STAIRSTEP career forum – Department of Physics - Wednesday, May 1, 2011

Raul Otero from TOTAL, Ken Pepper from Ken Pepper Engineering, Inc. and Donny Dorn from RDS presented job opportunities for students with physics background in the engineering field.

Raul Otero works for the TOTAL Port Arthur, Texas Refinery. He is the Project Development Senior Engineering Advisor. Raul is a chemical engineer with responsibility for the capital development of the Port Arthur, Texas Refinery. In his role as Project Development Advisor, Raul interfaces with the Refinery Business and Capital Execution Teams to define capital projects and oversee the successful execution of those projects to completion.

Ken Pepper works for ReCon Engineering, Inc. He is the Manager of Texas Operations for ReCon in Beaumont, Texas. Ken is a chemical engineer by discipline. He manages the ReCon Engineering Texas Office. His responsibilities include Business Development, Project Management, and Process Engineering for capital projects. He is a Licensed Professional Engineer in the State of Texas.

Donny Dorn has a B.S. in physics from Lamar University and was invited to discuss his work experience in the petrochemical industry and his motivation for returning to school to earn an electrical engineering degree. He also discussed his interest and the opportunities available in medical physics graduate studies at M.D Anderson cancer center in Houston Texas.
“We had a few people from industry come and talk to us in the Physics Career Forum. Raul Otero from TOTAL, Ken Pepper from a local engineering firm, ReCon, and Donald Dorn, from EE department at Lamar, a physics alumni, currently working at another local engineering firm who intends to join M.D. Anderson Cancer Center were present to give their own presentations. The message was similar and clear from all three members. Communication is key to be successful no matter what profession you seek. The presentation that caught my attention the most was Donny Dorn’s. His talk about opportunities for physics in the medical field is very interesting to me and I am looking to pursue this in the future. I have read up further on M.D. Anderson and their program and am really hoping to someday apply to the program.”

-Brandon Stjohn

“Mr. Otero really hammered home the point of how important communication skills are in the workplace. He emphasized that only about 30% of his time spent in the work environment is dedicated to the technical skills that students spend 90% of their time developing in the school environment. He also encouraged the attendees to take extra classes or join organizations that develop communication skills because ultimately they are what determine our long term success whether it be in graduate studies or employment. I definitely plan to take his advice now and improve my skills in this area.”

-Nick Lanning

This career forum included two sessions. The first session of one hour had six undergraduate students and 12 graduate students attending. The second session of 30 minutes had 10 undergraduate students. There were two STAIRSTEP physics students and several prospect students willing to join STAIRSTEP. Each presentation was followed by a question session.