In the fall semester of 2010, I thought the best thing to happen to me was being accepted in the Ronald E. McNair Scholars program at the University of Nevada, Reno. Being a successful undergraduate has been my main priority since attending UNR in the fall of 2008. My family and closest friends thought I was too good for the Wolf Pack, but I decided to stay because of the love and passion I have for the Reno-Tahoe community.

Even though I will ultimately receive my Bachelor of Arts degree in secondary education with an emphasis in social studies and health education in December 2012, my undergraduate experience, including my most recent experience as a research intern at the Ohio State University through the Summer Research Opportunities Program, has surely helped me to prepare for a future in graduate studies.

My strong desire to influence the education system, from the classroom to the school board, in positive ways has shaped me. As a first generation student seeking a degree at a four year university, I owe many of my successes and my academic skills to the public education I received. After taking an education law and ethics class at the university, I knew that I would attend graduate school and that I wanted to study the policy and law of education.

Unfortunately, at UNR the law and ethics class for educators is the only undergraduate level course that a student can take to be exposed to the topics of educational policy. Once I became a McNair Scholar, I was encouraged to seek guidance from faculty at UNR and also to begin searching for the graduate program and school that best fits my needs and interests. In the spring of 2011, I came across the opportunity to complete research at several institutions that have programs in the exact direction I am looking for. I was chosen to go to Ohio State for their nine week research experience.

At the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio I was able to collaborate with peers from different parts of the country, establish and maintain lasting relationships with faculty in my interest area, and develop a clear understanding of the research process. I needed the experience of collaborating on an academic and intellectual level with peers whose life experiences and perceptions differ greatly from mine. At the undergraduate level, students are rarely asked to work with each other, other than the occasional group project. My peers at the Ohio Summer Research Opportunities Program have given me experiences of humility, appreciation, and communication that will last a lifetime.

I was one of the lucky ones at Ohio State in the summer of 2011. I not only had autonomy over my project, but I was also afforded two Ohio faculty mentors, while some of my peers had to share one mentor with three other students and/or have no control over their summer research project. At first this feeling of independence was excruciating. Now I know, from firsthand experience, the importance of choosing a mentor that has their own agenda but doesn’t need to push it on you as well as to find a mentor that will guide you through the research process in the style that works best for you. My mentors may not have known specifically their role or mine in our agreement at the beginning of the summer, but by the end of the summer we were able to communicate effectively and reach the agreement that I would continue onto graduate studies in law and education. They hope to see me do so at The Ohio State University.
The Berkeley Conference attended by the Reno, McNair cohort during the summer of 2011 was a great success. Here, students comment on the symposium and what the trip meant to them both academically and emotionally.

Mikhail Serafico: The Berkeley conference was amazing. From the very liberal atmosphere... to the various research projects being presented and worked on, everything was worth the time and effort.

Alex Pearce: I really enjoyed the Berkeley conference and all the experiences that came along with it. I think it helped me understand how to better communicate my research to a broader audience and I really felt accomplished after having presented at a real conference. On the more social side, attending the conference really made me appreciate how family-like our McNair group is. Speaking to scholars from other schools, I realized that the strong support system we have in our group is not seen in all McNair programs. In our group, it was a given that we would help each other practice, that we’d make sure no one presented without another Reno scholar there, and that no one was ever left out. I’m very grateful to be a part of such a close-knit group.

Enrique Valdivia: The McNair conference was an amazing experience. Although it was intimidating to present in an advanced scholarly setting, the experience of doing so was extremely beneficial. It was inspiring to be part of the program and event that had such a high level of scholarship.

Iris Petty: Berkeley was a great experience. It showed me that I want to have a career in academia more than any book or class did. It was the beginning of an exciting future. I met some of my first contacts and loved sharing ideas with my colleagues.

