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## Institute helps undergraduates with future

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Each semester, the UNLV McNair Scholars Institute aims to help undergraduates chart a course to graduate school and beyond.

The institute, which accepts students each semester, gives research opportunities, free tutoring, academic counseling and graduate program admissions assistance to undergraduates. Students participating in the McNair program at UNLV this semester worked on research projects during the summer and presented their findings at a reception last month.



Laura Emerson/ViewUNLV faculty member Tish Smyer, left, speaks with UNLV pre-nursing major Susan Taylor at the 2009 McNair Scholars Institute poster program reception at the UNLV Student Union on Oct. 21.

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On the outskirts of a meeting room in UNLV's Student Union, 14 laminated posters attached to larger white

foam boards sat atop black easels. With the help of a faculty mentor, the 14 students exhibited a complete research presentation, which included an abstract (a summary of what the rest of the project will outline), an introduction, methods, data, results, conclusions, acknowledgements and references.

Each of the 14 undergraduate researchers also were present to answer questions about their findings. One of those students was Spanish and pre-nursing major Susan Taylor.

Prior to this, Taylor, who is 21, had never conducted research.

"I figured out it was something that I was not good at," Taylor said.

Although she didn't feel confident with her research, Taylor said she does want to continue her studies in a graduate program.

"I realize this is just the beginning of what I'll need to know in a master's program," Taylor said. "My ultimate goal is to do nursing in a nonprofit or in a foreign country."

Taylor's mentor was Tish Smyer from the school of nursing, who teaches at the master's level.

"It's interesting to work with them very early in their career," Smyer said. "They have a lot of energy."

The goal of the McNair Scholars Institute is to provide opportunities for students who qualify as low-income and are the first generation of their family to attend college and to garner interest in post-graduate education programs. All participants have to maintain a 3.0 grade point average and be a junior or senior in their undergraduate studies to be accepted.

"We encourage students to pursue their doctorates," Deanna Davis, director for academic enrichment for the UNLV Center for Academic Enrichment and Outreach, said.

At UNLV, the federally funded institute is coordinated through the Center.

Projects at the reception included Sorority Girls: Perception vs. Reality; Homelessness in Southern Nevada in a New Economic Paradigm; and Characteristics of Youths with School Refusal Behavior. In addition to

presenting at UNLV, students involved with the McNair Scholars Institute travel to other universities to present, and they attend national graduate school recruitment seminars.

Davis said being a McNair can help students get accepted into graduate schools.

"It adds to the package," she said.

The selection process for the McNair Scholars Institute is modeled after the application process for most graduate school programs. Students need to submit a personal statement, letters of recommendation and transcripts. The recruitment deadline for the institute's Spring 2010 semester is Dec. 4.

For more information on the McNair Scholars Institute, call 895-4777 or visit <http://caeo.unlv.edu/>.

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