

**McNair Scholars Program  
Central Michigan University**

**SRI HANDOUT  
SAMPLE CORRESPONDENCE**

**Faculty:**

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Dear Dr. Marsiglio,

I am a Ronald E. McNair Scholar at Central Michigan University. I am currently conducting original research on intergenerational and social influences on fatherhood under the direction of Dr. Jeff Angera. I am familiar with your work, specifically on fatherhood and social construction of fathers. I really liked how your book *Situated Fathering* talked about issues affecting men's identities as fathers and their involvement with children. In looking at this book and some of your other work I realize that my interests and your studies align perfectly.

I am very interested in your master's program in sociology and will be applying this coming fall. If possible, I'm wondering if you could answer the following questions:

- 1 - What areas of research are you currently pursuing and what future directions are you considering?
- 2 - Are there others in your department who may be interested in studying generational father influences?
- 3 - Will you be taking on new graduate students in the fall of 2008? It would be a great opportunity to work under your guidance.

I appreciate any thoughts and/or recommendations you may have in this regard and I look forward to hearing from you. I appreciate your time and response.

Sincerely,

Adam Mausolf  
McNair Scholar  
Central Michigan University

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Dr. Lorraine Gutierrez,

I am a Ronald E. McNair Scholar presently studying at Central Michigan University. In my search for potential graduate schools, at which I intend to pursue a Ph.D. in Social Work, I noticed that the University of Michigan has an international component to their program. Also, I understand that I can directly enter a Ph.D. program out of undergraduate school.

I was very excited to find a faculty member with research interests in the empowerment of oppressed groups and Latinos. Because I am a Latina woman who immigrated to the United States I am interested in pursuing graduate study in the Social Work department at the University of Michigan. My research interest is investigating the development of cultural identity of adolescent Latino immigrants. Does an opportunity to conduct this type of research exist at your institution? Could you recommend a professor whose interests might be a good fit to mine? Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,  
Maria Jacome  
Ronald E. McNair Scholar  
Central Michigan University

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Dear Dr. Jamal,

My name is Ryan Kostanecki and I am currently an undergraduate student in the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program at Central Michigan University. I am interested in studying comparative Middle Eastern politics through the lens of social science methodology, namely survey research. I am currently conducting original research using surveys to gauge the attitudes of American students, and Middle Eastern students living in America and in Egypt towards specific aspects of United States foreign policy regarding the conflict in Iraq.

First, I wanted to thank you for your contributions to the field, as I have used your research in my literature review. Second, I am writing you to inquire if Princeton would be interested in sponsoring me to do further research into Middle Eastern political attitudes studies, with a focus on Middle Eastern attitudes towards US foreign policy.

I have read and used research from Mark Tessler and Ellen Lust-Okar. However, I am wondering who else is currently doing research in this field and if there are any opportunities for a motivated undergraduate to assist them in their research.

Many thanks for taking a moment out of your schedule to advise a future graduate student!

Ryan Kostanecki  
McNair Scholar  
Central Michigan University

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Hello Dr. Wenk,

I am a Ronald E. McNair Scholar at Central Michigan University. I am currently conducting original research on the motor response complications associated with Levodopa treatment for Parkinson's disease under the direction of Dr. Justin Oh-Lee. I am familiar with your work, particularly on the influence of brain inflammation on neurodegenerative diseases and the progression of dementia.

I am very interested in Ohio State's neuroscience doctoral program and will be applying this fall. Given my interest in your work, I am wondering if you will be taking on new graduate students in the fall of 2009? Looking ahead, are your most recently published works things you will continue to pursue or do you see your research heading in a new direction? I look forward to future correspondences and appreciate your time and response.

Thank you,  
Heather Minkel

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Dr. Freyd,

My name is Maureen Harke and I am a senior at Central Michigan University working on a bachelor's degree in psychology. I will be applying to clinical Ph.D. programs this fall and I am very interested in University of Oregon, especially the Dynamics lab.

Last summer while conducting an original research project with the McNair Scholars Program, I came across several of your articles about Betrayal Trauma and I am intrigued by your theory. Desiring more knowledge, I have ordered your 1996 book and I am eagerly awaiting its arrival. In addition to reading many of your articles, I read your letter to Women's Review and I was impressed with the passion that your words conveyed.

My McNair research examined the relationship between college students' experiences of physical discipline, including abusive experiences, in childhood and current approval of various methods of physical discipline. Those who experienced higher levels of abuse in childhood were more approving of abusive discipline as young adults. We are currently examining the mediating effects of attributions for child misbehavior and the moderating effects of specific types of education on approval.

