

## **First Generation Interview with TRiO/McNair Scholars Program (UW)**

1. What memories do you have of being a first generation college student? What challenged you, what surprised you?

My first-generation experience was probably very different from many. As a non-traditional student just getting out of the military, I had experience dealing with bureaucracy and navigating institutional norms and professional environments. This is a challenge that many other first-generation students have when they arrive at college.

2. As a first generation student, what helped you most in your first year of college? What about your sophomore, junior and senior years?

What helped me most during my first year of college was having the GI Bill for financial support so I did not have to work as much as I would have otherwise. This allowed me to spend more time reading, studying, and adjusting to being a college student. One of the biggest challenges that first-generation and limited-income students face is the need to work more hours than many of their peers.

3. How did you find your path to your chosen field and your job?

I found my current chosen field and job by discovering that my previous career path in academia was no longer well suited for me. So I sought out other fields and career paths that would allow me to put my Ph.D. in political science to use in a different way.

4. What do you wish first generation students knew when they came to UW?

We wish first generation students knew about all the opportunities on campus for help and guidance. That they would take time to be curious about available resources. That it's okay to ask for help.

5. What advice would you give first generation students in your courses?

Go to office hours and make connections with faculty.

6. What resources are available to students in your field?

Resources available to students in the McNair Program include: funded undergraduate research experiences under the close guidance of a faculty and graduate student mentor, graduate admissions assistance, travel funding to present research and for graduate school visits, and free tutoring. These resources are available to students in most fields.

7. Are there any stories that come to mind of any first generation students in the past few years who you got to know in or outside of your courses?

We first met “K” at an undergraduate research conference at UW when she was a sophomore. She came from a very limited income background, but knew she wanted to earn a Ph.D. After our talk, she approached us about being a McNair Scholar. She applied and was already working in a research lab. The lab she was working in was not a good fit for her research interests. In talking to the McNair advisors, she was referred to a lab that would take her further in her career. During this time, her father was critically ill and she was his sole caretaker. The lab was so supportive in working around her time constraints. As a senior, she applied to graduate programs and went on invited visits. Upon visiting with one professor, she was immediately admitted into the Ph.D. program and is now beginning her third year.

8. Any advice you would add, for first-year, first generation students?

Pay attention to opportunities that could help expand your network of resources for jobs or graduate school. Don't be afraid to talk to people.