

# McNair Scholars Program Central Michigan University

## ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE: JUNE 5

### GRADUATE SCHOOL LIST AND PROGRAM RESEARCH – PHASE ONE

Researching and exploring potential graduate programs is one of the most significant steps in the process of finding a graduate program that will be a “good fit” for you. This step is extremely time intensive and should be viewed as a progression in thinking as you learn more about existing programs and the faculty that you would like to work with during your graduate career. Faculty and experts at the McNair “boot camp” talked a lot about how to pinpoint graduate programs of interest. Keep in mind that you will be collecting information from various sources in this process. Perhaps most helpful to you will be talking to your professors and others in the field about their opinions of the top graduate programs to pursue. You will gain a great deal of information on the web as well. **Remember that it is ultra-important that you develop a list of programs that you plan to apply to that aligns with your credentials and goals.** This means having a strong mix of reach, mid-tier and back-up schools, and including some master’s programs in the mix, even if your ultimate goal is gaining entry into a Ph.D. program right from the start.

#### **WORDS OF WISDOM FROM PAST SCHOLARS**

If anything, we have witnessed a good number of scholars apply to graduate school. Many have been met with success, receiving full funding for their program of choice. To be truthful, some have struggled to find a good fit and struggled to get in overall. We cannot stress enough how important it is to develop a reasonable and appropriate list of programs that is in line with things like your GPA and GRE scores. Of course you should set your goals high and apply to some “reach” schools, but you shouldn’t ignore the reality of researching and finding programs that you really think you have a good chance of getting into.

Once you are actually in the process of applying, you will realize how involved it really is. One of the best uses of your time this summer is situating your list of schools and preparing as many application elements ahead of time as possible. For starters, this means talking to lots of people about programs you are considering and coming up with a list that feels comfortable to you. There isn’t a magic number of programs to apply to, but on average, applying to at least six programs (more if your program area is particularly competitive) is a good number. Too often, we see scholars still struggling to “figure out” what schools they are going to apply to during the fall semester, as application deadlines draw near. The more research that you can do right now, the better off you will be come fall. We highly encourage you to take this advice to heart!

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**Assignment Part One:** Locate FIVE articles on research topics of interest to you and then research the authors. Find out if they are university professors, and if so, where they teach. Perform a cursory exploration of the each program to determine if you might be interested in applying and working with that particular researcher. Include a paragraph on your findings for **each of the five articles** that you find. You should include the name of the article, the author and the graduate program in which they are located, and your preliminary assessment of that program. You will need to find at least FIVE articles that are written by faculty member in a graduate program. Therefore, you may be reading more than five articles in order to find five that meet this criterion.

**Assignment Part Two:** Begin ranking the programs that you are considering by completing the “school rankings” tab in the graduate school matrix. Try to evaluate each criterion as best you can and don’t be shy in contacting the schools for information you can’t readily pinpoint from the web (i.e. departmental secretaries, graduate school admissions staff). The most important step in this process is locating faculty who are doing research that is of interest to you, as evidenced by part one of this assignment. You should **have at least FIVE schools in your “school rankings” table for this assignment** – definitely include more if you are further along in the research process!

**NOTE:** You will probably find your list of schools continually shifting and changing as you do more research and establish contact with more people. As you learn about each program, try to distinguish whether the particular program will be a reach, mid-tier or back-up school for you. In some fields, there are books that will list detailed information about each graduate program (i.e. psychology); however, **many of you will probably be challenged in locating pertinent information for each of your programs.** Especially critical is finding out average GPA and GRE scores, in addition to how many people apply and how many people are admitted. This is critical to figuring out how competitive your programs are! Be persistent and creative in locating this information, because without it, you cannot make a sound judgment about the program. Websites and departmental secretaries may prove helpful. Peterson’s guides in hard copy (the most recent version is available at Park Library in reference) are generally good – it just depends on the area. **Fully explore the websites/search engines mentioned in the “quick links for researching graduate programs” handout.** Good luck!