I am wondering if you are still accepting students in the fall of 2009. Last year there was a note on your web site stating that you would be accepting students then but I don't see the note there now. I am hardworking and passionate about learning. I feel that I would be a productive addition to your lab and I hope that you will consider me for a position next fall.

Thank you,  
Maureen Harke

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Maureen Harke  
2007 McNair Scholar  
Central Michigan University  
(989) 433-0359

**Faculty response:**

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Dear Maureen,

Thank you for your enthusiastic email and for your interest in my lab and grad school at UO. I appreciate what you wrote and I hope you do apply to UO. I currently expect to be able to accept one new student for the 2009-2010 year. On my website I have a statement of research interests for potential applicants:

<http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/~jjf/interests.html> In addition to our cognitive studies, we have current projects on the relationship between mental and physical health problems and trauma exposure, the impact of betrayal trauma on trust mechanisms, gender differences in trauma exposure, emotional abuse, the nature of disclosure processes, the role of abuse and dissociation in revictimization and perpetration, and many others.

You can see current graduate students at <http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/> and a list of awards received by my students at <http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/awards.html>. You can see a list of recent doctoral dissertations at: <http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/emeriti.html>

Grad admissions here is quite competitive, particularly in clinical psychology. We get over 200 applications for 3-5 positions in clinical. So it would be wise for you to apply to a range of places in addition to Oregon. (One possible place to apply is University of Denver, where my former student Anne DePrince <http://www.du.edu/~adeprinc/> is now an Associate Professor in clinical psychology.)

Also, one bit of advice: You will increase your chances for acceptance here if you can identify some other faculty you could work with and then write about your interest in compelling ways in your application. You can indicate I am your first choice advisor (if I am) but if you make contact with other clinical faculty and indicate that in your application it will likely be helpful. (If you are admitted you will be working with other faculty in various ways, so this is not just a tactic.) Information about admissions and faculty interests can be found at:

<http://psychweb.uoregon.edu/gradprog/gpmain.htm>

I am on sabbatical for the 2008-09 academic year and my access to email will be limited. You are welcome to contact students in my lab for information. Thanks again for your interest, Jennifer Freyd

**Graduate student:**

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Hello Jonah,

I am currently an undergraduate student at Central Michigan University studying biomedical sciences and neuroscience. I see that there are many exciting research opportunities at the University of Colorado-Denver and I am hoping to get your opinion on the program as a graduate student there.

I have two questions if you have the time to answer them. The first is about the student-faculty relations and the atmosphere at UCD: How do you feel the climate of the department is as a whole? The second is really just about how your experience has been in the program so far. Who or what made UCD your choice for graduate school, and how would you describe the experience so far? I appreciate any information you have to offer.

Thank you for your time,

Heather Minkel

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Hello Mr. Corstange,

My name is Ryan Kostanecki and I am currently a student at Central Michigan University studying Political Science and History with a focus in the Middle East. I am currently doing research on American and Middle Eastern attitudes towards the War in Iraq, and I have used your research with Dr. Tessler as a reference. So first let me thank you, as it has been a wonderful resource.

I am writing you because I am currently coming to the end of my undergraduate career, and looking at your CV you are researching exactly what I am hoping to research in graduate school. I have one specific question, and then one general one. Specially, what level of math/statistical proficiency should I have going into graduate school (as in what level math classes should I complete). Generally, can you give any recommendations as to what I should be reading before entering a graduate school program in comparative Middle Eastern politics? Who are the most prominent scholars in the field?

Any information would be very helpful. Again, thank you for the research, it is great! When I finish my project I will be sure to pass it along. Hope all is well! --Ryan Kostanecki

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Hello Janet,

I am currently a McNair scholar at Central Michigan University majoring in psychology. I am very interested in the industrial/organizational psychology program at Colorado State University and I am hoping to get your opinion on the program as a current graduate student.

I have a few questions for you if you have time to answer them. First, how would you describe the atmosphere of the department as a whole? Secondly, I am curious as to how your experience with the program has been thus far. What made you choose Colorado State University over other schools, and do you have any tips for a prospective student? I would greatly appreciate any information or advice you have to offer.

Thank you very much,

Caitlin Demsky  
McNair Scholar  
Central Michigan University

## Two graduate student responses:

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Dear Ryan,

Thank you for the kind words! It's always encouraging when people can get something useful out of the research that we've done, and especially when they want to continue and make it better.

