



# News Release

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## **HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS GAIN CHEMISTRY CREDIT**

**St. Joseph, Mo.** —Oct. 20, 2006—What is the chemical makeup of caffeine? That's what high school students from Excelsior Springs, Lawson and Lathrop set out to discover recently when they spent the morning at Missouri Western State University learning how to use a gas chromatograph-mass spectrometer to analyze caffeine.

The students are all enrolled in the chemistry dual credit program, which is taught via DVD by a Western chemistry professor or by a high school teacher certified by the chemistry department. As part of the course, the high school students visit Western two times, once each semester, and participate in a laboratory experience. They earn five hours of college credit when they successfully complete the course.

“Students gain valuable experience through the two on-campus visits to the chemistry laboratories,” said Dr. Michael Ducey, associate professor of chemistry and coordinator of the program for four years. “They conduct experiments with current high-end chemical instrumentation.”

“It's fun. I enjoy it,” said Tara Hales, a senior from Lawson High School. “It's a lot of work, but you can have fun while doing it.” Hales said she hopes to be a nurse, and was happy to be able to earn college credit while still in high school.

The course is identical to the one offered on campus; however, the high school students complete the requirements in a year rather than in one semester, and they receive a reduced tuition rate.

Robin Clark, a teacher at Lathrop High School, brought eight students to the lab. “The dual chemistry program is wonderful. We have a lot of help from the chemistry department. It’s probably the most organized chemistry program in the area because of the support from the college professors.” Lathrop High School has participated since 2000, she said.

The chemistry dual credit program, which started in 1999, began with six schools participating. This year, 116 students in 20 high schools throughout northwest Missouri and northeast Kansas are enrolled. The program is coordinated by Dr. James Puckett, instructor of chemistry; and Dr. Gerald Zweerink, professor of chemistry, coordinated the program its first two years.

The Western Institute offers 70 dual credit courses, and 700 students from 34 high schools are currently enrolled.

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*Missouri Western State University is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The university offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.*