Well, they’re gone! Off to dental school, physical therapy school, zookeeping, medical school, grad school in sports administration, pharmacy school – the destination list for our graduating seniors list goes on and on! It’s quiet right now in Hitch – although occasionally Murphree’s Bugs, Beetles, and Butterflies classes do rattle a few windows! Towering Traditions is over, with 52 students new Biology majors registered to date, so there is much to look forward to in the fall. However, the Spring 2009 graduating class gave us much to be proud of, as well: regional undergraduate research awards, scholar-athlete awards, graduate and professional school acceptances, and BURS performances! During the brief window of relative peace and tranquility now we have time to complete departmental assessment forms, plan for fall classes, order lab supplies, and try to find our desks. Speaking of desks, As of June 1, 2009 the desk of the Chair of the Department of Biology is occupied by Dr. Darlene Panvini. Dr. Panvini has a wealth of administrative experience, both at Belmont and at her previous institution, Vanderbilt University. It has been a privilege to work as Chair with the fine faculty of the Department of Biology, and I look forward to the growth and development under Dr. Panvini’s leadership. I am reminded of another famous doctor, Dr. Seuss: “Oh, the Places You’ll Go!”

**Department of Biology Majors Score with Scholar-Athlete Awards**

Several majors from the Department of Biology won end-of-year awards for their performances in academics and athletics. These were presented at a special ceremony in the Maddox Grand Atrium on May 4. Winning one of the four President’s Scholar-Athletes of the Year Awards was Environmental Studies major Andy Wicke. Andy has already won several regional and national awards for athletic performance in basketball and academics performance in the class, the field, and the lab. Biology major Mollie Schlarman won the women’s Graduating Senior Academic Achievement Award. Academic Achievement Awards (for the highest GPA per team) were given to Mollie Schlarman (Women’s Cross Country), Lauren Oeser (Women’s Golf), Cyrus Eaton (Men’s Soccer), and Mollie Schlarman (Women’s Track & Field). These students have performed exceedingly well on the court and in the field, as well as the classroom, indicative of Belmont’s adherence to the importance of scholarship in all areas.
Department of Biology Presents Awards to Students at College of Arts and Sciences Ceremony

On April 22, 2009 The College of Arts and Sciences hosted its annual Awards Day ceremony. Faculty of the Department of Biology made presentations to nine deserving students, from freshmen to graduating seniors. The awards are given for different accomplishments, to different majors, and to different classes. Below are listed the award recipients for 2009.

Freshman Achievement Award in Biology: Megan DeVries
Ronald M. Barrett Pre-Health Award: Ms. Amy Fehrmann
Donald R. Ramage Award for Service to the Learning Community in Biology: Ms. Beth Schriner
Department of Biology Scholarship: Mr. Sachin Amin
The first co-winner of the Award for The Outstanding Student in Biology: Ms. Mollie Schlarman
The second co-winner of the Award for The Outstanding Student in Biology: Ms. Alaia Williams
Freshman Achievement Award in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology: Reyna Niner
Outstanding Student in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology: Emily Karr
David R. Hill Environmental Service Award: Allison Berwald

Biology Seniors Make Oral Presentations at BURS

The Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium was held on April 30, 2009, and in concurrent sessions the Department of Biology sponsored oral presentations by 23 senior Biology majors, 3 Biochemistry and Molecular Biology majors, and one Environmental Studies major. While Biology faculty hosted sessions, signed convocation forms, and graded talks, family and friends gathered to hear seniors explain exactly why one should care if microscopic worms succumb more to harmful bacteria when they reproduce less, where in Middle Tennessee one could find streamside salamanders, and whether caffeine really does help zebrafish learn faster. Students received wonderful support from friends and peers, and the event was an excellent culmination to three semesters of research work by the seniors.

Tummins Presents at Natural History Symposium

April Tummins presented her senior research project at the 13th Symposium on the Natural History of Lower Tennessee and Cumberland River Valleys held at Land Between the Lakes. Her talk on “Water-Use Efficiency in Lonicera maackii and Symphoricarpos orbiculatus in Response to Increasing Light and CO₂” summarized the research April did using the new LI-COR gas exchange equipment recently acquired by the Department of Biology. This equipment allows for field measurements of photosynthesis and respiration, in addition to a variety of environmental parameters such as temperature, humidity, and light levels. April completed her senior research project with Dr. Darlene Panvini.
Students Strengthen Connections at SYNAPSE