Kety Luna: My experience going to Berkeley was eye-opening because I got to see what other universities are like in big cities. I was able to meet students from other universities and share ideas. Getting suggestions from them was very valuable. I had never presented at a conference, so just having the opportunity to do the research and present my findings in front of other students and professors was a great accomplishment that I will never forget. The conference was also inspiring. I was able to see what other students are doing in different subject areas and are passionate about their work.

Beau Hixon: The Berkeley trip was a great opportunity to understand what an academic research conference was like. It provided first-hand knowledge of how to present research and what is expected by other attendees. Also, the trip provided the opportunity to meet other like-minded people on the same career path from around the country. Getting into graduate school is a rigorous process, and it made me realize that I’m not alone.
When I first received the McNair summer research colloquium schedule, I questioned why we had to go to Virginia City for Orientation. My first thoughts about Virginia City were: empty, old haunted houses, boring, and one street with a lot of old shopping stores. I was not very excited to go because I had visited Virginia City before, but I never took an actual tour so (without excitement) I was wondering, “What is there to see?”

However once we got to Virginia City, Marsha Dupree, the McNair Assistant Director, gave me and all the McNair scholars a pass to go as a group to different places around the city. To start the tour we got into a fancy trolley for a guided expedition through the historic town. After that we visited “The Way It Was Museum.” There, one of the things that caught my attention was seeing how dentistry was done during the 1800’s when people did not have any electricity and the equipment was controlled with a pedal. Instead of anesthesia, whiskey was used; instead of small dentistry tools, “hammers” and other large tools were put in peoples’ mouths. Our next stop was the “Historic Fourth Ward School & Museum.” At the entrance, a very nice lady introduced herself as a retired teacher and took us into a room that was once used for classes. She explained that in the 1800’s the students did not use pens; they used liquid ink and quills to write. The desks were permanently attached to the floor, and she also explained that in this school the students who were left handed were not punished for writing with their left hands. Instead, each classroom had two seats in the front of the row and these seats instead of having just one ink holder, had two. The student who was left handed had the advantage to use his/her most comfortable hand to write. This was a somewhat radical approach at the time when other schools punished left-handed writers. One of the objects that caught our attention while visiting this school was the typewriter. Heather Penrod, the McNair Writing Coordinator, told us her story about using a typewriter in high school and how she had to retype full papers that contained errors. Just visiting these few places made me appreciate more about my lifestyle and the technology we have today.

When we go to school we have smart classrooms, pencils, pens, and our desks are not attached to the floor. We have the freedom to work in groups and interact in the classroom. We have computers to make all the mistakes we want and don’t have to rewrite for making a small mistake. We are lucky to have a city full of history very close to us to learn about the past and hopefully be able to appreciate what we have today.

Another impressive place I really enjoyed seeing was Piper’s Opera House. The tour leader told us that John Piper built this house several times after major fires in Virginia City destroyed it. I was very interested in this house after reading the following inscription from one of the pictures that I took while at the opera house: “A man of many talents, John Piper was a saloonkeeper, state senator, VC mayor, and the theatrical genius who built Piper’s Opera House. Around town, Piper was known as the “Old Manager,” a shrewd but honest businessman.” The Opera house was destroyed several times, yet Piper did not give up and built the third Opera House with recycled materials, and in 1885 opened the new opera that we can all visit.

After several tours around Virginia City, I learned that perseverance and not giving up after defeat is the key to success in life.
To Live Forever: Egyptian Artifacts at the Nevada Museum of Art

The McNair Scholars annual summer trip to the Nevada Museum of Art was especially good this year. The museum was featuring the work “To Live Forever: Egyptian Treasures from the Brooklyn Museum.” The display contained “more than 100 objects including mummies, statuary, sarcophagi, coffins, gold jewelry, and elegantly-crafted vessels. The exhibition includes some of the greatest masterworks of Egyptian artistic heritage. The exhibition also helps to explain the process of mummification, the conduct of a funeral, and different types of tombs—answering questions at the core of the public’s fascination with ancient Egypt” (Nevada Museum of Art website). Students were introduced to Egyptian cultural philosophies about death practices and the afterlife by a museum docent who took the group on a guided tour. For some, this was the 1st introduction to Egyptian art and artifacts. While the group was led through the entire museum and shown photographs by Ansel Adams, sculpture by local artists, and paintings by some of the masters, it was the Egyptian display that drew most of them back after our tour was over. Several students remained at the museum to continue gazing at the sarcophagi, lifting the lid on containers that held pieces of the book of the dead, and marveling over the ancient customs of the Egyptian people.

