Facilitating Effective McNair Scholar and Faculty Mentor Relationships through Learning Agreements

Presented by:

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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:

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

### Usefulness of Learning Agreement Sections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>None of the Above</th>
<th>All of the Above</th>
<th>Professional Development</th>
<th>Skill Development</th>
<th>Academic Knowledge</th>
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Q: “Overall, how useful has the learning agreement been...?”

**Overall Usefulness of Learning Agreement**

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<th></th>
<th>Not At All Useful</th>
<th>Not So Useful</th>
<th>Somewhat Useful</th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Extremely Useful</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>38.46</td>
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</table>
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!