

Once in a Blue Moon

Moreno earns Wells Scholarship, paid to study Astronomy and Astrophysics at IU Bloomington



Senior Raul Moreno achieves in academics and athletics. For his AP Capstone study, he's comparing the thought process of Catholicism and quantum mechanics (Photo by Adam Crozier).

By Adam Crozier

Born in Mexico, a U.S. citizen by age five, student body president, aspiring violinist, valedictorian and now one of 25 Wells Scholars, the bilingual senior **Raul Moreno** showers in warm water after diving practice.

"I have most of my good ideas in the shower because the distractions are minimized," said Moreno, who said he thinks best when he's by himself. "I'm normally a pretty extroverted person, but I need the alone time to recharge." Moreno prefers to study without other people around.

"If anyone needs help, like studying in a group, I'll help them after I've learned the material." Moreno was "mediocre" in his drive and results in elementary school, unselected for special IDEA or gifted classes. In the sixth grade he started to stand out and do well. Combine the fact that he liked school and he began demanding more of himself.

"Academically, it never really felt like a burden, necessarily. I just kind of did my work and it all just fell in to place," he said. "I've developed a good work ethic. Having this happen was a

big payoff."

The Wells Scholarship provides free tuition, academic fees and a \$10,020 stipend to attend IU Bloomington for four years. One of those years may be dedicated to a study abroad trip. A one-time grant of \$1,750 for a creative project is made available to the scholar, too.

"For my parents, it was a really big deal," Moreno said. I have a sister a grade below and having to pay for college for two kids would be impossible. Having this big of a scholarship was huge for my family."

Moreno's dad Raul Moreno is a construction worker, while his mom Adriana Moreno is a homemaker.

Moreno's sister, junior **Dayanna Moreno**, said, "His achievements have only showed me to work harder and to push myself out of my comfort zone, not to beat him or be exactly like him, but to better myself."

Offering more insight on the comprehensive road to a Wells Scholarship, Moreno gave his perspective. He said, "The school nominates two candidates. From those two, we both submit an online application. The main part of that is

an essay over the topic of our choice. It's to judge our worldview, how we think. From the application pool they pick around 50-52 actual applicants to interview--- from around the world."

The application itself puts pressure on hopeful applicants. "You're supposed to come up with your own question and write about it using sources you cited," Moreno said. "Mine was about the relevance and importance given to the liberal arts and STEM programs. I said they should be of equal importance because the stem fields can only take you to a certain point."

He discussed his ideas further. The future astrophysicist said, "There's a lot more value that comes with creativity than is usually highlighted by science and math in the curriculum. I branched into the theoretical and philosophical implications of quantum mechanics--that's an example of the two mixing." The candidates were placed in a room for an open discussion.

The questions in question allowed multiple hopefuls to respond and bounce ideas off of one another. For example, they were asked to respond to a wide assortment of political scenarios.

"They asked a question on border policy. As someone who has experience on something like that my opinion had a little more authority," said Moreno. He was blown away by the sheer talent and brain power of the other kids in the room. Moreno believed other students there was deserving of the award.

"Everyone was really smart, but they were also socially intelligent, too." Moreno's roommate, Ted from Colorado, possessed extensive, working knowledge of colonial European history. "He talked about how this one guy's donkey became drunk and fell down the stairs and died," Moreno said. "It was all these really small stories he would tell as if they were personal memories."

He attributed part of his success to two teachers: **Jacqueline Sheehan** and **Stefanie Davis**.

He said, "The Friday before I went to IU, I literally broke down crying in Ms. Sheehan's room 'cause I was so nervous and they were both there to calm me. I'm extremely thankful. It's not

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hard to see that our teachers are truly invested in us. And in my case, their encouragement gave me confidence on an emotional level."

Moreno continued, "They said there was nothing I could do at this point that would make the interview seem better. I just had to go there and show them what I had to offer."

Learn more about Jayla Sloan's Lilly Scholarship on Page 2



When Moreno started diving, he would close his eyes in mid-air. Then he learned to keep his eyes open and close them as he entered the water (Photo by Adam Crozier).