



The Post-Standard

Visitors Ensure That Science is Not So Weird

Cornell University science professors reach out during visits to Nottingham High School

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Staff writer

Roughly 70 Nottingham High School students stayed after school Jan. 18 to catch a lecture on the origin and future of the universe by a Cornell University cosmologist.

Some students were there as part of their course work. Others, for instance 10th-grader Jelessa Rogers, were there because they chose to be. In fact, so many students showed up it was standing room only and latecomers couldn't get in.

Based on last week's attendance, the pilot project between Nottingham and Cornell, was a hit. Assistant Professor Rachel Bean is the third Cornell faculty member to speak at Nottingham as part of Cornell's "Ask a Scientist" program. Cornell is dispatching a professor a month to talk to Nottingham students.

The arrangement was born after Nottingham earth science teacher Myriam Ibarra and two other Nottingham teachers spent six weeks at Cornell last summer in a professional development program.

Jane Earle, who works for Cornell's Center for Materials Research in Education, was looking for a way to expand Cornell's Ask the Scientist newspaper column into a face-to-face venture. She was looking for a school contact, and she found it in Ibarra.

Earle asked Ibarra to query students about what sort of scientists they'd be interested in having as speakers and recruited faculty around that for a monthly lecture at Nottingham. Cornell faculty donate their time, Earle said.

Bean said she was happy to do so. She thinks it is important for students to see that research scientists are normal people, and that there are up-to-the minute questions in cosmology that students themselves could someday have a hand in answering.

Bean could answer questions in more depth than a high school teacher, senior Jargalan Nermunkh said.

Junior Marielle Forte said getting information from the scientist was great, as opposed to turning to a possibly outdated book.

"You are actually getting the information about what's going on right now," Forte said.

Earle asked Nottingham students to give her more ideas for future lectures. She said they will continue "as long as kids have ideas and I can come up with a faculty member."