The Chemistry Department at Lamar University hosted a Career Forum, on Friday November 1st, 2013 with Dr. Erin Burke as the guest speaker. Dr. Burke is a former instructor of chemistry at Lamar University and is now the Senior Research Chemist at Glycos Biotechnologies a biochemical company in Houston, Texas. At the company she manages the analytical/process chemistry group and oversees experiments and engineering projects. Dr. Burke began with a presentation about her work at the company which includes innovations in microbiology and producing green chemicals. Through her presentation she described how the basic idea of creating things in the lab works and how those ideas are carried out.

“The career forum gave a fantastic insight into what a career at a biotechnology company would be like.”

After her presentation, Dr. Burke opened the floor up for questions from the students. Among some of the questions was: “How is the adjustment from being a student to working in the industry?” Dr. Burke explained that your undergraduate background and experience is very important in industry. She also revealed that everything you learn as an undergraduate will follow you and be used in industry. She walked us through a day in her shoes as a chemist and explained that some of the foundational concepts learned in beginning chemistry courses are some of the main things she uses every day.

Dr. Burke also stressed the importance of having a LinkedIn profile and keeping it updated. She said that employers today actively use LinkedIn as a tool to find employees that would be great fits for their company. The previous week all STSP students were required to go to a LinkedIn session and having Dr. Burke emphasize it was significant.
“…a day in the life Dr. Burke was very informative. It gave a glimpse on what to expect as a chemist.”

There were a total of 16 students who attended: 15 undergraduates (10 of which were chemistry), 1 graduate student (Chemistry), and included in the number undergraduates, 4 STST participants. There were also from faculty and staff of the Chemistry Department in attendance. The students enjoyed the career forum and found the information provided very essential. Many of the students in attendance stayed after the forum ended to have one-on-one time with Dr. Burke. A few even made connections with her on LinkedIn.

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