Dr. McGrew and four students, Jackie Hunter, Roshni Patel, Taylor Walter and Julie Malkowski, attended The Symposium for Young Neuroscientists And Professors of the SouthEast (SYNAPSE) on March 28, 2009. SYNAPSE is a one-day regional undergraduate conference in neuroscience that provides several opportunities for students, including discussing important issues in neuroscience training via workshops and panel discussions and learning about cutting-edge research via a keynote speaker. Jackie, Roshni, and Taylor conducted research during Summer 2008 centered around assessing working memory in zebrafish, Danio rerio, and presented a poster of combined findings at the meeting. A number of conference attendees visited the poster and made positive comments about the students’ work. Roshni had this to say about the conference: “At SYNAPSE, we presented a poster focusing on the working memory of zebrafish; it was a great opportunity for me and my peers to share our work with other undergraduate researchers. It was fun getting to showcase what we had learned over the past year, and we also got to see the city of Charleston!” Taylor added: "Attending the SYNAPSE conference allowed me to see what other institutions are doing in undergraduate research. It's so interesting to see what other students are working on, and SYNAPSE is a great outlet for scientific communication with other undergrads." Julie is currently studying zebrafish through BIO 2710 and so attended the conference to see the scope of student projects and the breadth of the field. She was impressed by the number of students who are conducting undergraduate research in neuroscience.

Tennessee Academy of Sciences Middle Collegiate Division Meeting

On April 18, 2009, the Belmont School of Sciences hosted the Tennessee Academy of Sciences Middle Collegiate Division Meeting for the second straight year. Dr. Nick Ragsdale, the meeting coordinator, indicated that student participation increased from 43 abstracts in 2008 to 55 abstracts in 2009. Students presented their work in topics ranging from geology to cancer biology. In addition to the student participants, an additional 35-40 professors, friends and family members watched the presentations and joined in celebrating the students’ achievements. Out of 8 sections, Belmont students won 1st, 2nd, or 3rd in the Entomology, Animal & Cellular Behavior, Neuroscience, Immunology/Microbiology, and Zoology/Geology sections. The School of Sciences will also host the 2010 Tennessee Academy of Sciences Middle Collegiate Division Meeting.

Belmont Department of Biology award winners were:

Lauren Oeser (1st, Animal and Cellular Behavior), Mollie Schlarman (1st, Immunology and Microbiology), Robbie Gibson (1st, Neuroscience), Andy Wicke (2nd, Entomology), Brittany Myers (2nd, Neuroscience), Alaia Williams (2nd, Immunology and Microbiology), Alaina Reagan (2nd, Zoology), Will Baugher (3rd, Entomology), Christina Inman (3rd, Animal and Cellular Behavior), and Audrey Henson (3rd, Zoology).
Biology Alumni Gather for Homecoming Event

The Department of Biology hosted its first alumni gathering during Homecoming at Belmont on Feb. 28, 2009. While the scheduling was tight, a brunch was served between events such as book signings at the bookstore, a Fireside Chat with Dr. Fisher, and indoor tailgating before the basketball games. Current faculty were on hand to greet former faculty, Don Ramage, David Hill, and Ron Barrett, as well as many alumni returning to campus from several states.

Dr. Nick Ragsdale, host of the event, made a slide presentation of current facilities and activities of the Department and presented door prizes to guest for their knowledge of Belmont trivia. Current students Sachin Amin, Cyrus Eaton, Brittany Myers, April Tummins, Taylor Walters, and Anna Walsh were on hand with posters to discuss their research and give alumni a close-up glance at ongoing undergraduate work. Approximately 46 alumni, students, and faculty were on hand for the event, and by all accounts it was an excellent time for renewal of friendships and re-establishment of relationships. Our hopes are to continue this event every 5 years.

Darwin Celebration

Darwin’s 200th birthday was celebrated by over 575 students, faculty, and staff who participated in seven events February 6-16, 2009. Twelve Belmont faculty, two Vanderbilt University faculty, and one minister spoke on a variety of topics that included “Challenges to Teaching Darwin’s Ideas”, “Natural Selection and Natural Rights: A Discussion about Charles Darwin and Abraham Lincoln” (who share birthdays), “Darwin the Person”, “Intimations of Mortality: Darwin and the Literary Imagination”, and “The Impact of Evolution on Healthcare”. Dr. John Niedzwiecki, event co-coordinator, provided a look at current research on Darwin’s Finches in the Galapagos Islands as well as a travelogue of his journey to the islands. A highlight of the week was a panel discussion on “Reconciling Two Realities: Faith and Evolution”, moderated by event co-coordinator Dr. Darlene Panvini. Held on Darwin’s actual birthday, February 12, this event included birthday cake for all!