Egyptian Words to Live By

True wisdom is less presuming than folly. The wise man doubteth often, and changeth his mind; the fool is obstinate, and doubteth not; he knoweth all things but his own ignorance.

If thou be industrious to procure wealth, be generous in the disposal of it. Man never is so happy as when he giveth happiness unto another.

To be satisfied with a little, is the greatest wisdom; and he that increaseth his riches, increaseth his cares; but a contented mind is a hidden treasure, and trouble findeth it not.

Akhenaton, King of Egypt, 14th century BC
McNair Alumni Mark Lemos (cohort 2008) recently created a very nifty website focused on algae and its many uses. The website, titled “Algae U” short for Algae University, is a work in progress for Lemos who spent much of his undergraduate career at UNR conducting research on algae’s uses as a biofuel. Lemos had great success concentrating on biofuels; he won the Governor’s Cup award in the undergraduate category for his business plan for “EVO Fuels,” and he was featured in the Silver and Blue magazine article which recognized his biofuel research. His website is a compilation of everything algae. It provides basic definitions of algae for the novice reader and more detailed technical articles about algae’s potential as a resource and revenue producer. He’s got graphs and maps, times lines of the history of algae research, and in one drop down menu an algae events calendar filling his audience in on “conferences, annual meetings, and other events related to algae research or algae commercialization.” Lemos is now attending the University of California at Davis to work on his PhD in plant biology. He’s been quite a success there as well. Lemos and three other students were awarded a National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance (NCIIA) grant for $20,000 in August of 2011. Lemos was the team leader for the grant under his mentor Dr. Karen McDonald. He said, “The grant will run a period of 18 months (maximum) and is important seed funding for pursuing my research. I was really fortunate and thankful to have had the support of several faculty and directors here on campus while preparing the grant.” Congratulations Mark, on your continued success! Check out the Algae U website at http://www.algaeu.com/index.html.

Jourdan Douglas, continued from page 1. — Academic research was something I had no clue about when I became a McNair Scholar. With the introductions out of the way, I had some knowledge going into the internship. But nothing can prepare a researcher for the research process other than actually completing a research project. My completed paper was finished by week eight of nine, and I still think about the possible implications and points of further research that can be done. My nine week investigation of the inconsistencies among constitutional interpretation, public policy, and case law in regards to the authority of school officials to protect students from cyber-bullying is a twenty page research paper that informs the reader about this 21st century issue plaguing schools.

I look forward to continuing scholarly research in education law and policy. If it weren’t for McNair Scholars, I would not have been able to attend the Summer Research Opportunities Program at the Ohio State University. Without the OSU - SROP I would not be nearly as prepared to complete my McNair research project or continue with my plan of going to law school and graduate school. I thank those who made my research experience an enriching one. My appreciation will be reciprocated in full when I continue my research on making the education system the one our country deserves.
Faculty Spotlight: Heather Hardy

We're very happy to report that Heather Hardy, Executive Vice President and Provost of the University of Nevada, Reno, is a supporter and proponent of the McNair Scholars Program! While Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, she said she encouraged all departments to use the McNair Scholars Graduate List as a recruitment aid and was pleased with the programs that did. McNair Scholars here at UNR (and those students who wish to apply to graduate programs here) are fortunate to have the backing of the Provost — a talented, gracious leader who helps guide the academic future of our university.

