Mark Lemos Goes to Mexico by Mark Lemos

“I’m going to be late. I’m going to miss my plane,” I kept thinking as I stood in the stagnant security line. RING. RING. RING. I grabbed my cell phone. “Where are you?” Leyla, my fellow lab researcher, asked. “I am in the security line. I will see you in a bit,” I really hoped I was right. I walked through the metal detector. “You are not allowed to carry anything through. Please step back,” said the security woman with an irritated look because I was holding my research poster. I walked through their scanner twice! Finally past security, I made the dash to my gate. “He’s here,” the boarding pass woman said over the walkie-talkie to the pilot. “You almost didn’t make it.” We had a layover in Houston before heading to Merida, Mexico. I opened my camera bag. EMPTY. I forgot my camera, but brought the stupid bag. We landed in Merida around 10 pm and finished with a crawling customs line at 11:30 pm. I went to pick up my luggage and couldn’t find it. I checked again. THEY LOST MY LUGGAGE! Leyla and her husband Upul asked me if I put clothes in my carry-on bag. “NO!” I said laughing. Opening up my bag, I revealed my McNair scholar’s book, the GRE test prep book, my professor who came a day after us brought my camera, and the Plants and Bioenergy Conference was starting. The rest of my time in Mexico I was in sensory overload. The Yucatan culture was amazing! Local art and sculptures lined the streets near our hotel. Mayan pyramids and historical sites were found in almost every town we visited. In Uxmal, we were able to climb up one of the Pyramids putting us above the green forest below. You could almost see the curvature of the earth making it feel like you were on top of the world. I swam in the most amazing “cenotes,” water caves, that were filled with beautiful water that seemed like it had been pulled from a National Geographic magazine. Of course, I enjoyed the food, and I found myself eating when I was not hungry. At the end of my trip I was counting the hours until I had to leave. This peaceful utopia had grown on me so quickly.

Drumming Up a Great Start to the New Semester

The first monthly McNair Scholars meeting of the 08/09 school year was a great success. Dave Kemppainen, from counseling services, attended our September 5th meeting as a presenter, and he brought with him an assortment of drums and rattles both big and small. Over the last year, Dave has led a growing number of drum circles on the UNR campus. His hobby of making drums and leading drum circles actually started off with the leisure activity of bead making. However, when that work became too tedious and didn’t supply the “instant gratification” Dave says he was looking for, he turned to building drums. And we’re lucky he did, because every scholar at the meeting had a wonderful time examining and then pounding away on the drums. Cont. on page 5
The Adventures of Alumni Ashley Rolfe by Ashley Rolfe

Over the summer, McNair Scholar alumni Ashley Rolfe was busy doing graduate research for the University of Michigan. She sent an update on her progress working with the wild animals in that area.

“Hello everyone, I thought I’d let you know how I’m doing out here in Michigan. Well, I’ve been pretty busy all summer doing bat surveys on various projects (looking for the endangered Indiana bat). This included a survey for a wind power company in the Manistee national forest, as well as a survey for an oil company called Marathon which wants to build a pipeline. It has been a lot of fun, and so far I have seen/handled six out of the nine bat species of Michigan bats including the big brown, little brown, northern big-eared, hoary, eastern red, and the silver-haired bat. I’ve also gotten to see a lot of cool birds that get caught in our nets, along with the occasional glaucousm as well!

Dr. Kurta and I will be going to Puerto Rico over Thanksgiving break where I will get to handle some ghost-faced bats and the Jamaican fruit bat, so I’m really looking forward to that. Hopefully I will be able to do my thesis work down there. I just need to learn some more Spanish since I only know about 15 words!”

Adriana Marin-Herrera is off to Columbia by Adriana Marin-Herrera

During the past two years I have been working towards a Masters and Licensure in Secondary Education: Spanish degree. I have a minor in Spanish, although right now it can be practically considered a bachelor’s degree too since I continued taking Spanish classes. Even though I have decided to focus on languages, I do still plan to make Biology work for me. It’s never too late to keep on going with our dreams.

