

Field Trip to WIU Chemistry Department
By Dylan Gibbs

The West Central Advanced Chemistry students went to WIU on Wednesday, November 13th. When we arrived we were taken to one of the labs and greeted by Dr. Vinod, the organic chemistry professor, and his two assistants, Bishnu and Adeola. We were instructed to do two experiments in the first lab, the synthesis of nylon and the olfaction of different extracts and oils. The nylon synthesis was made using equal parts of the compounds adipoylchloride in cyclohexane and 1, 6-hexamethylene diamine, within an aqueous sodium hydroxide solution. As for olfaction (the way we perceive different smells) we compared 10 different extracts and oils and tried guessing what they were, and learned what they actually were. After that we were escorted upstairs and met with Dr. Soendergaard, the Assistant Professor in biochemistry and her assistant Kimberly. We learned how to use a microchannel pipette (a pipette capable of transferring extremely small amounts of liquids) to transfer DNA samples to a gel. The gel had an electric current ran through it from one side, so the DNA samples would be attracted to it. It would then be put under a UV light where it was easy to see the individual samples. The sampled DNA that was small would move much farther towards the source of electricity than a larger sized DNA sample would. This process of finding the relative size of DNA is called gel electrophoresis. Before we left we toured the organic chemistry labs and had the opportunity to look at cancer cells. The trip was very fun and educational, and prospective chemistry students should look forward into doing it next year.