Physics STAIRSTEP organized a short visit at Lee College in Dr. Tom O’Kuma’s physics classroom during the lecture period. There were 25 community college students present with their instructor. The students all received a package containing information about Lamar, about the College of Arts & Sciences, about the Computer Science, Math and Physics programs. Detailed information was provided about the opportunities for physics majors at Lamar.

Dr. Bahrim warmly greeted the classroom and gave a brief overview of the physics program at Lamar, explaining the courses offered and how their credits would transfer over to Lamar and how they could get their Bachelors in physics with two more years of study transferred from Lee College. He also mentioned the benefits of being part of STAIRSTEP and how it funds our physics students in doing their own research projects, under his supervision. Lastly, he talked about the many scholarship opportunities available such as the Mirabeau. After that, he let me talk about my experience at Lamar.

I talked briefly about my research in atomic spectroscopy and its significance in our on-going research project and its real world applications. I talked about how STAIRSTEP had provided me the experience necessary to pursue an internship at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) this summer and how that consequently lead to my selection as a Beck Fellow and a Goldwater Scholarship, two very prestigious awards. I also talked about the engineering program, since I am also an electrical engineer and since many students were interested in becoming engineers.

After I gave my spiel, we opened the floor for questions. I had several students approaching me about the physics and engineering programs, campus life, applying for the Goldwater, etc.

It was a great experience and I felt that I inspired at least a couple of students to continue towards a higher education and to get actively involved in research as soon as possible. I love these kinds of visits the best because I think it is the personalized attention and personal testimonials that can truly inspire people.

Keeley Townley-Smith (event coordinator)