O.N.E. Club Activities

In Fall 2008, the ONE Club got off to a good (but hot and sweaty) start by collecting cardboard for recycling on freshman move-in day. They hosted an organic bake sale later in the semester to increase awareness about environmentally-friendly cooking while raising funds to support club activities. Students also sponsored an educational event on green cleaning that included demonstrations on how to make soap and “green” household cleaners. The club worked with SGA to develop a survey assessing Belmont students’ interest in a student green fee that would support sustainable efforts on campus. The ONE Club is open to all Belmont students who are interested in raising environmental awareness on campus. This year’s club president Allison Berwald is an English major and the club vice-president is an Environmental Studies major. Other ONE club events in the spring included two screenings from the Planet Earth series led by Belmont biology faculty and a presentation on water, land stewardship, and faith led by Dodd Galbreath, Executive Director of Lipscomb University’s Institute for Sustainable Practice.
BIO 1120 SPEAKERS

Peter Kareiva, chief scientist for The Nature Conservancy, visited campus on March 24, 2009. As the annual Environmental Studies speaker, he visited with Environmental Studies students and gave a community presentation on “Making Conservation Work for People.” He also visited the BIO 1120 courses and answered questions from students, who spent the spring semester reading a variety of papers authored by Dr. Kareiva. Advocating a conservation approach that provides resources for human health and survival while at the same time protecting species and ecosystems, Dr. Kareiva seeks ways to place monetary values on the ecosystem services that nature provides. Biology and Environmental Studies students were challenged by Dr. Kareiva to consider a variety of approaches to supporting human-focused conservation.

Debate-Inspired Energy and Environment Lectures Continue

As part of the “Art of Being Free” theme of Debate08, the Town Hall Presidential Debate sponsored by Belmont, throughout the year a series of speakers was invited to campus to concentrate on the themes of “Energy, Environment, Economy, and Entrepreneurship”. Two of the speakers sponsored by the School of Sciences presented in Spring 2009. The first of these was the Vaughn Science Lecture presented on January 20, 2009 by Dr. Louis Gross of the University of Tennessee. His lecture, entitled “Mathematics and Ecology: Bears, Panthers, and Equations” presented many applications of math to biology, including his work in monitoring water flow in the Everglades National Park. Dr. Gross also spoke in two mathematics classes and presented a workshop on biomathematics to faculty. The Vaughn Science Lecture is sponsored by Dr. Tony Vaughn, a 1984 alumnus of the Department of Mathematics. The School of Sciences is very grateful for his continued support of this important annual event.

On February 6, 2009 Dr. Jonathan Gilligan of Vanderbilt University gave a presentation entitled “From the Laboratory to the Legislature: Why Climate Change is Fundamentally a Multidisciplinary Issue”, discussing many of the environmental ramifications of climate change.

School of Sciences Receives National Science Foundation S-STEM Grant of $574,000

It was announced in May 2009 that the School of Sciences had received a grant for Scholarships for Students in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. This grant is designed to increase the number of students in the science pipeline and will provide up to $10,000 per year for students in several majors in the School of Sciences, including Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Environmental Science, and Neuroscience. Dr. Glenn Acree is the Principal Investigator for the grant which will offer scholarships over four years matriculation for each of four incoming classes. The grant will also provide supplementary learning experiences for these students, acquainting them with a variety of career possibilities and graduate school options.

EARTH WEEK

Students in the ONE Club hosted a variety of events in honor of Earth Week, April 20-24, 2009. Leading off the week was a presentation by Scott Davis, Director of the Tennessee Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. Other events included a presentation by students in ENV 1110 on alternative energy plans to replace a nuclear power plant, a talk on recycling by ENV student Lindsay Walker, and a screening of Kilowatt Ours. Ben Lowe, author of Green Revolution and co-coordinator of the grassroots network Renewal: Students Caring for Creation also led a session. The ONE Club also sponsored a collection of items to support Walden’s Puddle, a wildlife rehabilitation center in Nashville, and celebrated at an Earth Day cookout - complete with a band and veggie burgers!
BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

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

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 address or by postal service.

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Also, please check the Departmental webpage at: www.belmont.edu/biology

Belmont Alumni

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

Alumni Update

Name__________________________________________________Graduation Year_______________
Address_____________________________________________________________________________
City____________________________State__________Zip Code________Phone____________
Email address________________________________________________________________________
Employment________________________________Title________________________________________
Recent promotion, honor, award, family activity?__________________________________________