As both an undergraduate and a graduate student at Minnesota State Mankato, Joseph Williams benefited from mentoring relationships with faculty and staff as he pursued his goal of earning a doctoral degree in counseling. When he enters the doctoral program at the University of Iowa in the fall, he’ll be one step closer to achieving his goal.
The Road to Becoming a Scholar

Minnesota State Mankato student Joseph Williams is the university’s first McNair Scholar to be accepted into a doctoral program.

By David Chapman

Introducing the Center for Excellence in Scholarship and Research

David Haglin, the Center’s inaugural director, gives an overview of current projects and provides a glimpse of things to come.

New Research Group Brings Humanities Scholars Together

Twenty faculty members and students representing five academic departments come together to reduce isolation, share their work, and provide support for each other’s scholarship.

By David Chapman

Mentoring the Next Generation of Scholars

Vinai Noraakkunkut proves that the benefits of mentoring relationships flow both ways.

Faculty who have high-quality digital photographs of recent research or creative projects are encouraged to submit them to the College of Graduate Studies and Research for inclusion in upcoming issues of FRONTIERS or TOMORROW. Photographs should be at least 200 dpi and should be accompanied by a brief caption describing the project and the photo. E-mail photographs (in jpg or tif format) to anne.blackhurst@mnsu.edu

The mission of FRONTIERS is to celebrate the scholarly and creative accomplishments of Minnesota State Mankato faculty and students and inform the campus community of research-related opportunities. FRONTIERS is published three times per year by the College of Graduate Studies and Research and distributed to Minnesota State Mankato faculty, staff, and graduate students. The College of Graduate Studies and Research welcomes ideas for feature stories and other content consistent with the mission of the newsletter.

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Joseph Williams is tall and lean, with a casual, unassuming presence. When asked about his accomplishments and goals, he answers with sincere modesty—often downplaying his own talents and achievements. But ask his academic and athletic mentors, and it quickly becomes clear there’s more to Joseph than he might let on.

“He was a quiet person in class,” says Dr. Houlihan, Joseph’s adolescent psychology professor. “However, I noticed about mid-semester that he was outperforming everyone else. He pretty much never missed anything.”

This from the student who, truth be told, was an athlete first and foremost. “When I came to MSU, basketball was life,” Joseph says. “My schooling and social life were at a distant second. I did not believe in life without basketball.”

Joseph was a starter on the MSU men’s squad, playing on the 2004–2005 team that broke school records for number of victories, points scored, three-point field goals, and blocked shots. Coach Margenthaler remembers Joseph warmly. “He is one of the most honest, hardest working, and loyal players that have ever come out of our program.”

His on-court success led Joseph to consider staying with the sport—he even thought about trying out for a European league. But he knew the danger of chasing a basketball dream that might lead to no end. “I didn’t want that to happen to me,” he says.

As important as basketball was to him, he was reluctant to think of it as his only option, which, as he says, “is one of those dangerous ideas that too many minority athletes fall into.”

Joseph credits Dr. Houlihan, psychology professor Dr. Sarah Sifers, and ethnic studies professor Hanh-Huy Phan for pushing him to think about continuing his education. Until then, he says, “it was the last thing on my mind to go to graduate school.” Dr. Houlihan remembers telling Joseph that he was the number one ranked student in his adolescent psychology class. “He was outperforming some seriously impressive people. I felt that he could perform at the doctoral level, and I suggested that he give it some consideration.”

In the summer of 2004, Joseph did take steps toward graduate school and was accepted into the McNair Scholars program, which helps students from under-represented groups prepare for doctoral studies. Michelle Carter was the director of the McNair Scholars program during Joseph’s senior year. “As with many students who are the first in their families to earn a bachelor’s, a Ph.D. often seems like a pipedream,” she says. Ms. Carter could see that the decision to stick with school was not coming easily for him, but, she says, “once Joseph enrolled in the graduate program in counseling and student personnel at MSU, he just seemed to thrive.”

In 2005, Joseph began pursuing a master’s degree in counseling and student personnel, where his advisor, Dr. Diane Coursol, says he clearly ranks within the top 5% of students she has worked with over the past 20 years. In addition...
The College of Graduate Studies and Research provides financial awards to students whose scholarly or creative work has been accepted for presentation at a regional or national conference, and who have received matching financial support from their college and/or department to help pay for travel to the event. The College of Graduate Studies and Research will match, up to a total of $500, college and departmental funding received by the student. During the current academic year, the College has to date contributed over $9,000 to students, representing 10 academic departments: biology, communication disorders, English, ethnic and multicultural studies, geography, geontology, history, psychology, sociology, and speech communication.

