By far most of the freshmen who enter as biology majors at Belmont express the desire to become physicians. For some that is a carefully thought-out decision, for some it’s a random choice, for some it’s someone else’s choice for them, and for some it’s a sincere decision based on faulty evidence. Our experience has been that for any of these reasons, many students do not remain as pre-med students. Some of these leave biology altogether; despite the fact that they continue to love the subject, they simply see no other career for them in biology. The faculty is making a special effort to acquaint students with other biology-related career options. In the Vaughn Science Lecture discussions on Jan. 19 Dr. Bill Bass discussed forensic anthropology and other forensic sciences. On Feb. 15 Scott Weidensaul talked about his work as a wildlife biologist and environmental author (see page 3). Ashleigh Long (Mar. 17) and Dr. Lou Laimons (Apr. 24) will present their work in biomedical research. This year’s keynote speaker for BURS is a professor of Environmental Studies at UT, Knoxville. We hope you find these opportunities for career planning helpful. Get enough sleep, nutrition, and study time!

Dr. Grammer

Dr. Daniel Simberloff to be keynote speaker for BURS (Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium)

Dr. Daniel Simberloff will be the keynote speaker at this year’s Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium (BURS). Dr. Daniel Simberloff attended Harvard University where he was awarded the Ph.D. degree in biology in 1969. He currently teaches at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville as the Nancy Gore Hunger Professor of Environmental Studies in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Dr. Simberloff also serves on the editorial boards of such scientific journals as Northeast Gulf Science, Environmental and Ecological Statistics and Oecologia. He is a member of the British Ecological Society, the Nature Conservancy, and the Society for Conservation Biology, among others. In 1994 Dr. Simberloff received a Special Award (Distinguished Statistical Ecologist) from the International Association for Ecology. Dr. Simberloff was appointed to the National Science Board in 2000.

BURS takes place in the spring semester and includes as many as ten disciplines from CAS. In 1991, when BURS began, there were 21 presenters. In 2005 there were over 100 presenters in 10 disciplines. BURS was started by Dr. Donald Ramage who was then Dean of School of Sciences and a professor in the biology department. The symposium was created to give Belmont students the opportunity to present research findings to a community of peers. While SURS included posters and presentations, BURS focuses specifically on oral presentations. This year BURS will be held on April 26. Times and location will be announced as they are confirmed.
Summer Scholar Community 2006

Scholar Communities

Imagine a small research community for 8 – 10 weeks in the summer. There is more time to concentrate on a research project – you have at least 16 hours a week to devote to your project. There are no more than six students working with you. Add a faculty mentor who is available to answer questions and advise you on your progress. In addition you and your team have the opportunity to meet four times during the summer with research students from various disciplines where you’ll discuss issues relating to your project. And all this is achieved at a highly reduced tuition rate. You have just seen what the Scholar Communities summer program at Belmont is all about.

The Summer Program for Student Research begins at the start of the summer session and runs 8 -10 weeks with 16 hours per week given to the research project. There are only four separate communities and each community has 4-6 students with a faculty advisor. The Biology department was a part of the summer 2005 community with Dr. Panvini and the study of exotics and Dr. Ragsdale and Dr. McGrew with their C. elegans crew. Students from these projects groups presented their data at SURES in December. If you’ve thought about a research project (a student can complete their BIO 4700 or BMB 4700 project in this community) or perhaps have thought about a career in biology research this would be an excellent opportunity to explore that possibility.

To learn more, contact Dr. Glenn Acree (460-6289; acreeg@mail.belmont.edu) or Dr. Robert Grammer (460-6216; grammer@mail.belmont.edu).

