



Courtesy Photo/O'Collegian - McNair Scholars presented their research at OSU's Research Symposium. Friday marked the end of OSU's Research Week, a celebration of projects that OSU students and faculty have finished.

McNair Scholars present research

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The Oklahoma State University Graduate College hosted nine undergraduate scholars from Wichita State University and the University of Central Oklahoma to present their research at the Research Symposium on March 7.

The students are all participants in the McNair Scholars Program. Named in honor of space shuttle Challenger crew member Ronald E. McNair, the program was created to encourage students who are underrepresented in higher education to pursue graduate degrees, according to the Wichita State University McNair Scholars Web site.

The program gives scholars the opportunity to work with faculty mentors to conduct and present research. It also assists scholars in applying to graduate schools, finding financial aid for graduate study and gives students the opportunity to present research at national, regional and local levels.

"The McNair Program allows each participant a chance to embark on an exciting journey through post-graduate expectations and graduate preparations," said Koya Webb, an exercise science senior from WSU.

The support of McNair programs from other universities could lead to the development of a McNair Scholars program for OSU undergraduates. Universities may apply to develop a McNair program once every four years.

"There has been discussion about OSU applying to develop a McNair program at the next available opportunity," said Michael Heppler the assistant director for student academic services for the Graduate College.

OSU has supported the McNair Scholars Program since 1996, said Heppler. He is active in the McNair program nationwide. Last year, he spoke at the National McNair Scholars conference at the University of Tennessee as well as other conferences in the nation.

Five students from Wichita State University and four students from the University of Central Oklahoma presented research in a wide variety of disciplines.

McNair students from UCO prepared posters to present their research. Participants from UCO were Jimmy Leverette, Tasha Lewis, Felecia Jenkins and Darla Sherman.

Jimmy Leverette, a psychology senior, said his favorite aspect of presenting his research was explaining to people how his research could benefit them.

The McNair students from WSU gave oral presentations of their research. WSU participants included Stephanie Kirsch, Koya Webb, Catherine Browning, Dorine Douglas-Bey and Norma Campos.

These nine students are either first generation college students or are part of a minority group that is underrepresented in graduate programs across the nation.

Norma Campos, an aerospace engineering senior at WSU, is both a minority and a first generation college student. She is a perfect example of how the McNair program can help students conduct research in their fields.

She said her mother and brother have middle school educations and her father has a high school education.

The main obstacles she has had to overcome are financial and avoiding stereotypes. However, her mother has motivated her throughout her career.

Campos participated in a study on automated aerial refueling done by NASA and the Dryden Flight Research Center. The chief researchers on the project were Jennifer Hansen and James Murray.

OSU has hosted McNair students at the research symposium in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

"We have hosted McNair Scholars from 10 states and approximately 20 universities at the research symposium in the past five to seven years," Heppler said.

Heppler believes the research symposium will continue to grow each year due to the university's support of research week through such things as keynote speakers and marketing advertisements.

Both UCO and WSU plan to send McNair Scholars to next year's symposium.