STAIRSTEP Career Forum

Guest speaker: Joseph Young from Rice University
November 2, 2012

Jacob James (event coordinator)

Physics STST participants: Bryan Neal, Jose Castro, Sara-jeanne Vogler, and Jacob James

Joseph Young, a LU alumnus and former Goldwater recipient while at Lamar in 2005, now Ph.D. candidate in the final year at Rice University spoke about what he felt is more important to remember when applying to Graduate Schools. Mr. Young said, “It has to be your decision, it has to be your choice.” Many of the students in attendance are in their beginning stages of their degrees. These students were eager to learn about what would be ahead of them if they choose to seek out higher levels of knowledge.

Joseph put emphasis on the subject of recommendation letters. It is important to approach advisors and mentors that would be willing to write strong recommendations based off of their knowledge of you. A letter of recommendation should be taken very seriously. The author of the letter should feel comfortable with this task and have a better understanding of who you are and your abilities. This knowledge should be based on interactions outside the classroom as well as your basic academic performance inside the classroom.

He reassured everyone that there are many aspects involved in the acceptance process and one should not be discouraged due to having one weak aspect of the application. The application process involves having GRE scores, a statement of purpose, recommendation letters, and all forms involved.

This event has organized to spread out the STAIRSTEP name to even more potential younger students. Therefore the audience was broader than the PH STAIRSTEP
group, with 18 undergraduate students from a general physics class taught by Dr. C. Bahrim attending the talk. These students have now been exposed to the benefits of being involved in the STAIRSTEP program.

This forum has helped me understand the potential pitfalls of applying to Graduate school and how to better manage my time throughout the process. This event can be improved by increasing the amount of people we reach. Joseph Young has been a remarkable speaker.

**Statistics:**

STAIRSTEP participants: 4  
Twenty-two undergraduate participants  
One recent PH graduate and STAIRSTEP alumnus, Nick Lanning.

Figure 1: Joseph Young speaking in from of LU students on Nov. 2, 2012
Figure 2: Joseph Young showing web sites with career opportunities in physics to PH STAIRSTEP students after his talk.

Figure 3: Group picture with Joseph Young and the participants at the Career Forum on Nov. 2, 2012.