Welcome from the Teaching Center to the 2009-2010 academic year at Belmont! As we gather together to teach and to learn, we are invited to read the poetry of Mary Oliver, ponder the question A Paradise Lost?, and reflect on the meaning of the U.S. News and World Report ranking of #7. Although to the writers and readers of U.S. News, number seven calls attention to noteworthy academic accomplishments, we know that the number seven has additional significant meanings.

In the Hebrew, seven is shevah, from the root, “savah,” meaning to be full or satisfied or to have enough of. It occupies a large place in the Word of God and is considered a very powerful and spiritual number. And, according to one source, because of these characteristics, it often revolves around the teacher and the student! Thus, to members of the Belmont community, we have multiple reasons to celebrate the ranking.

Many faculty members joined Summer Reading Groups, and this issue of the Newsletter features reviews of three of these thought provoking books: Omnivore’s Dilemma (our common book), Stroke of Insight, and Mindset. May they provide ideas and compelling questions to begin your new semester.

This fall we are focusing on the theme of What is the Context? Our four lunch discussions center around this idea. Also, we are glad to introduce a new column in The Art of Teaching! It will help all of us better understand the history of Belmont. The column: “Past Is Prologue” will be written by our columnist Dr. James Stamper, historian and professor of education. He has been at Belmont since 1980 and has served as Academic Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs. He has served as chair of 30 visiting committees for SACS and serves as a trustee for International College in Naples/Ft. Myers, FL. Student teachers have the highest regard for his mentorship and continue to stay in touch long after they graduate. He is also known far and wide as The Cookie Man, infamous for his Chocolate Chip Cookies. We can look forward to learning more about the place we work through his knowledge and gift of storytelling.

We at the Teaching Center hope, through our programming and availability, to keep the conversation alive about teaching and learning. Through the Fall Workshops, Pause for a Poem, Lunch discussions, and the Courage to Teach Retreat Series, we hope that you will find a way to connect with yourself and others across campus around the ideas and engagement of teaching and learning.
“One day, my students sat me down and ordered me to write this book.” So begins Mindset: The New Psychology of Success (2006), by Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck. “They wanted people to be able to use our work to make their lives better. It was something I’d wanted to do for a long time, but it became my number one priority” (p. ix).

Dweck recounts her realization “that there were two meanings to ability, not one: a fixed ability that needs to be proven, and a changeable ability that can be developed through learning.” This led to her identification of two different mindsets—fixed and growth. When we operate from the fixed mindset (viewing traits as fixed), “success is about proving you’re smart or talented. Validating yourself.” In contrast, when we operate from the growth mindset (allowing for changing qualities), “it’s about stretching yourself to learn something new. Developing yourself” (p. 15).

What charts our destiny (and that of our students)? Is it talent and intelligence? Or is it effort, persistence, motivation—factors related to our mindset? After more than three decades of research on personality development and motivation, Dweck posits that effort—not talent—is the most important key to success.

Persons with the fixed mindset believe intelligence is static, while persons with the growth mindset believe intelligence can be developed. The fixed mindset, Dweck explains, leads to a desire to look smart and the tendency to avoid challenges (due to chance of failure), while the growth mindset leads to a desire to learn and a tendency to embrace challenges.

Meeting obstacles, people with a fixed mindset get defensive and give up easily, while the people with a growth mindset persist in the face of setbacks, learn from criticism (rather than ignore useful criticism), get inspired (rather than threatened) by the success of others, and finally, reach higher potential and achievement. If you want to really help your students, your children, your friends, and your colleagues to succeed, praise them for their persistence. Set high standards and give process feedback; focus “on the processes they used in their strategies, effort, or choices” (p. 211). Praise effort, not ability. “Give them the gift of the growth mindset” (p. 8). The great teachers, Dweck notes, “believe in the growth of the intellect and talent, and they are fascinated with the process of learning” (p. 194).