I have been planning on completing an internship this whole semester, and when I found out that the American school that I used to attend in Colombia qualified for internship / teaching status, it became an obsession to me! The school’s name is Colegio Bolivar, (www.colegiobolivar.edu.co) and it is located in Cali. It has about 2,000 students and staff. Some students are from families who have moved to Colombia and are working for American, European, or Asian corporations. This school has a huuuuuge campus, and it is located right by the Farallones National Reserve; therefore, in the mornings sometimes you can see the big and colorful macaws eating from the guava trees!

What I like the most about this school (that I first attended at 5 years old) is that is has a very warm sense of community. I grew up with my school friends, I matured with the teachers and the staff, and even the janitors knew our individual names. Some teachers had their sons or daughters there, and we all grew together. Colegio Bolivar is also involved in many community activities to help the poor, and it strives to involve the students in various activities to create awareness. It also has an amazing way of making the students visualize themselves in a future career and in fact, most of the students end up going to college abroad. It is a bilingual school that is very conscientious of how important it is for its students’ futures to learn various languages. I can almost certainly say that if it weren’t because of that school and because of my family’s efforts to pay for it even though we did not belong to an elite class, I would not be accomplishing these milestones today.

During my internship at Colegio Bolivar I will be teaching Spanish to classes composed of mostly Spanish speakers. My focus will be on Latin American and Spanish literature, authors such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Isabel Allende, Ana Maria Shua, and many more. We will be reading, analyzing, and evaluating these books, and I will also be checking for grammar of course! Furthermore, I plan to participate in as many extracurricular activities as possible, activities such as Model United Nations, Honor Society events, Social Services, the Christmas activities (musicals, religious, cultural, and theatre), Sports Day, Bolivar Day, etc. I will also be working as a tutor at the school. (I have to eat somehow!)

In addition, during my free time, (if I will have it) I will be volunteering at the Farallones mountains through the Wildlife Conservation Society. This is also my chance to get up to date in Biology research and to get to see a tiny bit of all the biodiversity that my country has.

This is the best opportunity for me ever. I am truly, very excited to go back to my past and see what helped me become who I am today. I am very excited to learn how this school works and to bring this knowledge back to the US.
In the summer of 2008, several McNair Scholars attended the McNair Symposium in Berkeley, CA. This is what they had to say about the experience:

**Marvice Marcus**

The Berkeley experience was great. Having the opportunity to present my research project in front of motivated, intelligent, and humble scholars was the experience of a lifetime. Without question, it was scary and somewhat intimidating at times, but I was able to get over my nervousness once I began talking. I felt motivated when members of the audience looked interested in my topic. It was also a fun trip because I was able to get to know each of my fellow McNair Scholars on a more personal level. We laughed at the most random things, danced, and cracked jokes the entire time we were there. The conference was educational as well as worthwhile. I would definitely do it again!

**Stephanie Orozco**

I found it completely helpful and inspiring to see how many students, with similar or slightly different backgrounds — from all over the nation, come together for the same purpose: to further our education. This summer’s McNair conference at Berkeley helped, first and foremost, with the unity of our group. We were able to see each other both inside the educational sphere as well as outside. Though we all brought a different flavor into our group, it was a motivating experience to see how much we took care of each other and each others’ needs. I felt completely surprised when I wasn’t able to keep the McNair group from joining my presentation. Although they saw my presentation previously, they came to support me again. I couldn’t help but think how comforting it was to see their enthusiasm and motivation for participating in my session even after telling them they didn’t have to join in. In addition, I loved that it was simple to meet and make new friends at the Berkeley conference; the feeling of bonding and making connections with even more McNair Scholars was a fantastic experience. Our ability to communicate with others from all over the U.S and make connections at such a young stage of our careers is amazing. Though our roads to success may lead us either closer to each other or further apart, the only thing to do now is to wait and find out where our life’s journey may take us.

**Mark Lemos**

I kept checking my watch and hearing our director’s voice, “Don’t be late!” Our 6:15 AM flight time to Oakland was getting close, and I was glad that I was not the only one going. Five of seven McNair scholars stood in the luggage check-in line for a grueling 45 minutes. After luggage check-in, we ran like an offensive line to the checkpoint. We made our flight and in no time we arrived at the Oakland airport, we’re on the BART, and we’re on our way to the Berkeley campus. On Saturday, I gave my research presentation, and it went GREAT! The audience was intrigued and asked lots of questions. We wrapped up the conference with a dinner cruise in San Francisco. The scene felt like something from a movie as we looked out across the water to the lit up city of San Francisco. This was one of many opportunities that I didn’t expect to experience this summer.
TRiO Veteran’s Day Event  by Heather Penrod

All TRiO programs joined forces on November 8th, 2008 in order to honor our local veterans and pay tribute to the heroes living at the Veteran’s Administration Hospital in Reno, NV. The day started off grey and cloudy, but was brightened by Upward Bound students who walked the halls of the Veteran’s Administration passing out thank you cards that were created by UB, TRiO, and McNair students.

