“I can’t believe I’ve actually done all this work! It feels good to have accomplished something like this that required so much dedication, time, and effort.” “Research taught me to think in a different way and think about everything going on at once.” “I learned that I really like doing research.” “I have gotten better at my public speaking ability through presenting my research.” “I have learned that I am capable of a lot more than I had originally thought. Junior year when we were planning our research, I was not convinced that I was going to be able to do it. I am really happy with the way things turned out.” “I enjoyed writing my paper and making my presentation.” “I enjoyed working independently and spending time in the lab.” “I like analyzing data much more than gathering data.” “The research process is very demanding yet incredibly rewarding at the same time.” “It takes a big commitment to stick with one project and work on it for over a year.” “I have learned that research can be fun.”

These reflections typify the responses that our 31 seniors wrote to complete the phrase “two things I learned about myself through the research project …” At the end of a three-course sequence, these students have a much different perspective on scientific research now that they have completed their projects. They typically start out anxious and intimidated by the huge task before them, even though they have been exposed over the previous years to research projects presented by those students preceding them. They have also been practicing various components of the scientific process through numerous lab courses taken since they were freshmen. Yet the surprise of success and completion accompanies a welcome relief and genuine pride at what they have accomplished.

Biology faculty are proud to see another group of seniors reach this milestone. We have invested many hours with these students and know that the research experience is more than collecting, analyzing, and presenting data. While we say goodbye to these students we are simultaneously gearing up to work with the juniors on their projects. [This summer I will be working with three students studying earthworm diversity in plots invaded by exotic plants!]

Changes in how we structure research have been implemented so that we can accommodate the growing number of students in our program and the increasing demands on our time. Yet we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing a research experience for all of our students. At the ASB conference in April, several of us gave a talk about our research program and afterwards fielded many questions from colleagues at other institutions. We are clearly doing something good here! The rewards for our dedication and work come from many directions: accolades from peers at other universities, students receiving awards for excellent posters and presentations at conferences, and the gratification of learning more about the organisms and systems we study. For me, the greatest rewards are the smiles on our senior’s faces after their final presentation at the Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium and the accompanying hugs of “thanks!”

For more information on our research program, visit us on Facebook and at our website. Have an enjoyable summer!

“A Land Ethic for Nashville, Tennessee, America and the Earth”

This year the ENV Lecture series was host to Buddy Huffaker, President and Executive Director of the Aldo Leopold Foundation. This foundation carries on the environmental legacy of Aldo Leopold who was a pioneer in the field of conservation and ecology. During Mr. Huffaker’s talk, students read excerpts from Aldo Leopold’s book “A Sand County Almanac” and discussed Leopold’s ecological philosophy and how it can apply to Belmont, Nashville and beyond. The talk closed with Mr. Huffaker creating a “word cloud” incorporating words from the audience as the ingredients necessary for a Land Ethic in Belmont, Nashville and Tennessee.
CAS Awards
Awards were held in Frist Lecture Hall on April 15, 2013. Dr. Darlene Panvini, Department of Biology, and Dr. Rachel Rigsby, BMB Coordinator, presented awards to ten deserving students, from freshmen to graduating seniors. More photos can be seen on our Facebook page, Serotonin Helix.

Freshman Achievement Award in Biology
Zahraa Abdulameer
Robin Weyman

Ronald M. Barrett Pre-Health Award
Morgan Wilters

Donald R. Ramage Award for Service to the Learning Community in Biology
Justin Smith

Biology Department Scholarship Award
Fatin Jweinat

Biology Department Research Award
Lacey Dunkley

Outstanding Student in Biology
Shea Harrison

Freshman Achievement Award in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
Felicity Newton

Outstanding Student in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
Liberty Foye

David R. Hill Environmental Science Award
Sarah Gilmore

TAS Awards
Tennessee Academy of Science announced the award recipients from the Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 meetings. Congratulations to our winners!

Fall 2012 Meeting
Cell and Molecular Biology
1st place Fatin Jweinat
2nd place Lacey Dunkley
3rd place Rachel Garland

Microbiology
3rd place Shea Harrison

Botany
2nd place Emma Ghulam Jan

Spring 2013 Meeting
Cellular/Microbiology
1st place Fatin Jweinat
2nd place Lacey Dunkley

Zoology
1st place Lauren Land
2nd place Breanna Poore
3rd place Anna Beth Jones

Botany/Ecology
1st place Parth Majmudar
2nd place Jessica Braden
3rd place Rachel Chandler

Congratulations to Spring 2013 Alpha Chi Inductees!

