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The inequities in our education system persist. Underrepresented, low-income and first generation students remain challenged in pursuing and completing a college degree. Issues of preparation, affordability, navigability and persistence plague a community of learners that seek to improve their lives and the lives of their families. The value proposition of going to college is in question due to the high debt level many develop. The persisting gaps between majority and underrepresented students remain concerning.

As daunting as this situation sounds, we are optimistic, committed and excited about the opportunities before us. We believe that equity in education is both a necessity and attainable. "Equality is leaving the door open for anyone who has the means to approach it; Equity is ensuring there is a pathway to that door for those who need it.” (Caroline Belden) Since 2008 the Center for Access and Attainment has been providing that pathway for students by:

- developing research and research opportunities that contribute to the dialogue surrounding issues of college access, persistence and degree attainment
- piloting and scaling programs that address the retention and graduation of underrepresented, low-income and first generation students
- partnering with Chicagoland school systems, non-profit organizations and community based organizations in developing pipeline programs
- providing students with opportunities to develop research skills and gain research experiences that will heighten their profile as a graduate school candidates
- providing students with a supportive environment in which they can pursue their academic success and professional preparation
- leveraging dynamic internal partnerships to improve the student experience and remove barriers to success

I am pleased to share the results of our efforts for 2019 – 2020.
The Center for Access and Attainment (CAA) serves as a focal point for dialogue, strategy and action concerning college access and attainment. This is consistent with DePaul University’s strategic vision to exceed national norms in recruiting, retaining and graduating a diverse student body, with an emphasis on first-generation and low-income students in the Chicagoland area.

The CAA Pathway is a strategic initiative designed to increase the access of and degree completion by historically underrepresented groups in higher education. This initiative creates learning opportunities that complement and enhance the educational and career success of students. Through a sequence of educational trainings, co-curricular learning experiences, and support services delivery, students are better positioned for degree attainment, post graduate studies and career success.

The goals of the CAA Pathway are to:

- build college awareness and a supportive environment for K-12 students in the Chicagoland area
- provide college readiness and early career exploration programming for high school students
- identify internship and co-curricular learning opportunities for DePaul students
- connect DePaul students to research positions and internship opportunities at Chicago-area corporations and institutes
- coordinate graduate school and career learning programming to support and prepare DePaul students for graduate school

These goals are realized through the programs and partnerships cultivated and maintained by the center’s three main functional units:

- College Access
- TRiO programs (Student Support Services & McNair Scholars)
- Mitchem Scholars
We aim to broaden the capacity of degree attainment for first-generation students, low-income students and students of color from Chicago high schools.

Our programming serves Chicago area students from public and Catholic K-12 schools, focusing primarily on high school students. Throughout the academic year we offer:

- The College Connect Summer Enrichment Program
- Essay Editing Services
- Campus Visits
- D-MEN Challenge
- Strategic Partnerships

[go.depaul.edu/collegeaccess](go.depaul.edu/collegeaccess)
College Connect is a FREE summer enrichment program for Chicago high school students. Designed for high school juniors, the program introduces students to college-level coursework while also providing college readiness workshops, career exploration opportunities, and diverse cultural experiences. Due to the COVID-19 campus closure, College Connect 2020 will be virtual.

go.depaul.edu/college-connect

JUNE - AUGUST 2019

Students Enrolled

90

63% First Generation

73% Female
27% Male

67% Low-Income

44% Hispanic or Latino
28% White
19% Black or African-American
5% Asian

College Connect Classes:

DOCUMENTARIES

BIO-ETHICS

PSYCHOLOGY

SOCIAL JUSTICE

SOCIAL MEDIA

College Connect Experience:

"Doing College Connect was one of the best programs I was able to be a part of in high school. I had a great time going to classes and trips around the city, it was such an immersive college experience and a period of growth for me as well. DePaul provided me with a truly valuable experience during my summer, since then I knew DePaul was on the top of my list when applying to colleges!"

Jorge Garcia, DePaul Peer guide and College Connect '17 alum

"College Connect served as an opportunity to experience what I will encounter in college, a guide to applying and becoming involved and even assured me that I do want to further study English literature because of the amazing English class I took the summer of 2019."

Delia Martinez, College Connect '19 alum

“My son’s participation in College Connect had everything to do with him deciding to attend DePaul as a freshman this year. I cannot thank you enough for this program, he is so proud to be part of the Blue Demon family.”