Later in the day, a carnival descended upon the VA cafeteria as UB kids manned carnival games and booths that included a ring toss, a fishing hole, a frisbee toss, and face painting. Children who had accompanied older UB siblings were excited to play all the games and collect the stickers, coloring books, and erasers that they won.

Adults manned the more mature booths where Veteran’s enjoyed several rounds of black jack. Wheel chairs lined the 21 table where dealers passed out cards and players collected prizes. Ruth Salas, president of the Upward Bound student council and leader of the ring toss booth, said, “I think it’s fun to help out the vets – to have all the TRiO programs come together to help vets feel good about the event is really great.”

On one end of the cafeteria patriotic karaoke songs drifted from the TV set as students and veterans alike sang along to “It’s a Grand Old Flag” and “America the Beautiful.”

Upward Bound students weaved their way through the crowd interviewing veterans and finding out about what life was like during the war and on the home front. Robert Fyda, a TRiO scholar, said that he was happy to take time out of his day to spend time with the veterans to make them feel appreciated. He thought the carnival was a success and that it was nice to see the vets mingling with the students. Thinh Vu, a McNair scholar, echoed Robert’s sentiments when he said, “I thought the event turned out well. It was a bonding time for the TRiO programs and a good opportunity to learn about the veterans’ lives. It was a joyful experience.”

Ruth Salas mans the ring toss booth while Thinh Vu and Robert Fyda try to win a prize

Veteran’s gather around the Black Jack table

Marsha Dupree recognizes Drew Yancey and his hard work

David Pena on the Debate Team  by David Pena

I am a member of the University of Nevada, Reno Debate Team, and my debate partner and I are currently among the top 15 most competitive teams nation-wide (out of over 800 teams). I first joined the University of Nevada, Reno Debate Team in 2005 when I was a freshman, and I have been actively involved in it ever since. This year I was also nominated by the coach, Phil Sharp, as the team President, an office I will hold until my graduation in May of 2009.

Our team practices four days a week for three hours a day, and we travel about six to ten days out of each month to compete in the National Circuit. This year and last year, our team has been a major player nationally and we have received awards and recognitions at all four competitions this semester: Claremont Tournament, Berkeley Tournament, Puget Sound Tournament, and the University of Pacific Tournament. Also, my debate partner (Max Alderman) and I have qualified for all the Round Robin Tournaments we have applied to. Round Robins are elite, invite-only tournaments in which only six to eight of the top teams nationwide get to compete against each other. Our travel schedule for the Fall semester is over, but we will compete in seven more tournaments over Winter/Spring in order to qualify for Nationals which will be held at University of Pacific and U.C. Berkeley.

David and his debate team colleagues prepare for a match
Dave's drums are truly beautiful works of art. He brought in some drums that he made out of fallen cottonwood trees which he hollowed out and stretched deer skin over. He also had some clever drum creations that were made of wooden salad bowls with the bottoms removed or old wooden fencing materials hewn together. These new resources melded well with the old tradition of drum making and created a wonderful sound. Dave's rattles were also impressive. A few were made of turtle shells and tree branches. Natural materials were often used to create the rattling noise – dried cherry pits, beans, beads, etc. On each instrument that Dave brought, he placed a symbol – a circle with two lines running through it, dividing the circle into four equal parts. These four portions represent the many aspects of our world that are also divided in four: the four directions, the four seasons, or the four feelings of man.

One activity that Dave had the scholars perform was trying to recreate the sound of the four emotions of man on the drums. First he asked the scholars to use the drums to make the sound of fear. He proceeded through anger, sadness, and finally happiness. He asked the scholars to use the drums to produce the sounds and feelings that surround the beginning of the semester, finals week, and when finals are over. Loud and triumphant sounds of elation followed that last request. One of the items brought up by scholar Fern Bosada was that the drums were a great way to relieve stress. Hitting the drums, making noise, concentrating on the rhythm, and becoming part of the energy of the drum all help to divert a person's attention away from their present problems. So not only can these drums represent the "sounds" of finals week, they can also help to take the stress of finals away.