Eligibility

The awards are available to any currently enrolled graduate student. Students must present the results of their scholarship at a national or regional conference, and the presentation must have been invited directly by the program organizer or submitted to the program committee for their consideration and selection. The number of awards is limited by the availability of funds, and funds are allocated as proposals are received.

Application Process

Application is by letter. The letter should include the student’s contact information, a brief description of the scholarly or creative work and the conference at which it will be presented, and a proposed budget for the trip. Required attachments include a copy of the conference announcement, a letter of invitation or acceptance from the program committee for the conference, and evidence that the home department and/or college has agreed to provide funding. If applicable, the student must submit a letter from the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) confirming IRB approval of the proposed research. If the presented research involves the use of animals, the funding request must include evidence the research was approved by the Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

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I didn’t trust that teachers were interested in me...A lot of people talk, but very few people take that next step and put their words into action.

To Joseph’s research skills, Dr. Coursol praises his approachability, sensitivity and sincerity in his interactions with others. Joseph responds to such praise with characteristic modesty: “I want the opportunity to give to others what was not given to me and so many of my friends and family members—a helping hand in the midst of life’s circumstances,” he says. “I have a special area of interest in researching and working with African American male populations from at-risk environments because I was once one of these individuals, and, to a certain degree, I still am.”

Joseph feels grateful for the encouragement he has received from the faculty and coaches at MSU. He also acknowledges that he didn’t arrive at where he is easily. “I didn’t trust that teachers were interested in me,” he says. “A lot of people talk, but very few people take that next step and put their words into action. That’s what I found here, especially from Michelle Carter—she was a big help, a big influence.”

Growing up in a lower-income household in Kansas City, Kansas, it may have seemed unlikely to Joseph that he would eventually pursue a doctorate degree. “In my family, graduating from high school is a big deal,” he says. But a Ph.D. does appear to be in his future—he has been admitted to the doctoral program in counseling at the University of Iowa. When he learns he is the first McNair Scholar from MSU to be admitted to a doctoral program, he reacts with surprise. “I didn’t know that,” he says, slowly shaking his head and grinning. “I guess it shows the program works.”

Joseph says that his acceptance into a doctoral program hasn’t really sunk in yet. “It probably won’t hit me until I start my first class.” Nevertheless, he’s already given some thought to his future research goals: “I’m interested in focusing on how factors such as cultural and ethnic identity, oppression, racism, discrimination, demographics, and socioeconomic status play a role in the attitudes, values, beliefs, education, and experience of African American males.”

Now there’s a statement from a future Ph.D.

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Now there’s a statement from a future Ph.D.
CONGRATULATIONS TO FALL 2006 FACULTY RECOGNITION GRANT RECIPIENTS

Goedecker, Geoffrey, Biology, Effect of Normal Polyglycylamine Polymorphism on Huntington’s Disease Protein Function
Greer, Kimberly, Sociology and Corrections, When Women Hold the Keys: Impact of Gender on Leadership and Policy Decisions in Corrections
Haas, Gretchen, English, Technology’s Influence on Organizational Change: Using a Wiki in a Software Development Project
Hashmi, M. Ata A., Marketing, Political Risk Assessment Practices in U.S. Corporations
Khan, Saleen, Economics, Contagion in the Stock Markets: The Asian Financial Crisis
Miller, Liz, Art, Devastating Beauty: Utilizing Storm Radar Imagery in Large-Scale Installations with the Help of Student Assistants
Novsaakkun, Vinai, Psychology, The Cultural Construction of Emotional Experience and Subjective Well-Being: The Role of Social Situations in Japan and the United States
Park, Ken, Economics, Contagion in the Stock Markets: The Asian Financial Crisis
Slocum, Fred, Political Science, Explaining Republican Realignment Among White Southerners: The Role of Race, Religion, Militarism, Authoritarianism and Southern Culture
Tomany, Maria Claudia, Modern Languages, “Destination Viking”: A Case Study of Cultural Tourism Between Culture and Commerce
Visser, Mary, Human Performance, Assessing the Partners in Active Living for Seniors (PAL5) Project
Waterkotte, Erik, Art, Exploring Graphic Structures and Innovative Formats in Printmaking Media
Winstead, Vincent, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Cooperative Control Using Autonomous Aircraft
Witthoet, Larry, History, “Supermac” and “Daff the Chief”: British-Canadian Relations During the Age of Harold Macmillan and John Diefenbaker, 1957-1967
Wrigley, Dorothy, Biology, Coelomic Cell Activity During Caudal Regeneration in Eisenia fetida
Xu, Shaozhen, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Bit-rate-error (BER) Calculation in Phase Modulated Fiber Optic Communications Systems