Kaneka Ceh, mother of Orion Light, College Connect 2019 alum
We aim to host groups of students from targeted populations. Collaborate with middle and high school counselors, college coaches and nonprofit organization leaders enables us to widen college access for traditionally underrepresented students. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic we have implemented virtual campus visits to serve the needs of our target populations via Zoom.

go.depaul.edu/campus-visits

I can't thank you enough for the time you gave our students. You provided them with both your personal and professional insights and offered excellent student tour guides. The students were very happy and nearly all of them expressed the interest to apply to DePaul University. You and your team could not have been more amazing and I thank you again for supporting our students.

Yoomna Rahim, Chicago Operations Associate at Urban Alliance

“It was such a wonderful experience for our students, and even I had a great time! I hope that you will have us again next year!”

Colleen Henehan, Student Success Counselor from CICS Wrightwood

“Thank you so much for everything that you coordinated for our Embarc students last week. Our students had many insightful reflections about how appreciative they were to see a college campus filled with so many resources.”

Ashia Aubourg, Program Manager at Embarc Chicago
In partnership with Casualty Actuarial Society (CAS), a leading international organization for professional actuaries, and DePaul’s actuarial science department, we host annual “High School Actuarial Day” events to introduce actuarial science and math careers to high school juniors proficient in math. High school math teachers, counselors, and interested students partner with actuaries (who generously volunteer their time leading workshops and math activities) to explore the actuarial field and related careers.

2019 HIGH SCHOOL ACTUARIAL DAY EVENT:

- 10 Visiting Schools
- 217 Participating Students
- 56% Female
- 44% Male
- 2% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- 5% American Indian/Alaska Native
- 9% Asian
- 13% Black or African American
- 28% White
- 43% Latinx

This experience provides our students who are passionate in mathematical studies an opportunity to explore other post-secondary and career options with a mathematics focus. Students are enthusiastically engaged throughout the day’s activities with speakers sharing first-hand accounts of actuarial field experiences, are given opportunities to meet and collaborate with other students from across the city with like interests and participate in a friendly math competition. School faculty members that attend the event also return back to school with positive feedback. Its a rewarding experience for all!

Irene Kondos, IB Diploma Coordinator at William Howard Taft High School
The McNair program prepares carefully selected undergraduate students from low-income and/or first-generation college families, or who are members of underrepresented groups, for doctoral study and faculty careers. It is a challenging program that provides opportunities for undergraduate research, faculty mentoring, study abroad and other scholarly activities alongside intensive advising and assistance with the graduate school admission process.

The McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program at DePaul University is a U.S. Department of Education TRiO Program grant award. The program is funded (70 percent of annual budget) with federal funds and supported by the Center for Access and Attainment (30 percent of annual budget) using DePaul funds.

go.dePaul.edu/trio-mcnair
MCNAIR 2018-2019 COHORT

31 Students Enrolled

- 3 White Participants
- 7 Black Participants
- 21 Latinx Participants
- 74% Female
- 26% Male
- 77% First-Generation and Low-Income Minority

100%
Completing an independent research study with a faculty member

100%
Presented their research at a conference

70%
Completed a study abroad experience

77%
Seniors that applied to graduate school

80%
Accepted into graduate school

Majors

- 23% Humanities and Non-Majors
- 13% STEM Majors
- 65% Social/Behavior Science
STUDENT EXPERIENCE

McNair helped me build strong relationships with faculty mentors who became the foundation of support and guidance as I pursued my goal of higher education. In fact, the first thing my PhD faculty mentor said to me upon our first in-person meeting was, “Your letter-writers had wonderful things to say about you”. This fall I will be joining the University of Santa Barbara’s PhD program in Geography with a concentration in cognition and human behavior. Ultimately, I would like to be a professor who focuses on applying theory to fieldwork and helps immerse students into experiential learning.

Kelly Velazquez, Alumni McNair Student

I am looking forward to the next phase of my academic career, knowing that I have the incredible McNair network as support. From the newfound knowledge I gained through these experiences I am pursing a dual PhD in Geography, Environment, and Spatial Science and Environmental Science and Policy at Michigan State University. Recognizing that structural racism disproportionately impacts low-income communities of color, I hope to gain experience with spatial analysis and Geographic Information Systems to help solve some of these complex issues. Upon completion of my PhD, I plan on teaching and advocating for environmental justice as an advisor for the Environmental Justice Caucus.