Another activity Dave led the group in was generating the sound of a thunderstorm from our instruments. Dave divided the group into a few categories of instruments that stood in for the sounds of a thunderstorm. The drums were clouds building. Small, metal, xylophone-like instruments were the wind. The rattles were the rain. And a large, hand-held drum was thunder. The scholars slowly built from a soft spring shower into a roaring downpour complete with booming thunder and the "flash of lightning" (supplied by Stephanie Orozco's camera). The group had to work together and listen to the cues of the other players in order to produce a thunderstorm sound that came together as one and eventually dispersed into blue skies.

After all the drums were put away, the scholars revealed how they felt about the drum circle session. Some comments included that it was definitely a bonding exercise. You got to know the people you were drumming with through music and shared enthusiasm. Other scholars said the event was fun and energizing. Marsha Dupree told the students not to forget that when times get stressful and you just need something to hit, you don’t necessarily need to have a drum. You can always take out those pots from the kitchen and drum away with a wooden spoon. There are many ways to relieve stress or express joy – including calling some of those McNair scholars you bonded with in the drum circle.

Diane Barone came to speak at the third McNair monthly meeting this fall of 2008. After all the scholars and staff were done feasting on an early Thanksgiving luncheon, Diane began her presentation. She put together a wonderful speech about her research on campus and off. Diane related the work and research she had done on several books about childhood literacy and how it correlates with childhood poverty and low performing schools. She also spoke of her work with graduate students which inspired some McNair scholars to comment on how great it would be to work with Diane as a mentor!

Diane Barone Speaks to McNair Scholars

Regardless of how you voted in the November election, this is an historic time in our country in terms of access and opportunity. We have an African American President-elect who came from a background not unlike that of Dr. McNair. As a McNair Scholar, you are part of a program that was founded on the social justice ideals of equal access to higher education for all qualified students. As a future influential member of distinguished faculty across the country, each of you will be instrumental in advocating for those who follow in your footsteps. You will make sure that all underrepresented students have the opportunity to achieve their academic dreams despite parental level of education or income status. As you work hard to be successful students, don’t lose sight of the big picture: you are part of an ambitious plan to diversify higher education one McNair graduate at a time!

A Note from Rita Escher, Program Director

Your Voice Must Be Heard
Spring 2009 Important Dates To Remember

- January 29, 2009: Deadline to Apply for May Graduation
- February 1, 2009: University of Nevada, Reno Scholarship Deadline
- February 6, 2009: 1st McNair Monthly Meeting - Etiquette Lunch
- March 6, 2009: 2nd McNair Monthly Meeting - Mock Interview Session
- April 3, 2009: 3rd McNair Monthly Meeting - Roni Dahir - Center for Research and Design Analysis
- May 1, 2009: 4th McNair Monthly Meeting - Presenter TBA

Birthdays During the Spring...
If you see these scholars around, please wish them a fabulous birthday!

Stephanie Orozco January 22
Mark Lemos January 28
Anna Scarpa February 20
Gretchen Hill February 27
Thinh Vu March 18
Henry Aguilar April 3
Grace Morris April 22

Scholar and Alumni News

Mark Rincon wrote in to say...

I am currently working for the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) down in Carson City doing GIS work. Before taking this position, I was working for an engineering consulting firm in Reno, which involved GIS.

I am also planning to take the GMAT in December and hope to apply for the MBA program at the University of Nevada, Reno.

What is the McNair Scholars Program?
The Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program is designed to provide research opportunities and other related academic experiences that promote the acquisition of the Doctoral Degree (Ph.D.) for first generation, low-income, and underrepresented college juniors and seniors. The McNair program is federally funded at $231,000 per year. The program was created by Congress in an effort to increase the number of underrepresented persons pursuing teaching, research, and administrative careers in higher education.

Credits & Acknowledgements:

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Assistant Director: Marsha Dupree
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Applications for the McNair Scholars Program are accepted year round via the McNair Scholars Website
http://www.unr.edu/stsv/saos/mcnair