



# McNair Moments

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Sponsors of the Mackie lecture: McNair Program, Distinguished Lecture Fund, College of Basic & Applied Sciences, Tennessee Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation and the Office of Multicultural Affairs

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## Mackie fires em up

“Don’t let anyone tell you that you can’t make it in school or in life,” says Dr. Calvin Mackie. “If I hear someone say to their kids, ‘I didn’t go to college and I’m alright,’ I have two questions for that person. First of all I want to ask, *who* says you’re alright? And the second thing is, even if you think you’re alright, why don’t you want more for your children than you had yourself?”



The McNair Program invited Mackie to the MTSU campus recently to speak to McNair Scholars and friends. His presentation was, by turn, inspiring, humorous, and challenging — too big to be contained by an immobile podium.

Mackie himself comes from a blue-collar family background (his father was a roofer) described in his just-released book, *A View from the Roof: Lessons for Life & Business*.

His message crosses class and color boundaries. As he puts it, “Not everyone who looks like you is your friend, and not everyone who doesn’t look like you is your enemy.”

Education is a recurring theme for Mackie. He approvingly quotes W.E.B. DuBois, who said that the purpose of education “is not to make men and women into doctors, lawyers and engineers, but to make

doctors, lawyers and engineers into men and women.”

He places the responsibility for obtaining an education squarely on the individual by saying, “It’s up to you. It’s in your power. Nobody’s stopping you. The only person who can stop you is you. And don’t expect it to be handed to you. It’s hard work and you’re the one who has to do it. You *can* do it. You *should* do it.”

To Mackie, achieving the Ph.D. was a matter of empowerment. Getting an advanced degree was not just a means for getting a job. Nor was it an end point.

In his book, Mackie says, “Today, many people believe



that the purpose of education is to get a good job and to make good money. ... The purpose of education isn’t to make money, but to supply you with the tools and mechanisms to be free: free to create, free to produce, and free to do the things God has ordained and created you to do.”

But education does not stop with the Ph.D. Both in his book and in person, Mackie further says, “I’ve said it before, and

I’ll say it again until I’m blue in the face: We must be concerned with life-long learning. The world is forever changing and our skills must be updated to maintain our place and value in the market.”

Mackie continually exhorts scholars to stretch and exert self-discipline. He does so with goodwill and with humor.

His humor is sometimes self-deprecating. One story he tells on himself is the day he and his brother, Willie, botched a job of forming copper gutters in the sheet metal shop. They were bored and they let quality slip.

Their father, owner of the shop, was outraged and said, “Discipline yourself to do it right the first time and every time. Otherwise you’ll have to do it all over again and no one’s gonna pay you for that.” Then, almost screaming, he added, “And turn that d - - radio off!”

Something Dr. Mackie turns ON, though, is an audience. □



Calvin Mackie is Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Tulane University. He earned his Ph.D. at the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1996.

## Important dates

### June 6

The eight-week McNair Summer Program begins.

### July 7-10

SAEOPP/UTK McNair Scholars Research Conference in Knoxville

### August 1-3

McNair Summer Symposium at the MTSU Alumni Center. The symposium will start at 9:00a.m. and run to 4:00p.m. each day. Refreshments provided. Scholars present their research, and the event is open to the public.

## IAQs

(Infrequently asked questions)

### What *really* happens at a GRE Testing Center?

By Karin Hooks

They are all slightly different, of course, but this is my experience at the test center in Franklin, Tennessee. Thankfully, I arrived with time to spare despite being caught in early morning rush hour traffic. The first thing I noticed is that the testing center is much smaller than I had imagined. It is actually housed in a Sylvan Learning Center and consists of a small lobby, a tiny office, the testing room with about a dozen computer stations, and a large learning lab for the Sylvan students.



Several other people arrived while I was waiting to begin, and I was surprised to realize from their conversations that I was the only one taking the GRE (I had envisioned a setting similar to my paper-based testing experiences where a roomful of people test together).