Jesse Pink, Alumni McNair Student

While growing both as a scholar and student during my time in McNair, I completed a Summer Research Opportunity Program at University of Illinois at Chicago and an International Research Experience in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Additionally, I obtained a Research Assistantship from the Department of Psychology at DePaul University. During my last year of undergraduate studies, I was accepted to a fully funded PhD program at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign with a three-year fellowship. McNair was fundamental and the driver of all my accomplishments. I continue to use the knowledge, development, and scholarly wisdom I gained during my time in McNair. Without the McNair program I would not have envisioned and achieved my educational goals.

Grisel Lopez, McNair Alumni

McNair granted me with the opportunities and mentorship needed to succeed as an undergraduate and to complete the graduate application process, which has allowed me to pursue a doctoral degree in clinical psychology. With the assistance of McNair, I was able to attain valuable research experience, such as presenting at conferences, working on publications, and conducting research at DePaul and UCLA. These experiences led me to Loyola University, where I am currently a third year Ph.D. student in a research lab that focuses on immigrant and refugee children and families. Regarding personal goals, McNair has instilled in me a sense of resiliency which has carried on through graduate school and my career. Every time I am faced with a new challenge, I am reminded by my time in McNair that I belong here, that my voice matters, and that I am never inferior to anyone else. Imposter syndrome is real, and having people who see your potential, who support you, who help you feel valued, is vital to success.

Yvita Bustos, McNair Alumni
TRiO Student Support Services (SSS) provides advising, academic assistance, mentoring and career-related services to eligible first-generation and low-income undergraduates at DePaul. The aim is to increase the college retention and graduation rates of participants and empower the transition from college to career. Since 1997, DePaul’s SSS program has assisted approximately 2,000 students on the path to timely attainment of their baccalaureate degree.

The TRIO program has origins in the federal "War on Poverty" initiatives of the 1960s and 1970s. Their overall goal was to expand educational opportunity by providing a pathway from sixth grade to college graduation for students from low-income and first-generation college families. However, not all colleges and universities offer TRIO programs, which are awarded through a highly competitive grant process administered by the U.S. Department of Education.

[go.dePaul.edu/trio-sss]
201 Student Participants

72% Female
28% Male

92 New Participants

109 Continuing Participants

7% Asian
9% White
17% Latinx
24% Black or African American
43% Mixed Ethnicity

Academic Standing
92% of Participants are in Academic Good Standing

College Grade Level
3% Freshman
24% Sophomore
23% Junior
46% Seniors
Receiving mentoring from people like Miranda Quinn and Carlisa Brown with finding out that Financial Aid Appeals exist at all, or how to approach graduate school properly, were pivotal to my growth as a student and person. I was accepted to two graduate programs through the strength of their guidance and continual encouragement, and will begin a Masters of Information Science program at U of M Ann Arbor next fall. They gave me the confidence to finish my degree strong and leverage that into a future. I felt like I wasted so much time in life so I could only spare what was essential, and knowing that SSS was there if I had foolish questions, needed a snack, or maybe just someone to say hello to during my day with no assignment attached to the interaction ended up being truly essential for me.

*Michael Joseph Garza, TRIO SSS Alumni*

SSS has been with me since I started my classes in my community college before I transferred to DePaul University, SSS was there for me when I needed a work-study, when I needed an internship, and when I dreamed of international exposure. SSS is the compass that marked my path when I was feeling stressed and sometimes even lost. These years would not have been this positive if it were not because I had the SSS family to support me all along my path.

*Layoneth Ramos, TRIO SSS Alumni*

At every point in my undergraduate career I found community in all CAA programs, which have been instrumental in my personal and professional development and have led me to realize my potential as a college student and future graduate student. Looking forward, I seek to mentor first-generation students as everyone in the CAA has mentored me. CAA has continuously provided me with the invaluable support to pursuing higher education and finding my own voice.

*Monica Estrada, TRIO SSS Participant*

*Monica Estrada started the CAA pathway in SSS and subsequently was a participant of IRE, AMF, and McNair.*
The Arnold Mitchem Fellows Program serves first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented sophomores planning to attend graduate, law, or medical school and pursue a research-based career. Participation in the program is an academic, yearlong commitment. Students complete a series of signature assignments (i.e., personal philosophy paper, annotated bibliography, and a literature review) to improve their academic research and writing skills while reflecting on their lived experiences.

