Public Policy
McNair Alumni: Eastern Michigan University Ypsilanti, Michigan

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

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

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

PM Only

Room 2115

PRESENTER

Dr. Alex Agiliga, Staff 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

4:05 PM – 5:05 PM

HOW TO FULLY FUND YOUR Ph.D.

Room 2116

PRESENTER

Dr. Vicki Johnson, 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

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

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THE NATIONAL MCNAIR SCHOLARS & UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN RESEARCH

Room 2104

PRESENTER

Dr. Jessica Vitak, Director, Ph.D. Information Studies; HCIL Affiliate Professor
Communication Department and Joint Program in Survey Methodology
University of Maryland, College Park Maryland

5:30 PM – 12:00 AM

SHUTTLE SERVICE LOOP RESUMES-COLLEGE PARK MARIOTT

7:15 PM – 9:15 PM

THE SCHOLARS' BANQUET

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

PRESIDING & INTRODUCTION OF KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Mr. 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's, and Lead Community Engagement Program Coordinator, Center for
Community Engagement, University of Maryland, College Park

CLOSING REMARKS & TRANSITION

Mr. 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)

SPONSORED BY

Lower Level Art Gallery

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

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

2026 CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

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

INTRODUCTION & MODERATOR

Dr. Christopher Travers , Visiting Clinical Professor
Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Special Education
College of Education, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland
McNair Alumni, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

PANELISTS

Dr. Jose Centeno Melendez, Historian
National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.
McNair Scholar Alumni, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

Dr. Nichole Margarita Garcia , Associate Professor
Department of Higher Education and College Student Affairs
Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, Brunswick, New Jersey
McNair Alumni, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah

Dr. Chinyere Osuji , Associate Professor
Department of African American Studies, College of Behavioral & Social Sciences
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland
McNair Scholar Alumni, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, Illinois

Dr. Yixin Ren , Senior Material Scientist
Bureau of Engraving and Printing
Washington, D.C.
McNair Scholar Alumni, University of Buffalo, 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 NOTRE DAME & THE HOWARD HUGHES MEDICAL INSTITUTE
(Student Room Assignments are located in the Conference Proceedings Book)
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

LUNCH AND DINNER ON YOUR OWN
GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF THE NATIONAL MONUMENTS
(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.

2026 CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

THE NATIONAL MCNAIR SCHOLARS & UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

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

CALL TO ORDER , PRESIDING, AND COMMENTS

Mr. 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