

Trip to WIU Chemistry Department
By Wesley Stewart

On Wednesday, November 13th the Advanced Chemistry class went to visit the WIU chemistry department. During this visit they met with Dr. Vinod, who was assisted by Bishnu and Adeola, and Dr. Soendergaard, who was assisted by Kimberly. First, Dr. Vinod taught us about the synthesis of polymers and, more specifically, nylon 66. Then, Adeola showed us the synthesization of nylon 66 and let us pull some out of the solution ourselves. We were able to see the process firsthand and feel the nylon we had just synthesised. After this demonstration we were taught a little about essential oils and how they make up the building blocks of what we smell. We were then given an array of essential oils to attempt to guess the scent of. Once we had tried to write down the scent for each one, they gave us what the real scents were and where they came from. Following this, we went upstairs to see biochemistry professor Dr. Soendergaard. She taught us about D.N.A. and a process called electrophoresis that is used to determine the length of the D.N.A. strand. We then set up an experiment using this process with D.N.A. samples they had given us. We also learned how to use a microchannel pipette. While the process of electrophoresis was taking place, Dr. Soendergaard gave us a tour of her research lab and told us how they ran research in it. Although we had to stop it early, we were able to see how the different strands of D.N.A. were different lengths when we took the gel out of the electrophoresis machine. Overall this trip was very fun, and it gave us insight into what chemistry is like at the next level of education.