The first few minutes were spent copying a paragraph agreeing not to disclose any test questions to others. Then, upon entering the office, I was required to show my identification and to place my belongings (including my watch) into a locker since I couldn't take anything into the testing room except my identification and locker key. Also, I was asked to count and sign for the scrap paper I was given.

When I sat down at the computer, the attendant was required to perform a few key strokes to begin the testing procedure. After verifying my identity, I had to fill in the information for the schools where I wanted my tests scores sent.

My test began with two writing sections and then I was allowed a ten-minute break. To leave my computer station during the break, I had to raise my hand and notify the monitor plus sign out of the room. After signing back in, the rest of my test consisted of two verbal sections and a math section. These sections seemed even harder than I expected, and I could not gauge how well I was doing.

When I finished, I had to decide whether to view my scores (in which case they would be sent to the schools listed) or to delete them without viewing. I had thought that I would see my scores before being asked whether to send or delete them, so this caught me off guard. I decided to view my scores, and I wrote them down on my scrap paper as previously instructed; when I turned the paper in I was allowed to transfer my score to a post-it note to take with me. Although people taking other tests got a print out of their scores immediately, GRE takers must wait for the results to arrive by mail.

I would definitely recommend taking the GRE prep course offered by McNair; it helped acquaint me with the testing format and procedures and enabled me to approach the test with confidence. □

*Editor's Note: Karin did just fine on the test. On the basis of her GRE scores, GPA and McNair activities, she has since been accepted by seven graduate programs and has decided to accept the offer made by the University of Delaware.*

### Five graduate, nine en-



### May 2005 Graduates

Ashley Hicks  
Tanya McLaughlin  
Carmen Triplett  
James Whitaker  
Tim Worrall

### New Scholars for Summer 2005

Kristen Bailey  
Jeffrey Blackman  
Roberta Edge  
James Edmondson  
Russell Parman  
Sarafina Croft  
Rachel Edmonds  
Megan Musick  
Terri Proctor

## Bonnie plays nashville

As the date for the Southeastern Psychological Assn. (SEPA) conference approached, I began to ask myself, "What have I gotten myself into?!" It dawned on me that I, the person who despises public speaking more than anyone I know, had voluntarily signed up to talk in front of *doctors* about research. As much as I didn't want it to, April 8th arrived, and I made the journey to Nashville for the conference.

I spent all day Friday admiring others' work. I enjoyed hearing about so much fascinating research that I completely forgot to worry about Saturday, when I would present. By the next morning, though, the nervousness had returned. I began to pray for a natural disaster or a sudden and horrible illness. For some odd reason, as I started putting up my slides, I began to relax a bit. My mentor arrived and gave me a few encouraging words just as the first curious person came up to ask questions. Much to my amazement, I could answer all his questions fairly easily. As more people came up, I began to realize that I really did know what I was talking about. After that, time seemed to fly by. I was actually enjoying this opportunity to share my research with others!

This conference provided me with so much beyond the chance to showcase my work. I got to mingle with other people who are interested in the same areas that I am. For instance, one professor who has done similar work has since emailed me with helpful information for my own work. I made other contacts as well. I met professors from schools that I'm interested in attending as a graduate student. For example, I met a graduate professor from LSU (a school I'm looking into) who is a former undergraduate student of my mentor!

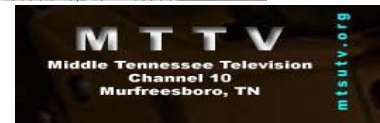
I think the best thing I came away with, however, was more confidence. Before arriving at the conference, I was so nervous, but by forcing myself to do something I felt would be unpleasant, I opened my eyes to something new and exciting. — *Bonnie Saari*



Bonnie Saari with mentor, Dr. Stephen Schmidt.

## McNair in the media

The McNair Scholars Program has been featured in the *Daily News Journal*, on MTTV (twice), in the *Record* and in both the electronic and paper versions of *Sidelines* (again twice) in recent months. Not to mention this newsletter.