For math and statistical proficiency: they're related, but not exactly the same. In terms of statistics, most good graduate programs in political science will provide enough options for statistical training to get you sufficiently tooled up to use it well. It will be a lot of work, though, so know that going into it. It would be somewhat helpful to be familiar with some basic calculus and matrix algebra ahead of time, but they'll teach that along with the statistics. I, for example, took no math classes as an undergraduate (which I regret), but was still able to do well with it. It's just that the statistical boot camp the first year is probably a little less hard if you can lean on some past understanding. As for math-math: if you're interested in doing analytic formal modeling and game theory, I'd recommend you take a few classes now, if you can.

If you're interested in Middle East studies via a political science program (which I would recommend as opposed to an area studies program), I would suggest Mark Tessler (of course), Amaney Jamal at Princeton, and Ellen Lust-Okar at Yale. These are probably the biggest three in terms of work on the Middle East that also uses rigorous social science methodology. Also, there is a woman named Lisa Blaydes who will be starting at Stanford in the fall (she's currently finishing up at UCLA): she's very new, but has a lot of potential to be very good as well. In terms of what to read: it's a little difficult to say in that there aren't really any canonical texts that I can think of, but you can probably start with articles and books the above-cited folks have written, and then troll through their bibliographies.

Hope this is helpful! Let me know if you've got any other questions. Best, Dan

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Hi Caitlin!

I would be happy to answer all your questions about CSU!

Q: First, how would you describe the atmosphere of the department as a whole?

A: The atmosphere at CSU is very collegial and cooperation is highly encouraged. For example, I changed my adviser this semester and there were no problems- I was actually encouraged to work with both since they have different strengths and can offer me different perspectives. As you investigate your programs of interest, you will find that to be a very unique occurrence in PhD programs.

Q: Secondly, I am curious as to how your experience with the program has been thus far.

A: I love the program here at CSU and feel that this was the right choice for me. Even though the program is both rigorous and challenging, I am amazed at how much I have learned and grown this year. I liked my assistantships- I was both a TA and a research assistant- and felt that they increased my understanding of how to conduct research and gave me insight into academia. In addition, I had several opportunities that were amazing- I got to guest lecture in one class, co-author a book chapter, and create a new measurement scale, all in my first year! I cannot imagine being in any other program.

Q: What made you choose Colorado State University over other schools

I was accepted to several other PhD programs and took visits to two other schools. I choose CSU based on the "balance" that I felt CSU possesses. So what kind of balance I am I referring to? They encourage both academic and applied experiences- meaning that you conduct research and do internships (some places only focus on one or the other). Also, I had no idea what I wanted to do with my degree (teach or go applied) and they don't pressure you to make those kinds of decisions right away, which was really important to me.

I also felt they had balance between pushing you through the program and letting you take your time. Some programs brag about how fast you can get through, but I wasn't in a real rush and it was important for me to be able to stop and enjoy life once in a while. For example, I am going to Chile over Christmas break to visit my sister, another student is in another state all summer visiting her boyfriend, and some students go home. In many programs, this would not be possible. However, you are also expected to make timely progress and move through the program in a reasonable amount of time, so there is also accountability (which was important to me).

In addition, I wanted to go to a top school, but also wanted a school where I would enjoy my time. I was accepted to a really good school, but didn't think I would be happy there. In this area, CSU is a great balance. We are still in the top ranked schools for research (and SIOP representation), but are also in the top student ranked schools.

The main reason I choose here is hard to explain. I came on the recruiting trip and it just felt right. I know that is ambiguous, but that is just how it happened. After meeting all the professors and students, hearing about the program, and seeing the city, it was just right for me.

Q: Do you have any tips for a prospective student?

There are lots of things that can help you prepare for graduate school. For starters, get as much research experience as possible! This includes being an RA for a professor, conducting an honors thesis on your own, and submitting as much research as possible (even if it is outside IO, that doesn't matter as much). In this process, make sure you get to know your professors and they get to know you, this will enable you to get stronger letters of recommendation, which are also important. Other things to consider are internships and independent studies.

In choosing which schools to apply to: Decide what is important to YOU. There are several things to consider when choosing a graduate school: funding, who your adviser would be, what you want to study, whether you want to go applied or academic, the culture of the program itself, the overall quality of the program, etc. I would recommend prioritizing what is most important to you, because the truth is that no place is perfect and you will have to decide what can be overlooked. This is how I choose CSU, they had the best mix of things that were most important to me.

Once accepted to programs, I really encourage you to go on as many recruiting trips as possible. They are really helpful in getting a preview of the culture of the program. Also, talk to your potential advisers and get a feel if that is the right fit for you.

I hope this answers your questions and please feel free to ask me anything else. If you would like to call to chat about CSU, feel free to call me (509) 863-5470. Also, I am just wondering, but where did you get my email address from?

Best of luck with your graduate school search!

Janet