Hardy explained that as Provost she acts as the school’s chief academic officer. She is the president’s #2 and is responsible for the “academic side of the house” including the medical school. All the deans report to her including the vice president of research (as research is part of the academic mission of the university) as well as libraries and IT (since they support the school’s academic endeavors as well). With each department, she is responsible for hiring and evaluating the dean’s work on a regular basis to ensure institutional priorities are met and that the work being done in the departments aligns with university priorities and standards. She also has the final say in who gets tenured — a process which starts at the department level and proceeds to the college and then on to the provost for approval. She said she feels fortunate to come to this position after six years as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts.

The principal part of her job as provost lately has been working on becoming familiar with other parts of the campus outside of liberal arts and with meeting people in all the departments. With such a big area to oversee, she really has to trust and rely on the deans and the department chairs as they are critical to helping her determine the right course of action for their department and faculty.

But before Hardy ever became provost, she was a teacher and a researcher. She commented that you usually chose a job as a faculty member in a university because you are “devoted to your discipline,” and Hardy loved her original calling: linguistics. She was fascinated with it from the time that she was a little girl when, at 7 years old, she had the opportunity to learn German after hours at her elementary school. When you love what you do, it’s easier to excel, and Hardy clearly excelled in the field of linguistics. She has edited several journals on linguistics and published even more in her area of focus — Native American Languages. So how did she go from teaching a subject she loves to working in administration? Hardy said she, “discovered along the way that I have the right temperament and skills which are suited for academic leadership.”

In 1998 Hardy was chair of the English department for Northern Illinois University, and while she found the work challenging and enjoyable being provided with the opportunity to make a big difference in the department, she says she felt she had done all she could do to help the department achieve its goals and become the best department it could be. She wanted to look for other ways to make a difference and apply what she had learned by guiding an even larger group. So she applied to be Dean of Liberal Arts at Colorado State University. As this was the first time she applied for a dean position, she thought she would just do it “as practice.” She spent a lot of time preparing and learning from this “practice” experience and then was offered the job! As for her dean position at UNR, she said it, “just felt like a great fit.” She had a good rapport with the interviewing committee and they had what felt more like a “lively conversation” than an interview. Our McNair scholars should recognize the sentiment that a good interview and the feeling of fitting right in carries great importance — Like Don Asher says, it’s all about “Fit and Match.” You have to find the graduate school that’s the best match for you and obviously that principle can be applied to teaching and faculty positions as well.

One might say that Hardy came into the position of dean, and now provost, at a bad time — when UNR is facing major budget cuts. But Hardy tries to face the situation objectively, “It would be great to have a big budget and to be able to say yes all the time. One might think you would want that. But I’ve always been in a resource starved environment at every campus. It’s a challenge that requires resilience, optimism, and creativity.” These are adjectives that should resonate with any McNair Scholar who comes from a budget starved background. Hardy says her “off the chart” optimism has served her well in times of crisis, and she recalled a Kipling poem to illustrate her brand of leadership — “If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs…” She feels she’s one of those who can keep her wits about her in a time of crisis and that makes for good administrator material as well. Having the confidence to do a good job and find solutions helped her accomplish her goals.

It was likely Hardy’s educational mentors who instilled optimism and confidence in her. Both of her parents went to college and her family ancestry is filled with "wonderful educational role models."
Heather Hardy, continued from page 6: “in a rich educational environment.” In fact, she had a grandmother who in the 1920’s (before many women even pursued a degree) obtained her law degree and even ran for the state legislature. Her parents and grandparents on both sides of her family supported her and told her that she could do whatever she set her mind to. Her mother often reminded her, “You’re lucky compared to most children in the world, therefore a lot will be expected from you.” She has always been aware and grateful for the opportunities provided her.

