

## From the Director:

The *McNair Scholars Program* is funded by the United States Department of Education and was established in honor of Dr. Ronald E. McNair, a physicist, astronaut and scholar. The goal of this program is to prepare underrepresented students for graduate studies leading toward research doctorates and faculty positions. Being the first Ivy-League institution to host this effort, we are proudly committed to its purpose and goals, and it is with great pride that we present the first edition of the *Penn McNair Research Journal*.

Our McNair participants are encouraged to become the scholars of tomorrow through research-training, early academic experiences and constant interaction with our renowned faculty. This structured research program has been essential in encouraging and retaining underrepresented students, and has created a pipeline toward doctoral studies. Our students have soared during their McNair experience.

This publication is the culmination of their experiences. Our participants have completed original research projects and presented works at national conferences; they have also entered graduate programs at prestigious institutions across the country. The articles in this volume have been presented at venues such as: *The National Council for Undergraduate Research*, *The Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students*, *The 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Neuroscience Conference*, *Sigma Xi Annual Meeting and Student Research Conference*, *The University of Delaware Annual McNair Research Conference*, and *The Annual National McNair Scholars Research Conference*.

Many are responsible for shaping the direction of this program since its inception. Most important are the committed faculty-mentors who have worked directly with the students and have assisted in a myriad of ways to make this program possible. In addition, various offices and Centers on campus have all contributed toward our success. We would like to thank everyone for your valuable support, and to offer a hearty congratulation to each of our fledging scholars, who are truly living up to the legacy of Dr. McNair. May you continue to “Soar Beyond Expectations.”

Janet Y. Thomas, PhD  
Project Director & Principal Investigator