

Outstanding Alum

Meladee
Garst, PhD



Meladee Garst, PhD was chosen as an honoree because she exemplifies what the McNair Scholars Program is all about. During her two years in the program she took full advantage of opportunities given to her. She conducted scholarly research with James Snyder, PhD and Robert Zettle, PhD.

Garst completed all of her tasks in a timely manner as well as attended research conferences and presented her findings from these projects. The staff sees her as a true role model. She has served many times on the alumnae panel for the program and is currently serving on the McNair Alumnae Advisory Board. She willingly sees scholars and provides advice to them regarding graduate education.

Garst is grateful to the program. She says, “Without the McNair Scholars Program I don’t think I would be where I am today! TRIO, in particular McNair Scholars Program, helped me reach my dreams. I am forever in debt to the assistance that was given to me, the experiences and relationships I made through the program, and ultimately how the McNair Scholars Program helped me get to my dream of being a psychologist.”

She advises students to, “take advantage of these programs and give them your all. I truly believe that it takes a village to raise a child, and it takes a village to become the adult you are supposed to be. Find your village and use that village to help you get to where you want to go, so that one day you can be in someone else’s village!”

Rising Star

Martina
Salerno



Martina Salerno is a biomedical engineering student at Wichita State University where she has participated in McNair for the past three years. During this time, Martina has worked diligently to prepare herself for graduate education. She is working on her third research project with McNair under the guidance of Anil Mahapatro, PhD, assistant professor for the Department of Biomedical Engineering, and is a current National Institute of Health K-INBRE research grant recipient through Kansas IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence.

Martina’s research focuses on improving orthopedic implants, through surface modification, to decrease the chance of infection when implants are placed in the body. She has taken advantage of opportunities to present at several research symposiums, including at the 2016 Materials Research Society Spring Meeting in Arizona.

Martina prioritizes time to give back to the community and work with youth to help spark interest in STEM and inspire them to pursue higher education. Encouraging budding, especially underrepresented, students is something that Martina feels is part of her responsibility as a Hispanic woman in the engineering field. She presented at EOA’s Girls in STEM Conference hosted at Wichita State in May 2016 and also participated in outreach events for Upward Bound Wichita Prep. After graduation in May 2017, she plans to pursue a doctoral degree involving tissue engineering. Martina aspires to conduct research at the university level as a professor focusing on tissue engineering to improve implantable organ systems.