RASP RECognition EVENT

Provos Olson and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs will host a reception recognizing Minnesota State Mankato faculty and staff for their efforts in pursuing external support for research, scholarship, and creative activities during FY 2007.

Thursday April 26, 2007 Centennial Student Union Rooms 284 A/B/C Breakfast social at 9:30 a.m. Program at 10:00 a.m.

FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

What follows is a list of recent publications by the MSC community. Authors who are faculty or staff have been indicated in boldface. Authors who are MSU students have been indicated with an asterisk. We tried to be as complete and as accurate as possible.

Slocum, Fred, Political Science, Explaining Republican Realignment Among White Southerners: The Role of Race, Religion, Militarism, Authoritarianism and Southern Culture
Introducing the CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH

by David J. Haglin

In January, 2007, the new Center for Excellence in Scholarship and Research (CESR) officially started, with me as the director, and with support from the College of Graduate Studies and Research. While we continue to explore options and fine-tune our mission, central to our effort is the support of scholarly work by our campus faculty and staff with the overarching goal of increasing both the quality and quantity of the scholarship at MSU.

We have two graduate students—one with an expertise in writing and editing and the other with an expertise in statistical analysis of data—to provide services we expect many of you will find helpful in turning your scholarly activities into publications. We have been delighted to receive requests from many of you for manuscript editing review and/or statistical analysis help.

We understand that many of you have individual needs not met by statistical analysis nor met by manuscript editing. Perhaps you are wondering if anybody else at MSU is interested in your work. Perhaps you would like to find others at MSU with whom you could engage in scholarly conversation. Perhaps you have little experience with publishing and would like some guidance, perhaps even a mentor, to help establish your scholarly path. We are very interested in learning about your ideas on how we can help support your scholarship.

One idea that we are very interested in pursuing is the support of Research Interest Groups (RIGs) that can take different forms: (i) a group that has a theme that binds them academically (see article on page 12) and wishes to support each other in writing and publishing; (ii) a regular forum for interested scholars to engage in conversation about any topic, this may be off-campus and can involve community members as well as MSU scholars; and (iii) a “birds of a feather” meeting where scholars interested in similar topics may exchange ideas through short presentations in the hopes of clarifying early thoughts on a topic or spurring interdisciplinary collaboration. I expect that all three of these RIG formats will have their place at MSU.

In addition to all of these supporting activities, CESR would like to track (archive and disseminate) all of the scholarly successes across the campus. The TOMORROW Magazine lists scholarly work after it has appeared in print or presented. In contrast, the FRONTIERS Newsletter (to be published three times per year) will include scholarly work that has been accepted for publication or has been planned for a creative presentation or exhibition.

Please send your thoughts, ideas, and comments to: cesr@msu.edu
Researchers in the humanities often find themselves feeling isolated from their peers. The nature of their work—reading, writing, thinking—dictates that they spend countless hours alone. Recently, Dr. Maria-Claudia Tomany of the Scandinavian Studies Program has attempted to reduce this isolation by forming the Medieval and Early Modern Research Group, now comprising twenty members from five departments.

According to group member Dr. Chris Corley, the informal mission of the group is to encourage scholars in medieval and early modern studies by providing a collegial research environment. Additionally, Corley says the group provides an opportunity for people to meet other researchers outside their own departments. “It’s great to have people in different disciplines that share a thematic interest.”

The group’s current focus is on reviewing members’ research manuscripts. “The goal is to see how effectively the readers think you have developed your argument and to give you suggestions for going forward,” says Corley.

Eleanor Harper, an undergraduate in art history, hopes the group can help her polish a research study on the use of optical devices by renaissance and baroque painters, which she plans to present at the Undergraduate Research Conference in April. “I look forward to any kind of criticism, not only on this project but also on my general research methods. Any help I can get on becoming a better writer and researcher is welcome.”