## Making the most of mentoring

The McNair Program offers a variety of career development resources and opportunities to budding scholars. Among these, the mentor relationship will be the most important asset for many McNair participants. Mentorship provides an informal, yet highly valuable, learning opportunity. Mentors share strategies for success and the unwritten rules of their professions with their protégés.

Research demonstrates the powerful impact of mentorship. According to a study by Shaffer (2000), professionals who have been mentored:

- complete advanced degrees earlier,
- invest more in career development,
- demonstrate more leadership skills,
- get promoted sooner and more often,
- are more productive, and
- have higher job satisfaction.

Mentoring relationships are particularly important in professions that have a history of preferential treatment or discriminatory practices toward specific employee groups. These biases may favor or impede individuals of one gender, ethnic, socioeconomic or age group. Mentors who are established and successful in the field can help students to

understand and overcome these potential barriers. Mentors also create opportunities for protégés to publicly demonstrate current abilities and future potential, which can be a powerful strategy for overcoming traditional biases and stereotypes.

Good mentors support the protégé in a variety of ways. They promote learning, discipline and self-confidence by providing affirmation, encouragement and support. They can inspire the student by serving as a role model of career success. They offer advice and open doors to future educational programs, research opportunities and employment prospects.

This is often accomplished by introducing the protégé to the mentor's network of professional colleagues, as well as by advocating for the student in recommendations and letters of support. They also encourage risk-taking and "stretching" in professional activities such as writing a grant proposal or writing a paper for publication.

Mentors also provide support and guidance through constructive feedback regarding potential pitfalls in the field. The younger partner can benefit by hearing examples of early mistakes or missed opportunities, in addition to the positive experiences,

from a mentor's career.

Like any relationship, a successful mentoring relationship requires investment from both partners. Both need to commit the time to meeting, interacting and working together in spite of heavily committed schedules.

The protégé should freely discuss his or her interests, learning needs and goals. The mentor should offer to collaborate on professional projects. Both must develop a sense of trust. They must be respectful of each other's time limitations and competing obligations. And each must demonstrate respect and gratitude for the other's contributions.

The benefits of a successful mentoring relationship are not limited to professional development but should grow into long-standing professional friendship. The relationship is reciprocal with mutual benefits. For the mentor, few professional experiences will be more rewarding than witnessing the success of a protégé who matures into a valued professional colleague. — *Dr. Suzanne Prevost*



## No free ride

As a business major I thought getting an advanced degree was just like getting a bachelors degree. The only difference in my mind was that I had to invest two additional years of school in order to more than double my salary. I felt that an MBA would make me a more competitive individual. So when I heard about the McNair Program, I immediately sought out the details.

After entering the program, I could only focus on the three most important aspects to me at the time: money, travel and a free ticket to graduate school. I soon learned that the purpose of the program was to grant first-generation/low-income and minority undergraduates an opportunity to gain research experience and to prepare them for doctoral research. Every student in the program has to get a mentor and develop a research project. My internship coordinator volunteered to be my research mentor and I had a research plan. I felt this program would be a cakewalk. I was greatly mistaken.

My mentor introduced me to the reality that is

graduate school. The research involved required long hours toward a project that will never be perfect. No matter what I did, it was wrong. My mentor forced me to think and to work hard for reasons that I could not understand at first. Every time I met with him I had to be completely prepared or the project would suffer delay. I had to mature a great deal in a short amount of time. This was certainly not the free ride to graduate school that I had anticipated.

Graduate school is not about obtaining a degree for a higher salary. It is about discovery. Discovering that you have a purpose to make an impact on society. Dr. Orlando Taylor, Dean of Graduate Studies at Howard University, visited MTSU last spring and said that the holders of doctoral degrees were the hosts of society because their discoveries benefit society. For minorities and first-generation students seeking to improve society, the McNair Program can help set you on the right path. — *James Whitaker*



## Two new mas-

### Congratulations!

To Sharon Caton, Delta State (left) and Raven Neese, North Carolina State, for their achievement.