At Rice University, where she got her bachelors degree, she had great mentors with a very low teacher student ratio and she developed close relationships with her linguistics professors. It was actually her undergrad professors who helped her obtain her first teaching position and they had earlier given her the opportunity to co-author papers with them. She had great teachers and a very stimulating environment, but it was also a daunting atmosphere. She initially came from a position of being the best in the class, but at Rice, everyone was the best in the class. However, her fear was overcome by her determined confidence, and she offers the advice to McNair scholars going into the sometimes frightening world of obtaining a master’s degree, “Don’t let other people make you feel inferior.” Clearly, Hardy left Rice University with self assurance and a good amount of Texas pride. Though she and her husband have no children, they have pets they treat like children – two cats and one dog (a black cocker spaniel). It’s an indication of her Texas roots that the animals are named after iconic Texas figures. The cats are Lamar and Lyndon, and the dog Lyle (after Lyle Lovett).

At the end of our conversation, Hardy offered more advice for scholars. “Follow your heart and your passion, and if you do you can’t go wrong.” Professors and researchers (the jobs our future scholars will hold) get to do just that – they follow their passion into the area they want to research. But Hardy reminds us, success in grad school comes from more than just passion. “Discipline and hard work, and in graduate school those two traits are often more the key to success than brilliance.”

Advice From the New Bride Gretchen Hill

Gretchen Hill (cohort 2008) — A married mother of two and graduate school student at Oregon State University has some words of advice for those students just starting out in graduate school. Take her words to heart, this busy graduate student has a lot to juggle (as do so many of our scholars!). She plans to graduate in the spring of 2012, but at the moment she is busily working on her thesis while coordinating the nationally recognized National Geographic’s Geography Awareness Week at UO and training to be an undergraduate advisor.

To all potential grad school applicants: With the work load that is involved in graduate school (i.e. teaching, grading, attending lecture, your own coursework, and thesis research/writing — which is every term) you should start treating graduate school as a full-time job. For instance, it has taken me two years to realize that I cannot leave campus mid-day and expect to get work done at home. Rather, I schedule full days in my office M-F, basically 10-5. This has been a difficult transition for me seeing that I have switched from leaving campus everyday at different times of the day (for 9 years now), or not coming to campus on some days, to a more structured 40 hour work week. But the benefits are clear: a more organized calendar and projects that get done.
**Spring 2012 Important Dates to Remember**

- Jan 16: Martin Luther King Day  
- Jan 23: 1st day of classes  
- Feb 1: Deadline for May bachelor’s degree graduation applications.  
- Feb 20: President’s Day  
- Mar 23: Last day to drop classes  
- Mar 17-25: Spring Break  
- May 9: Prep Day: No classes

**1st Friday of the Month: McNair Meetings!!!**

**Birthdays During the Spring…**

If you see these scholars around, please wish them a fabulous birthday!

- Iris Petty: March 17  
- Rogina Mojumder: March 18  
- Enrique Valdivia: May 10  
- Benjamin Del Rosario: May 12  
- Beau Hixon: May 15

**Scholar and Alumni News**

**Stephanie Montgomery** (cohort 2009): Graduated with a BA in history from the University of Nevada, Reno, August 2011. She completed the International Chinese Language Program at National Taiwan University in June of 2011.

**Umar Ijaz** (cohort 2010): Graduated with a BS in Electrical Engineering from the University of Nevada, Reno, August 2011. He is currently a graduate special at UNR.

**Monica Atlookan** (cohort 2009): Graduated with a master’s degree in social work from the University of Nevada, Reno, Spring 2011.

**Alyetta Munoz** (cohort 2010): Was accepted to Oregon State University College of Pharmacy for fall 2011.

**Carina Rivera** (cohort 2007): Presented a poster in September of 2011 at the Nevada Public Health Association Conference entitled “Positive Prevention Outcomes of an Experiential Nutrition Education Program in Public Housing.”

**Aaron Modica** (cohort 2004): Was awarded a McNair fellowship to pursue his PhD program at the University of Washington. It is a two year award granted to recipients during the first academic year and final dissertation year amounting to 55,000 dollars!

**Lakesha Farmer** (cohort 2005): Was granted a pharmaceutical internship at USC UPC Pharmacy. She was also awarded the Blake and Okamura Scholarships.


**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.

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- **Program Director:** Rita Escher  
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www.unr.edu/mcnair