[go.depaul.edu/mitchem-fellows]
MITCHEM FELLOWS 2019-2020

Student Pre/Post Perception Survey

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<th>Pre-Survey</th>
<th>Post-Survey</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know how to select research topics that relate to my lived experiences and identity.</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to create an annotated bibliography that relates to my research interests.</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to create a literature review that is both academic and deeply personal.</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
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AMF gave me a voice to advocate for people of color. As a Native American woman living below the poverty line, I represent less than 2% of the US population. Therefore, as an ethnic minority woman from a rural area, I knew that I could contribute to bringing a unique social and racial perspective to schools that were predominately Caucasian. I am fortunate to have worked in 2 laboratories during my undergraduate career: in the department of Neurosurgery at the University of Chicago and in the department of Psychology at DePaul University.

Alondra Venegas, Arnold Mitchem Fellows Alumni

In all honesty, without the AMF’s help I would not have been able to navigate the U.S. education system as I did. The AMF was true to their mission to help students like me who are the first in their families to attend an American university and now, thanks to their unconditional support, I get to be the first person in my family to obtain a doctorate degree. A thousand thanks to the AMF!

Danya Soto, Arnold Mitchem Fellows Alumni

Throughout my journey in AMF, I have gained confidence in myself, expanded my network and have taken advantage of every learning opportunity. AMF has provided me guidance and comfort throughout my journey and I am confident I will continue using the skills and knowledge they have provided me to help me achieve my goals. Since participating in AMF I have joined the 2020 UC Santa Cruz Doris Duke Conservation Scholars program, where I will be embarking on two successive summers of academic growth and hands-on learning in conservation research, leadership and practice.

Valerie Tafoya, Arnold Mitchem Fellow Participant

The AMF program taught me that extra opportunities do not take away from the college experience, they actually add to it. Sure, the more on your plate the more packed your schedule may be, but in the process, you learn so much about yourself, your habits and how to improve for the future. The AMF program has also been a valuable steppingstone in applying for the McNair program. It is a fellowship for DePaul students in their junior and senior years who are interested in pursuing their masters and doctoral degrees. Without the confidence I gained in the AMF program I would not even have thought to pursue further certification.

Cameron LeFlore, Arnold Mitchem Fellows Alumni
**International Research Experience (IRE)**

The International Research Experience (IRE) contributes to students’ academic and professional development by offering a guided research experience abroad. It’s designed to prepare first-generation college students and undergraduate students from ethnic minority groups for graduate school and careers that include research experiences. Through IRE, students are able to gain a diverse perspective of the world, develop problem-solving skills, and become more competitive in the job market or graduate school application process.

- **6 Student Participants**
  - 65% Female
  - 35% Male
  - 100% First-Generation
  - 90% Low-Income
  - 2 Black Participants
  - 2 White Participants
  - 2 Latinx Participants
  - 1 Sophomore
  - 5 Seniors

**Predicted Outcomes**

- 5 Students completed presentation of their project by spring 2020
- 7 Students completed summer research applications

**CAA Lab**

The CAA Lab serves first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students interested in learning about research in a practical way. CAA Lab provides co-curricular educational internships where students receive transformative research training to introduce them to academic research methods and practice. Through this experience, participants become aware of research possibilities on campus and learn how to become competitive for acceptance into research projects in faculty labs. This experience improves the likelihood that participants will act on their research and career interests earlier in their college transition.

- **21 Student Participants**
  - 81% Female
  - 19% Male
  - 100% First-Generation
  - 30% Low-Income
  - 4 Black Participants
  - 8 White Participants
  - 9 Latinx Participants
  - 5 Freshman
  - 1 Sophomore
  - 9 Juniors
  - 5 Seniors
  - 1 Grad Student

**Predicted Outcomes**

- 8 Students completed research project by spring quarter 2020
- 5 Students completed presentation of their project by spring 2020
- 7 Students completed summer research applications

**Chicago Research Experience (CRE)**

The Chicago Research Experience is an opportunity for students at DePaul to learn about social challenges in Chicago through a community-based project. During the experience, students explore a social challenge using qualitative research methods (e.g., observations, interviews, and discourse analysis). In addition to supporting a Chicago community organization, the experience allows students to become more competitive for research careers and the graduate school application process.

- **3 Student Participants**
  - 100% Female
  - 100% First-Generation
  - 30% Low-Income

**Published Research**

- Predictors of natural mentoring relationships and students’ adjustment to college by Luciano Berardi, Bernadette Sanchez, and Gabriel Kuperminc; find at: https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22269

- Expanding Undergraduate Research Experiences for Underrepresented Students: The Arnold L. Mitchem Fellowship Program at DePaul University by Terry Vaughan III, Maria Mendez, and Luciano Berardi, find at: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1213467