

MCNAIR SCHOLARS CONFERENCE

By: David Smith

Embry-Riddle upper-classmen Vincent Bell and Christian Lewis presented their research findings at the sixth annual University of Delaware National McNair Scholars Research Conference in early October, 2008.

Both are members of Embry-Riddle's chapter of the McNair Scholars Program, a federally-funded academic enrichment program that prepares eligible undergraduates for graduate school and beyond.

Bell, an Engineering/Space Physics major, presented his solution of the Dirac equation, which explains how various particles spin. Lewis, an Aerospace Engineering major, shared his study on "Trajectory Shaping of ExoAtmospheric Bodies," or creating intercepts in space.

From Oct. 3-4 they attended a graduate fair, learned what research other McNair scholars are doing, networked with them and presented their own research.

Lewis, a senior, defined one purpose of the conference as "a pre-grad experience to see what it's like in the graduate field."

While neither had presented before, Bell attended a conference after joining the pro-gram at the start of Spring semester 2008. As part of the program, a handful of ERAU McNair Scholars accompanied the presenters in Delaware.



"The conference was great for networking and meeting people like you," Bell said of his previous attendance.

Bell's presentation of his method of solving Dirac's equation, "analytically and numerically," delved into the difference between classical and quantum mechanics, what he did with the equation, and his future plans for it.

And Lewis, who joined the program at the end of Spring 2008, described "changing the path of a given object to make it do something you want, with a set of specifications." These objects inhabit space or the upper-atmosphere. They could be asteroids, comets, satellites, or a UFO.

"What I gained is knowledge of what it feels like to present on a graduate level," said Mr. Lewis. The conference was his first.

In the tradition of Dr. Ronald E. McNair, the man whose name the program bears, the program is geared towards "first-generation college students, and under-represented [minority] students," the Engineering/Space Physics senior said.

For more information about the McNair Scholars Pro-gram, contact ERAU's McNair Coordinator, Ms. Paula Reed, at reedp@erau.edu or 386.226.6149.