

**Ricardo Ely**

McNair Scholar Program

My name is Ricardo Ely, I am currently a senior at Eastern Washington University double-majoring in biology and geology. My aim is to become a vertebrate paleontologist, studying extinct fossil forms and their evolution through time. As an undergraduate student, I have been fortunate enough to conduct research in this field, and this is all thanks to the Ronald E. McNair Program at EWU.

I have worked on a description of 26 million year old fossil skinks from South Australia as part of my research internship with the McNair Program. My advisor for this project is Dr. Judd Case. The program supported a visit to the San Diego Natural History Museum to perform comparative work on skeletal skink material. Without Dr. Case and the McNair Program's assistance, I would not have been able to be exposed to wonderful research opportunities to prepare me for graduate school.

The McNair program has led to success in acceptance to graduate school: I have been accepted to a Master's Program through the Department of Animal Biology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and a Master's Program in Geological Sciences at Indiana University. In addition, I am of Latino background, and look forward to increasing diversity in the field of vertebrate paleontology, one of the main goals of the McNair Program.



Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Program

Through a grant competition, funds are awarded to institutions of higher education to prepare eligible participants for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities. Participants are from disadvantaged backgrounds and have demonstrated strong academic potential. Institutions work closely with participants as they complete their undergraduate requirements. Institutions encourage participants to enroll in graduate programs and then track their progress through to the successful completion of advanced degrees. The goal is to increase the attainment of Ph.D. degrees by students from underrepresented segments of society.

All McNair projects must provide the following activities: opportunities for research or other scholarly activities; summer internships; seminars and other educational activities designed to prepare students for doctoral study; tutoring; academic counseling; and activities designed to assist students participating in the project in securing admission to and financial assistance for enrollment in graduate programs. McNair projects may also provide the following additional activities: education or counseling services designed to improve financial and economic literacy of students; mentoring programs involving faculty members at institutions of higher education or students, or any combination of such persons; and exposure to cultural events and academic programs not usually available to disadvantaged students.

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