



Facilitating Effective McNair Scholar and Faculty Mentor Relationships through Learning Agreements

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SLU FACTS



- Founded in 1818
- Catholic, Jesuit Institution
- Currently has 8,155 undergraduates and 4,698 graduate/professional students.
- Ave. GPA for admitted freshmen is 3.9
- Has three TRIO programs – Talent Search, Student Support Services and the Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program

ABOUT SLU MCNAIR



- Grant was awarded during the fall of 2017.
- Funded to serve 25 participants.
- Open to students at five universities in St. Louis.
- Staffed by a program director, academic coordinator and graduate assistant.
- Provides summer research internships for up to 12 McNair Scholars each year.

SLU McNair Learning Outcomes

As a result of their participation in the program, SLU McNair Scholars will:

- Understand and articulate what a doctoral-level education entails;
- Develop a clear research agenda with short- and long-term goals;
- Formulate research questions that will guide their work;
- Design and conduct original research;
- Present their work at research symposiums, McNair conferences and professional conferences in their chosen field;
- Utilize self-awareness and strategic research to identify the most suitable graduate programs in their chosen field of study;
- Develop an effective timeline for applying to graduate school;
- Research and apply for financial support for graduate study.

PRIMARY TOOLS USED FOR ADVISING SLU MCNAIR SCHOLARS



- ✓ Needs Assessment
- ✓ Scholar Education Plan
- ✓ Participant Agreement
- ✓ Learning Agreement

Learning Agreement

Key Components

Academic Knowledge

- “I am interested in learning...”

Skill Development

- “I would like to develop or enhance the following competencies:”

Professional Development

- I would like to work on the following in preparation for my future career:”

Learning Agreements and Needs Assessments

The McNair Scholars are encouraged during New Scholar Orientation and in 1:1 meetings with the Academic Coordinator to refer to their Needs Assessment when discussing the Learning Agreement with their McNair Faculty Mentors. Some commonly identified areas of development include the following:

Common Trends

- **Develop writing skills**
- **Use effective time management skills**
- **Develop research skills**
- **Learn more about different grad schools**
- **Gain experience with conference presentations**
- **Develop networking skills**

Holding McNair Scholars & Faculty Mentors Accountable

Scholars

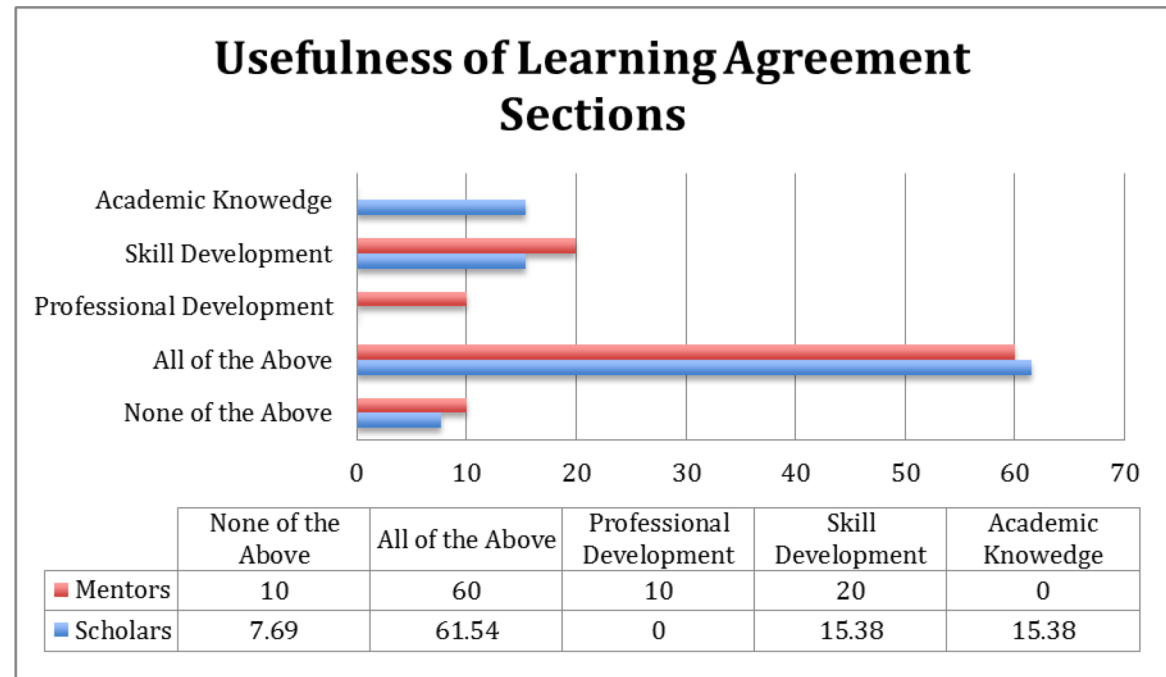
- Orientation
- Scholars Handbook
- One-on-One meetings with Academic Coordinator

