The Chemistry Department at Lamar University hosted Professor John Toscano from Johns Hopkins University on April 8, 2011. Professor Toscano began with recruitment for Johns Hopkins by offering a little history about Johns Hopkins and what the school has to offer. He also presented information about graduate school as an option after graduation from college, what to expect from graduate school, and what to expect from yourself as a chemistry graduate student.

Professor Toscano’s presentation focused on his research: “The biochemistry of the nitroxyl system (NO/HNO)”. His research included the new developments of nitroxyl system and the tools used to investigate the system. The students enjoyed learning about new technologies saying:

“He introduced us to new technologies used to investigate nitroxyl systems.”

Professor Toscano explained that his research started with limited information because HNO has to be generated and has a restricted number of precursors. He said that the more you are involved in research the hungrier you are for information. This was a positive aspect because the students said: “…you really don’t have to know anything about a topic to research on it- knowing comes from studying it.”
There were a total of 78 students who attended: 57 undergraduates (8 of which were chemistry), 21 graduate students (19 Chemistry), and 3 STST Chemistry participants. One area that the students said could be improved was having students be required to stay the entire time of the presentation. They felt that students getting up and leaving during the presentation was a huge distraction. This is an idea that we will make an effort to integrate in the next years outside speaker’s presentation. Also, students suggested that the temperature in the room be adjusted to a more comfortable temperature before the start of the presentation. I feel that this event was very valuable to me and to STST because it allowed students to see how research works, how it evolves, and how it is incorporated into higher education. The students agreed saying:

“[It is] interesting to see how the chemistry department interacts and collaborates with the medical school.”

-Kristeena Ingram
STAIRSTEP Student – Chemistry