SLURPS
(St u dent L ed U ndergraduate R eading P rogram in the S ciences)

You’re looking for a reading group to balance all of that knowledge that you’ve gained in those heavy tomes of Biology and Chemistry, but you don’t want to read Austen or Lawrence. So where do you go? How about SLURPS? No, it’s not a new coffee hang out or a new power drink. SLURPS is an acronym for Student Led Undergraduate Reading Program in the Sciences and it is a reading group for science majors. SLURPS’s originator, Dr. Kim Faison, saw a need for a group where students could expand their reading experience with books outside of their assigned texts. Book selections in the past have included Complications by Atul Gwande, Stiff by Mary Roach, Best American Science Writing 2003 by Oliver Sacks, and Adam’s Navel by Michael Sims. Prey by Michael Crichton, is the current selection. “Students enjoy the group immensely”, says Dr. Thomas who helps coordinate the group along with Dr. Faison and Dr. Ragsdale. The group is open to sophomores, juniors and seniors. Each student-led session meets four times a semester with at least eight to ten students attending but the numbers are growing according to Dr. Faison. SLURPS includes students from Biology and Chemistry, but Dr. Faison plans to expand the reading group to include other departments in the School of Sciences. So if you’re looking for a good read, SLURPS meets again on Monday, February 27 at 10:00. It’s not too late to drop by and discuss Crichton’s Prey. For more information contact Dr. Kim Faison (460-6432; faisonk@mail.belmont.edu) or Dr. Jennifer Thomas (460-6322; thomasjt@mail.belmont.edu).
Beta Chi, the Belmont Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Society, is for students interested in research in the areas of biochemistry and molecular biology. The goals of the organization are to bring in outside researchers to campus to talk about their work; expose students to the research opportunities available in the Nashville area, both on and off campus; provide a forum to prepare students for graduate training and careers in research; travel to local scientific meetings and provide social and volunteer opportunities to its members. Meetings are held on the first Friday of each month. Dues are $10.00 annually. Membership is open to any student possessing a 3.0 GPA, a record of good standing with the University, and an active interest in research. Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Biology and Chemistry majors and minors are encouraged to join. If you are interested and want more information, you can contact the current Beta Chi faculty advisor, Dr. Jennifer Thomas (460-6322; thomasjt@mail.belmont.edu; HSB 305) or the current Beta Chi president, Chris Bowman (bowmanc@pop.belmont.edu).

Scott Weidensaul at Belmont

The Environmental Studies Program hosted Pulitzer prize nominated author, Scott Weidensaul, at an academic lecture convo on February 15. Students in Biology 1120 had the opportunity to talk to Mr. Weidensaul about his new book, Return to Wild America. He then attended a dinner here on campus with faculty and students. Afterwards, Mr. Weidensaul signed copies of his new book before moving on to the convo event where he spoke to a room of 130 listeners about his book and views on ecology and global warming.

Ashleigh Long, a PhD graduate student at Vanderbilt and who has an MS in Neuroscience, will present her talk titled “Characterization of Nine Novel Synaptic Loci in Drosophila”.

Beta Chi & School of Sciences
Academic Lecture Convo
Monday, April 24th
10:00 - 11:00 am
HSB 408

Dr. Laimonis A. Laimins
"Human Papillomaviruses: The Causative Agents of Cervical Cancers"

The primary cause of cervical cancers is infection by specific types of human papillomaviruses (HPV). Dr. Laimins’ group at Northwestern University’s Department of Microbiology/Immunology has developed methods to grow HPVs in the lab as well as techniques to analyze the functions of HPV proteins. Current work focuses on the action of the viral proteins that target cell cycle and transcriptional regulators.
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

BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

IMPORTANT DATES

March 6–10  Spring Break 🌞
April  MFAT for Graduating Seniors
April 10–19  Academic Advising
April 24  BMB Seminar—Lou Laimons, “HPV: Causative Agents of Cervical Cancers”
April 17–21  Earth Week
April 26  BURS (Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium)
May 2  Last Day of Classes
May 3  Pizza Day 🍕
May 13  Spring Commencement 🎓

Biology Organization Club Meeting Dates

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