“Green Chemistry Opportunities”

The event was presented by Kate Anderson on April 11, 2012. The topic of her talk was Green Chemistry and how it can be applied to academia and the industry. Something that differed from average talks was the ice breaker that she performed. Kate handed out post-it notes to each ‘group’. She then had all of us call out our favorite elements from the periodic table while she wrote them on the board. After this, she asked the audience to categorize the elements in any way they could think of. Kate was aiming for the audience to think outside of the average classifications like, state, metal/nonmetal, and atomic size. The end goal of the exercise was to lead the audience to classify the elements by their toxicology. Toxicology is the study of the effect which an element or a molecule may have on people and the rest of the environment. Kate informed us that the general assumption about the purpose of Green Chemistry, that Green Chemistry is a field with which we decide how to clean up the hazardous messes already being made by the industry, is incorrect. The purpose of Green Chemistry is to go back to the beginning and correct the process, rather than cleaning up the mess. The students that were spoken to after the discussion claimed that, “The talk was very interesting.” About 30 students attended the event, within these thirty
students were fourteen undergraduate students, twelve graduate students, and one post bachelor student. Only one STAIRSTEP student was able to attend, the coordinator, Crissie Vandehoef. Five faculty members were also present.

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