## McNair & honors & pizza

On March 21, the McNair Program and the Honors College teamed up to host a mini-orientation for students who qualify for both programs. (Both McNair and the Honors College require a 3.0 GPA or better for participation.) Nearly 40 students dropped by to hear from Honors and McNair administrators and scholars who are currently in the programs, and to make a sizable dent in 17 pizzas and lots of cookies. More than a dozen of the students picked up applications for the McNair Program. Hopefully, all the students left the orientation stuffed with ... information.

### McNair advisory board profiles

In a continuing series, McNair Moments will feature profiles on two Advisory Board members. Our first two guests are Dr. Babbili and Dr. Bonner.



**Dr. Anantha Babbili, Dean College of Mass Communication Bio**

Dr. Babbili has a masters from the University of Oklahoma and a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa. He was chair and professor of journalism at Texas Christian University before coming to MTSU.

**Vision for McNair**

“One of the most noble premises in all of higher education in the U.S. is that of the McNair Program. It allows students to tap into the resources of this great nation and fulfill a dream. It brings intellectual diversity that amplifies the university’s mission. The program helps students embark on a perpetual journey of discovery and self-revelation.”



**Dr. Gloria Bonner, Dean College of Education & Behavioral Science Bio**

Dr. Bonner earned a Bachelor of Science degree and a Master of Education degree from MTSU, and an Ed.D. from Tennessee State University. She has 32 years of experience at both the elementary and college level.

**Vision for McNair**

“Open to diversity, different research agendas, different points of view, thinking outside the box, and best practices. With all of us working together, the MTSU McNair Program has become a great initiative designed to enhance the quality of academic experiences of our students in higher education.”

### McNair staff

- L. Diane Miller, PhD, *Director*
- Becky Linville and Steve Saunders, *Interim Program Coordinators*
- Mary Enderson, PhD, *Academic Coordinator*
- Cindy Howell, *Secretary*
- Steve Saunders, *Editor*

## Community colleges

Every fall, hundreds of students transfer to MTSU from a dozen community colleges in Tennessee. The top three community colleges alone — Columbia State, Motlow State and Volunteer State — are the source of more than 200 transfers each.

Since transfer students generally have completed 60 or more credit hours, a basic requirement for the McNair Program, it seemed to make sense to visit some of the community colleges and enlist their help in reaching potential McNair Scholars before these students even arrive in Murfreesboro.

So we did.

Thus far, the reception given MTSU’s McNair Program has been encouraging. The aim is that when community college transfers get to the Customs orientation at MTSU they will already know something about McNair. And if they don’t? Well, we’ll be at Customs, too. □



Columbia State  
Diane Miller/McNair with Nancy Bass, Christa Martin and Yolanda Neal of Columbia.



Volunteer State  
Charles Lea (standing at right) and division deans at Volunteer State.

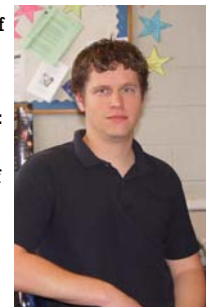
## Potpourri with cindy howell



Raven Neese has delivered the first “McNair baby.”

Brenna was born on March 25th at 7 pounds 14 ounces. Given that her mother has two degrees now, we’re happy to say that Brenna will not be able to qualify someday for McNair as a first-generation student.

Collin Davey has received notification of an award from URSCA for research involving the Norman conquest of England. He will examine three records: two chronicles and a 150-foot embroidered tapestry with a visual depiction of the events found in the chronicles. He will travel to France and England to study these records as well as battle sites from the era.



Carmen Triplett (center top) played Topsy Washington in “The Colored Museum,” sponsored by the African History Month Committee and the African American Student Assn.