MCNAIR STRONG

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The McNair Mission

Prepare low income + first generation + underrepresented students for successful entry into graduate school and ultimate achievement of the Ph.D.

“The only guarantees are those that reside in the unchallenged depths of one’s own determination.”

~Dr. Ronald E. McNair
What does this mean?

• Engage in research with a faculty mentor
• Enhance research writing and communication skills
• Learn about graduate education
• Learn how to apply to grad school
• Strengthen application materials
• Receive guidance in the application process
It’s a HUGE goal.

We are doing a great job on the grad school front. But is what we’re doing sustainable without establishment of a strong foundation?

By that, I mean their person.
Think about your students.

They face a lot of challenges. Money-wise, academically-wise, sometimes socially + culturally. They’re dealing with family issues in many cases. They are under a tremendous amount of stress most of the time. Especially during the most intense points in the semester.

Think about your students then.
My bright idea.

In response to seeing my students not feeling good, stressed out, sleep-deprived and not being able to cope on a regular basis … I said to myself … they need the key to life … which for me is:

YOGA

plain + simple
Why yoga?

• It’s one of the best forms of stress management
• It incorporates exercise for your body and your brain #cardioforthemind
• It relaxes you + clears out the detritus
• It improves your FOCUS
• It teaches you to BREATHE … which is one of the most important tools in your toolbox that you can have … in LIFE.
I felt guilty and nervous.

BUT, if Dr. Jon Kabit-Zinn (an MIT-trained molecular biologist) was encouraging people to explore the benefits of meditation + yoga through his cutting edge work with the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, then I could certainly introduce this important tool to our scholars.

Couldn’t I?
I distinctly remember:

• Josh and the vibrant butterflies
• Eric looking forward to the surprise foot massages
• Mara finding significant relief
• Amanda almost passing out from the heat
• Taylor finding peace with his body
• Tom feeling light as a feather, not to mention less lower back pain
That's why I do yoga with my scholars.

#potentialtochangelives
So there’s that. What was next?

We had already been hosting semesterly workshops on wellness + stress with Tammy Griffin, Manager of Employee Health and Wellness @ CMU
Starting the conversation.

- Define wellness and explore the mind-body-spirit connection.
- Get you actively involved in assessing your personal wellness status.
- Give you tips for improving in the 6 dimensions of wellness.
- Have fun and assess yourself honestly
- Set at least 1 wellness goal for the next 6 to 12 months.
Your individual wellness

**Spiritual**
- Spiritual wellness is a process of understanding beliefs, values, and ethics that help guide your life. Whatever your preferred approach, spending time asking and exploring your spiritual life can be an important part of your overall wellbeing.

**Emotional**
- Maintaining a healthy emotional life is important to overall health. Some ways to stay emotionally healthy are to manage your stress level, stay on top of school work, get eight hours of sleep, ask for help, or see a therapist at the Counseling Center.

**Financial**
- Financial wellness means taking steps to live within your financial means and living in, and planning for, future financial health. You can do this by planning financially, creating a budget, and learning to be a good consumer.

**Intellectual**
- Intellectual wellness means staying curious and engaged in learning new things. Engage in creative activities. Read for pleasure, be aware of social and political issues, or join a club that focuses on enhancing intellectual interests.

**Environmental**
- Environmental wellness means taking care of your global environment and your personal surroundings. De-cluttering your room, recycling your trash or volunteering to clean up your environment can improve health for all.

**Social**
- Social wellness involves having a strong social network can give you support and guidance when you are stressed or need stress relief. Additionally these relationships can aid in the development of healthy relationships. Physical wellness involves moving your bodies (exercise), eating well balanced meals (nutrition), sleeping, managing stress, receiving preventative medical and dental care, and getting sexual health screenings when you become sexually active.
STRESS. It’s a biggie.

• Define stress and the problems associated with chronic stress
• Propose that the key to stress management is LIFE BALANCE – there are no quick fixes
• Give you inexpensive tools to minimize stress (resilient/resistant) – but you need to practice daily
Katie Mora, a local registered dietician, and creator of Around the Plate came and taught us about better food habits and offered additional nutritional counseling for scholars in need.
We brought in Dr. Carl Johnson, a nationally-known sleep researcher @ CMU, to talk to us about sleep hygiene. Student lifestyles are *less than ideal* when it comes to getting enough sleep + developing good sleep habits.
MOVE

I decided to hire a personal trainer to host a series of 10 fitness sessions for our scholars during the summer.

It wasn’t mandatory (of course), but highly encouraged + peer pressure sometimes does wonders.

Brandan had *challenged my limits* and I wanted our scholars to experience the same kind of grit required to make it through those workouts.
EAT
SLEEP
MOVE
mcnair style
Teambuilding

• Great opportunity for cohort to bond
• Challenge scholars on multiple levels
• Expose them to something they’ve never done before
• Become more self-aware
• Grow confidence in themselves and each other
• Have fun!
Examples

• High ropes course
• Harley Blake – he’s our man!
• Kayaking
• Camp fires
• Horseback riding
• Archery
• Belly dancing – yes, belly dancing.
#mcnairfamily
Kayaking: one of our favorites.
And then came the Color Run.
It’s become our staple.
THE COLOR RUN.

418107

#WeShine Happiest5k

shine!

eat. sleep. move.
McNair Color Runners Unite!

- Provides a tangible but non-threatening goal for improving fitness
- Fosters partnership among scholars
- Helps them become dedicated to a goal
- Become accountable to each other
- Learn how to provide meaningful support
- The Color Run has become a “capstone” experience for the summer #fouryearsrnr
We are McNair.
Further evolution.

- McNair “Thrive Tribe” w/Tammy
- Fitness trackers modeled after CMU’s wellness incentives
  - team challenges!
- Summer MOVE challenge
- Summer MINDFULLNESS challenge
- CrossFit Worthy
Tell me the numbers.

• Negotiate a great rate with community partners
  • Yoga @ $5/class
  • CrossFit @ $50/month/scholar during summer

• Ask for discounts
  • Fitbit Zips $48/each

• Significant activities really aren’t that much
  • Cran Hill Retreat $150/scholar
  • Color Run $150/scholar
Meet Alli. 
First-year Ph.D. student in Neuroscience @ IUPUI
Meet Amanda. First-year Ph.D. student in Chemical Biology @ Harvard University
Meet Kamar and Dr. Rebecca Mercado Thornton.

#crossfitters
Meet Katelyn.
The connection is real.
In the end, it’s really about feeling good. Isn’t it?
A sign that we’re onto something.

Dr. Kerry Ann Rockquemore’s work with the National Center For Faculty Development and Diversity

Rock it out in the academy AND take care of yourself.

... by the way, you can do both.
McNair Strong = Scholar Wellness

Start the conversation.
Encourage + role model.
Plant some seeds.
How about you?

How do you feel about your habits in the following categories?

EAT
SLEEP
MOVE

< rate yourself on a scale of 1 – 10 >