Biology
Alicia Hsu
Justin Smith

BMB
Fakhry Daowd

Alpha Chi membership is the highest academic honor awarded by Belmont University. It is an international, interdisciplinary honors society open to junior and senior university students who rank in the top 10 percent of their class.
This spring, students and faculty had opportunities to hear from numerous speakers, including:

Teniel Ramikie, Graduate Student at Vanderbilt University—“The Role of Endogenous Cannabinoids in Central Nervous system Function”

Grad Student Panel, Sarah Collier and Shenika Poindexter (Graduate Students at Vanderbilt University)—“Graduate School Opportunities”

Dr. Julian F. Hillyer, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Biological Science and Institute for Global Health at Vanderbilt University—“Cellular immune responses and hemolymph flow dynamics in the body cavity of the malaria mosquito, Anopheles gambiae”

Buddy Huffaker, President and Executive Director of the Aldo Leopold Foundation—“A Land Ethic for Nashville, Tennessee, America and the Earth”

Additionally, several speakers and guests were on campus from health-related graduate and professional schools to talk about their programs.

Alumni: if you would be interested in talking with current students about your career path and experiences, please contact us.

NERD PROM!!!

The Tri-Beta Club hosted the first School of Sciences Nerd Prom on April 7. In addition to showcasing nerdy attire, the event was also a fundraiser for the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt University. Pocket protectors, glasses, plaid pants and suspenders were the fashion statement of the evening. Test tubes filled with glow sticks and beakers containing colorful liquids added ambience to the evening. The Periodic Table of Elements served as the perfect backdrop for prom portraits.

The Beta Beta Beta Biological Honorary Society provides opportunities for students to learn about careers, to have social events, to develop leadership skills and to provide service to the community in areas of biological importance. Dr. Steve Murphree serves as the faculty advisor for this organization. More pictures can be seen on our Facebook page—Serotonin Helix.

ASB Conference

Biology faculty members Nick Ragsdale, Jennifer Thomas, Darlene Panvini, Chris Barton and Roger Jackson and 14 biology undergraduate research students attended the 2013 Association of Southeastern Biologists Meeting on April 10—April 13 in Charleston, West Virginia. The meeting was hosted by Marshall University. Over 150 abstracts were presented by undergraduate and graduate students from Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama, Ohio, Tennessee and other southeastern states. Belmont students presented posters and talks at the meeting, attended presentations, symposiums and workshops and had the opportunity to see and discuss research with students from many universities in the southeast area.

Lauren Land was one of 14 students who presented at ASB

Faculty Promotions—Congratulations to these faculty!

Dr. Jennifer Thomas was promoted to Professor.

Dr. John Niedzwiecki was promoted to Associate Professor.

Dr. Darlene Panvini was promoted to Professor.

Biology Faculty Update

The cicadas are coming again! This time it’s Brood II and Dr. Steve Murphree is serving up cicada recipes. A recent article in Discovery News titled “The Cicadas Are Coming …Hungry?” discusses how to select the best cicadas for human consumption during the coming cicada swarm. Dr. Murphree gives tips on how to catch the tastiest cicadas and provides information on cicada cookbooks.

Faculty Promotions—Congratulations to these faculty!

Dr. Jennifer Thomas was promoted to Professor.

Dr. John Niedzwiecki was promoted to Associate Professor.

Dr. Darlene Panvini was promoted to Professor.
Congratulations to our seniors!!

Erin Pitts, Dr. Darlene Panvini, Sylvia Alsup and Jessica Braden

Lauren Land and Bellamy Hawkins

Rachel Chandler and Erin

Dr. Steve Murphree, Amber Hopkins and Gabrielle Hampton

Dr. Darlene Panvini and Fatin Jweinat

Homa Ghulam Jan, Dr. Darlene Panvini and Lida Ghulam Jan

Anderson Webb, Shea Harrison, Scott Kim and Rachel Chandler

For more pictures, visit our Facebook page—Serotonin Helix.
Alumni Corner

Sachin Amin (09)
“Hope all is going good in Nashville, I wanted to update you that this student of yours will be graduating from St. George’s Univ in June this year, will be coming home to TN in May, and will begin Internal Medicine Residency at University of Tennessee at Knoxville. My two years on the Island of Grenada were very fun. I did my third year at Hackensack University Medical Center in New Jersey, and I set up all my fourth year rotations at various hospitals in NY. Truly, I have had a very good clinical experience here and feel prepared to take the challenges up ahead.

