Notes from the (Rocking) Chair

The 2006-2007 academic year has certainly been eventful for the Department of Biology. Following Spring 2006 graduation in which 13 Biology and 4 Biochemistry and Molecular (BMB) majors graduated, the new academic year began with ca. 105 Biology majors and 12 BMB majors. During the Fall 2006 semester Drs. Thomas and Panvini were promoted to Associate Professor and granted tenure. In addition, Dr. Steve Murphree was granted a sabbatical leave for Fall 2007. The Department was also given permission to hire an additional professor starting the 2007-2008 year. The faculty agreed that the search would focus on expertise in population genetics. The remainder of this newsletter highlights lectures and student activities throughout the fall semester. I hope you enjoy this look at our activities! - Dr. Grammer

“Our Forests: Science, History, and Heart”

The Environmental Studies Program Convocation on February 13 brought Dr. Joan Maloof from Salisbury University in Maryland to Belmont’s campus to talk about her book *Teaching Trees: Lessons of the Forest* and environmental issues. Dr. Maloof’s visit included lunch and discussion with students, a question and answer forum with Dr. Murphree’s and Dr. Panvini’s BIO 1120 class and a speaking engagement in the evening where she signed copies of her book and talked about trees and forests to an audience of over 150 students from Belmont as well as Vanderbilt and Austin Peay.
Belmont University students continue to present at venues beyond SURS and BURS. In Fall 2006 Biology and BMB students attended the Society for Neuroscience conference in Atlanta Georgia to present posters from their research in the 2006 Summer Scholars Program. Students attending were Ananta Bhatt, Stacey Apple, Corey Winfree, Adam Militana and Trisha Siewnarine. They were accompanied by Dr. Robert Grammer and Dr. Lori McGrew.
The Science Undergraduate Research Symposium (SURS) took place on Thursday, November 30, 3:00—7:00 in the Beaman Student Life Center. The keynote address, “Wiring the *C. elegans* Motor Circuits: Turning Off the Wrong Genes to Make the Right Connections”, was presented by Dr. David Miller. Dr. Miller has a Ph.D. in Biochemistry and is a Professor in the Department of Cell and Developmental Biology at Vanderbilt University. Following the keynote, a reception and a student poster session were held in the Beaman Meeting Room Lobby and the Atrium West Lobby followed by student papers presented in Beaman A&B. SURS gives students in the sciences the opportunity to present their research to their peers and listen to keynote speakers. This fall was the third annual SURS presentation with 13 Biology majors and 2 BMB majors presenting posters that they had worked on. Six Biology majors made oral presentations as the culmination of their research experience at Belmont. Some of these students participated in the 2006 Summer Scholars program, others had been working on their research projects this fall.

**Vaughn Science Lecture**

The 2006-2007 Vaughn Science Lecture was held in November this year and featured Dr. William Schaffner, Chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. His presentation, “Bird Flu on the Wing”, attended by approximately 60 students, faculty and staff, discussed the H5N1 strain of influenza virus, its rate of transmission, the course of the disease, and the concern it raises as a potential pandemic. Dr. Schaffner met with interested students in an afternoon session, discussing his own career, medicine as a profession, preparation for medical school, and media interest in topics of medical concern. The Vaughn Science Lecture is sponsored by Dr. Tony Vaughn, a 1984 alumnus of the Department of Mathematics. This lecture series has brought a number of distinguished speakers to the Belmont campus, providing students with great opportunities for lectures and conversations with outstanding professionals in science.
BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Dr. Robert T. Grammer, Professor and Chair
Dr. C. Steven Murphree, Professor and Gulf Coast Research Lab Coordinator
Dr. Lori L. McGrew, Assistant Professor and ICORD Fellow
Dr. Darlene Panvini, Assistant Professor and ENV Coordinator
Dr. D. Nicholas Ragsdale, Assistant Professor and Pre-Health Advisor
Dr. Jennifer T. Thomas, Assistant Professor and BMB Coordinator
Ms. Terri Templeman, Administrative Assistant
Mr. Ray Seely, Laboratory Manager and Chemical Hygiene Officer

IMPORTANT DATES FOR SPRING

March 28-29  Environmental Sustainability Conference
April 2  TN Academy of Sciences Collegiate division (TSU)
April 5-6  Easter Break
April 9-18  Advising
April 25  BURS
May 3  Biology Dept. Pizza Day

Biology Organization Club Meeting Dates

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