

# BELMONT UNIVERSITY

## 2008 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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## BELMONT UNIVERSITY 2008 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*"Belmont University in Nashville proved that small places with big ambitions could be world-class stages."*  
~USA Today

*"Thank God for Belmont, the little school that almost could, the kind that puts the mad in the first round of March Madness. Belmont darned near gave us the whole package — monster upset, Cinderella, etc. — and if the Bruins fell one point short of sending the exalted Dookies home, there's no shame in that, nor does it diminish the thrill they gave us. They're tough and unflappable and have higher grade-point averages than just about everybody. And they give the big guys fits."*  
~MSNBC.com

*"They were smarter, they were better coached and they were more poised. They acted as if they had been here before, and they had... If Duke is the Harvard of North Carolina., Belmont is the Princeton of Tennessee."*  
~Charlotte Observer

*"I watched Belmont go from a college to a university and now I've watched it be a real player for this debate. I'm proud for this school."*  
~Trisha Yearwood, quoted in The Tennessean

*"When the national spotlight turns to Belmont University for its presidential debate Tuesday, it will be a result of years of unprecedented growth...at a school that has redefined its place in Nashville. Belmont administrators have made the debate one of the school's loftiest goals during nearly a decade of rapid expansion that has resulted in a quick rise for Belmont in local and national prominence."*  
~The Tennessean

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one to watch

For the first time in its history, *U.S. News & World Report's* annual ranking of *America's Best Colleges* asked its experts to identify "colleges and universities that have recently made striking improvements or innovations—schools everyone should be watching." Belmont University was one of the two most mentioned schools in the entire survey.

I don't think we could have received a finer compliment.

Clearly, Belmont is taking significant steps in the right direction, focusing our efforts on giving today's students the tools they need to excel in every aspect of life. For the fourth year in a row Belmont achieved a Top 15 ranking in its *U.S. News* category. Landing at No. 11 for the 2009 edition, Belmont placed the highest among all Tennessee Master's-level universities.

Such consistency is commendable, but our ambition is even greater. We will continue to be innovative in our thinking, re-imagining educational possibilities while grounding our students in a challenging core curriculum.

Whether hosting a historic presidential debate, breaking ground on a state-of-the-art pharmacy building or broadening the scope of our studies abroad and interdisciplinary programs, Belmont is empowering a new generation to engage and transform a 21st-century world.

Turn the page, and take a look at a few highlights of what's been happening at Belmont University this past year. I think you'll agree, Belmont University is "One to Watch" in 2009 and far beyond.

Robert Fisher, President

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From encouraging neighborhood children to read to holding classes in local prisons, Belmont University is making an impact locally in Nashville.

When Belmont was announced as a presidential debate host site in late 2007, a committee was quickly formed to plan programming that would impact area students and the broader Middle Tennessee community. Ultimately, more than 100 special events—from special lectures, concerts and art exhibits to voter registration drives, theatre performances and mock elections—were scheduled. Most programs, including campus appearances by acclaimed documentary filmmaker Ken Burns and Pulitzer Prize-winner David McCullough, were free and open to the public, ensuring the opportunity for city-wide learning. In addition, new relationships were forged throughout Nashville as local businesses teamed with Belmont to make Debate08 a success.

Of course, partnering with neighbors has always been a hallmark of Belmont, a fact made evident with the receipt of a \$10 million trust from the Ed and Bernice Johnson estate. Long-time friends of the university, the couple once owned and operated a gas station near campus. Little pleased them more than visiting with Belmont students, especially those who benefitted from their generosity.

The record-breaking 5,000+ students now enrolled at Belmont don't take such kindness lightly. Through service learning and volunteer efforts, Belmont students are well-known for giving back to Nashville. Numerous Belmont groups get involved in Literacy Day, an annual event to encourage neighborhood children to

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read with a free afternoon of interactive story times, crafts and games. In addition, more than 1,000 new students volunteered their time last August at 32 nearby ministry and charity organizations, and the Troutt Theater frequently showcases partnerships between Belmont's Department of Theatre and local ensembles, including the Nashville Ballet and the Nashville Shakespeare Festival.

Of course, many times Belmont students and faculty are participating in community efforts that are extensions of their educational specialty. Pharmacy and physical therapy faculty put their tennis shoes on to raise money for Nashville's Arthritis Walk, held on campus in May, and School of Sciences faculty offer a popular summer insect camp for area elementary children called "Beetles, Bugs and Butterflies."

Perhaps the most interesting Belmont/community partnership, Sociology 2990 paired Belmont students with inmates at a local minimum security prison to study Restorative Justice. The class represents a perfect picture of how Belmont's One to Watch in the Community as "insiders" and "outsiders" come together to study, to gain understanding and to discover new solutions to age-old issues. ■



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The 2008 Town Hall Presidential Debate certainly made Belmont University One to Watch in hometown Nashville, but the impact stretched far beyond the local community.

In fact, so great was its influence that university president Dr. Bob Fisher was named Tennessean of the Year, in large part due to the debate's effect on the state and the region. The first presidential debate to be held in Tennessee, the Town Hall event brought Senators Barack Obama and John McCain to Belmont for a Tom Brokaw-moderated face-off attended by more than 370 Belmont students.

Belmont also played host to the 3,000 media and campaign staffers the debate brought into the area. Alumni and country music sensations Josh Turner, Trisha Yearwood, Brad Paisley and Julie Roberts performed their hits for debate guests in a special, Belmont-inspired session of the "Grand Ole Opry" at Nashville's famed Ryman Auditorium.

Belmont also practiced its hosting skills earlier in the year when the Gulf South Summit on Service Learning held its annual conference in Nashville. Belmont faculty led sessions on Social Entrepreneurship, Study Abroad and Engaged Scholars in front of attendees who represented over 150 different educational and community institutions.

Finance professor Dr. John Gonas provided more regional recognition for Belmont by being selected as the 2008 Tennessee Professor of the Year by CASE and the Carnegie Foundation. Under Gonas' leadership, Belmont's Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) program has won numerous regional and national awards.





Gonas represents the fourth Belmont faculty member chosen as the state's professor of the year since 2000.

But being One to Watch is about much more than special events and awards. It's also about innovation. In 2008, Belmont expanded on its commitment to the allied health sciences, seating its first class of 75 students in the new School of Pharmacy. In addition to helping alleviate the region's significant shortfall of qualified pharmacists, Belmont's pharmacy program ensures that its students will graduate with all the skills necessary to succeed in a complicated, constantly-evolving field. The pioneering four-tiered academic structure—emphasizing management, informatics, pharmacotherapy and missions—will be complemented by a state-of-the-art facility. Last fall Belmont broke ground on a \$30 million pharmacy building designed to include research laboratories, medical simulation spaces for experiential learning and a licensed pharmacy. ■



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