I wanted to thank you for helping me set the foundation in basic sciences especially in physiology. Also, thank you for helping me all along the way as an advisor.”

Caleb Binkley (11)
“I will officially be attending pharmacy school at Lipscomb University College of Pharmacy this fall! I also currently work for Saint Thomas Hospital here in Nashville as a pharmacy technician, but will be taking on the role as one of their pharmacy interns this June. I plan to work for the Hospital through pharmacy school, and hopefully have the opportunity to do a residency here as well as afterwards.

I want to thank you all for your patience, your time, and your encouragement during my time as a biology student and after graduation as well. As many of you know it’s been a long road, but I could not have done it without all of you!”

Ryan Alexander (10)
“I have officially been accepted at LMU-Debusk College of Osteopathic Medicine and I am waiting for a final decision from the University of Tennessee. I will likely be attending LMU-DCOM but will wait to make a final decision until I hear from UTHSC.”

Emily Ezell (Smothers) (11)
Congratulations to Emily who was recently married in December! Emily is now entering her second year at DeBusk—OMS II.

Katie Rice (11)
Has recently started working at ICON Clinical Research which is a private biomedical research organization.

Megan DeVries (12)
Has received a University Fellowship at the University of Louisville in the Division of Evolution Ecology and Behavioral Biology. Megan will begin her Fellowship in Fall 2013.

Gabrielle Hampton (13)
Has just been offered a teaching position at Maplewood High School in Nashville, TN.

Current Students Update

Erin Pitts (ENV) was interviewed by the Friends of Warner Parks about her bird research projects and work as a seasonal naturalist at Beaman and Warner Parks.

Andrey Borisyuk (Neuroscience) has been awarded two scholarships: a $600 scholarship from the Wallace Rasmussen Study Abroad Program to be used for his study abroad trip, and a $900 Simmons Scholarship for language study in Dresden.

Erin Pitts (ENV) and Ashley Allen (ENV) wrote a grant for Genesis Learning Centers as part of their fall 2013 Social Entrepreneurship 4150 Grant Writing course. Their efforts earned a local nonprofit organization a $6,000 grant. The Memorial Foundation and the Christy-Houston Foundation funded the grant, Genesis Learning Center Autistic Sensory Room Project. Genesis Executive Director Terry Adams also has used some of the information from the grant in a contract application to Metro-Nashville Schools and a grant application to the HCA Foundation.

BIO 3300 (Animal Behavior) Students in Dr. John Niedzwiecki’s Biology 3300 Animal Behavior class conducted research projects at The Nashville Zoo at Grassmere for spring 2013. Students gathered data to test scientific hypotheses about the behavior of zoo animals. The video can be viewed at this website: http://www.belmont.edu/iss/environmental_science_program/index.html

Environment Fair On April 23, ENV Capstone students presented posters on a variety of topics: fracking, community gardens, tree ordinances, exotic pest plant management in state parks, land protection in TN, and global climate change. The ONE club also hosted a bake sale and raised over $100 to donate to a local environmental organization.
Contact Us!

- Have any comments about the newsletter or the Department?
- An alum with an update on activities?
- Like further information about the Department, its offerings or activities?

Please contact us by one of the following e-mail addresses or by postal service.

Ms. Terri Templeman, Administrative Assistant, terri.templeman@belmont.edu
Dr. Darlene Panvini, Chair, darlene.panvini@belmont.edu
Department of Biology
Belmont University
1900 Belmont Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37212

Biology Alumni Update

We want to hear from you! Please take a moment to fill out the information below and send to us.

Name_________________________________Graduation Year ______________

Address___________________________________________________________________________

City_____________________________State_____________Zip Code________Phone____________

Email address_______________________________________________________________________

Employment____________________________________Title________________________________

Recent promotion, honor, award, family activity?_____________________________________________

We’re on Facebook! Join us at Serotonin Helix

Check out our website: www.belmont.edu/biology