Corley thinks that incorporating students into the group is central to its mission. “There are a lot of professors here who are trying to create well rounded students and one way of doing that is by giving them a perspective of the past.”

By providing a supportive atmosphere for scholars of medieval and early modern studies, the group acts as a model for collaborative research activity on campus.

**A NEW RESEARCH GROUP BRINGS HUMANITIES SCHOLARS TOGETHER**

by David Chapman
Dr. Vinai Norasakkunkit understands the value of mentoring relationships for students who have aspirations of earning the doctoral degree. Doctoral programs expect collaborative relationships between their faculty and students, so the opportunity for undergraduates to work with faculty on research projects is an important introduction to the expectations—and the culture—of doctoral education.

He also understands the value of such relationships for faculty. Chief among these is the opportunity to work with undergraduate students who are passionate about research and highly engaged in the educational experience. “I don’t think there is anything more rewarding for a university faculty member than to work with highly motivated students like those in the McNair Achievement Program,” says Norasakkunkit. And he should know: He’s mentored two McNair Scholars in his four years at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Federally funded by the Department of Education, the McNair Achievement Program (MAP) has been in existence at Minnesota State Mankato since 2003. In its first four years, under the leadership of former director Michelle Carter and current interim director Laura Bartolo, the program has served nearly 50 low-income, first-generation, and under-represented students who aspire to doctoral degrees.

The program’s many benefits include assistance with the graduate school application process, GRE preparation, research stipends, and opportunities to present at national and regional conferences. However, one of the greatest benefits to participants is the opportunity to conduct research under the direction and guidance of Minnesota State Mankato faculty mentors like Dr. Norasakkunkit.

An Assistant Professor of Psychology, Dr. Norasakkunkit researches the ways in which culture influences mental processes, including cognition, attention, emotion, motivation, and well-being. His research is based on the assumption that many existing psychological theories do not adequately describe, predict, or explain the behavior of individuals from non-Western cultures.

It was in his research lab, where he guides student projects related to cultural psychology, that Dr. Norasakkunkit was first introduced to the McNair Achievement Program. A student who was interested in working in the lab also happened to be a McNair Scholar. Together, they decided she would conduct her McNair research project in the lab under the direction of Dr. Norasakkunkit.

The success of that first mentoring relationship has fueled Dr. Norasakkunkit’s ongoing interest in the program. He is currently mentoring Dan Ellis and Khou Yang, and anticipates mentoring a third scholar, Julie Poyzer, when she begins the program in fall 2007.

Norasakkunkit appreciates the benefits and resources the McNair Achievement Program offers to first-generation college students. He also appreciates the ways in which the program has benefited his own research. “I have the McNair Achievement Program to thank for providing the support and resources that make the work I do with students go smoothly and help speed up the research that comes out of my lab.”

Dr. Norasakkunkit describes research findings with students in his cultural psychology lab.

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**MEET THE IRB CO-CHAIRS**

Dr. Vinai Norasakkunkit

Psychology Professor Vinai Norasakkunkit discusses research findings with students in his cultural psychology lab.

Dr. Mary Hadley

Dr. Mary Hadley received her Ph.D. in nutritional biochemistry from the University of Guelph in Ontario Canada. In 1990, she joined the faculty at North Dakota State University (NDSU), where she served as Vice Chair and Chair of the IRB and a member of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. After working as a Compliance Scientist reviewing grants funded by the Department of Defense, she joined the faculty in the Department of Chemistry and Geology at Minnesota State Mankato.

Together, Drs. Hadley and Hagemester chair monthly IRB meetings, provide leadership for IRB policy development and implementation, coordinate the review of Level 2 proposals, and provide consultation about research ethics and IRB compliance. Both agree that learning about the wide range of research being conducted at the university is the most rewarding aspect of serving on the IRB.

They also emphasize that the IRB is not intended to stand in the way of faculty research. “We are not the research police,” says Hadley. At the same time, says Hagemester, “When research involves potentially vulnerable individuals, we are very careful to help safeguard those participants.”
Tet masks on display in Hanoi, Vietnam, where Department of English Assistant Professor and 2006 Teaching Scholar Fellow Candace Black traveled to conduct research for a creative nonfiction writing project.

A Thousand Words