Faculty

- Orientation
- Faculty Handbook
- Following up via email or in-person meetings

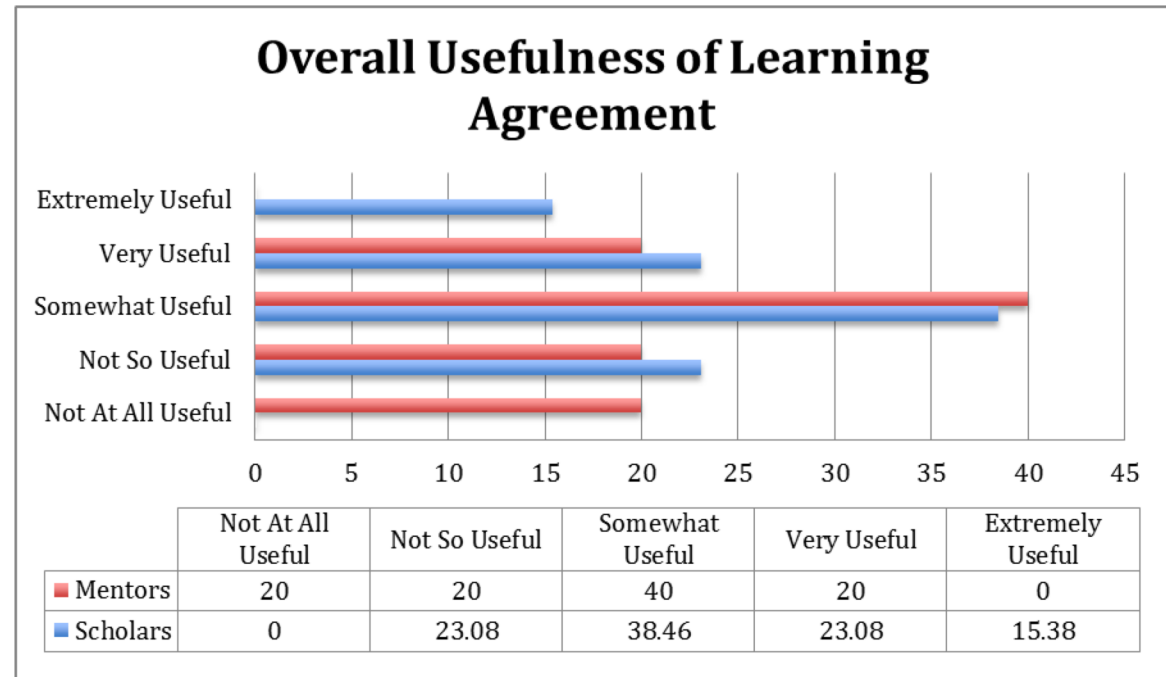
LEARNING AGREEMENT FEEDBACK (SURVEY DATA)

Q: “Which section(s) of the learning agreement did you find most useful...?”



LEARNING AGREEMENT FEEDBACK (SURVEY DATA - CONTINUED)

Q: “Overall, how useful has the learning agreement been...?”



ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

- The learning agreement was completed early in the mentor-mentee relationship (first meeting or shortly thereafter).
- Several McNair Scholars expressed that there should be a new learning agreement each semester, whereas the mentors suggested a new one annually.
- The desire for a 'sample' learning agreement (refer to handout) was expressed by both groups.

Next Steps



- Create a pre-filled sample learning agreement (done).
- Revise agreement to include a blank section for mentor recommendations (done).
- McNair staff will work on the learning agreement with the scholars prior to their meetings w/mentors.
- McNair staff will work on the learning agreement with the scholars after discussing needs assessment results.

Q&A



Just kidding... We welcome any questions you may have!



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