These ideas are supported in Dweck’s research. Her studies suggest that when we praise someone’s talent or intelligence, we unwittingly harm their motivation and performance by stifling their willingness to attempt something that they might not excel in. Instead, by praising the effort or perseverance of our students (the problem-solving process they used, for example), we promote their motivation to reach ever-higher levels of achievement. Instead of messages that “you have permanent traits and I’m judging them,” send your students growth messages that “you are a developing person and I am interested in your development.”

If you want to love what you do (even facing obstacles) and be even more effective doing it, then operate from the growth mindset. “In the fixed mindset, everything is about the outcome. If you fail—or if you’re not the best—it’s all been wasted. The growth mindset allows people to value what they’re doing regardless of the outcome. They’re tackling problems, charting new courses, working on important issues. Maybe they haven’t found the cure for cancer, but the search was deeply meaningful” (p. 48).

The book begins with sections titled “Why Do People Differ?” and “What does This All Mean for You? The Two Mindsets.” Later sections include “Mindsets Changing the Meaning of Failure” and “Mindsets Changing the Meaning of Effort.” She discusses “What is Success?” and “What is Failure?” There are also chapters devoted to sports, business, relationships, and parenting/teaching/coaching.

Dweck discusses examples of growth mindsets in the successes of Jackson Pollock, Twyla Tharp, Muhammad Ali, Michael Jordan, Babe Ruth, Wilma Rudolph, Jackie Joyner-Kersee, Tiger Woods, and Mia Hamm. She describes the motivating style of UCLA basketball coach John Wooden, who told his players, “You have to apply yourself each day to becoming a little better. By applying yourself to the task of becoming a little better each and every day over a period of time, you will become a lot better” (p. 207).

She illustrates the dangers of the fixed mindset in suggesting that Enron was “done in by its fixed mindset” and talent-worshipping culture (p. 109), and that Chrysler CEO Lee Iacocca eventually “lived the fixed mindset” (p. 116).

The author mentions many studies she and her colleagues conducted, many in school settings, to test the principles discussed in Mindset. As the book is written for the lay reader, the scholarly studies are mostly described as anecdotal stories in a style and format that is easily approachable for even the nonscholar. Full citations of scholarly journal articles on these studies are found on Dweck’s web site at http://psychology.stanford.edu/~dweck/.

The concepts discussed in the book are eloquently summarized in a diagram by Nigel Holmes appearing on p. 245, which was available at this writing as a pdf online at: http://www.stanfordalumni.org/news/magazine/2007/marapr/images/features/dweck/dweck_mindset.pdf.

Dweck is respected for her research on personality, social psychology, and developmental psychology. The Yale-educated psychologist taught at Columbia, Harvard, University of Illinois, and now Stanford. She co-edited two books on motivation, and her studies have been published in Child Development, the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Developmental Psychology, and the Journal of Experimental and Social Psychology. She developed achievement goal theory to explain why some people take risks and view failure and mistakes as learning opportunities. She’s been featured in Time magazine and The New York Times.

In a few Web searches, most reviews of the book were positive, and many praise Mindset as “a life-changing book, a must-read for educators & parents,” or “an essential read for any parent, educator, leader or student.” The few detractors who suggest that the ideas in the book could be condensed into a small pamphlet have missed much of the richness. A reviewer at Hoover’s Business Insight Zone praised the book as one “that can change your life and work for the better.”
MENTORING FOR MISSION
by Mike Pinter, Professor, Mathematics and Computer Science Department

All 2008-09 first-year full-time faculty members at Belmont were invited to apply to the 2009-10 Mentoring for Mission (MfM) program. As a result, nine second-year faculty members are paired with mentors selected from among current experienced faculty on campus. Thanks to a grant proposal in Summer 2008 prepared by Kim Daus, director of the Teaching Center at that time, this inaugural year for the MfM program will be supported by a Mentoring Program grant from the Lilly Foundation. Mike Pinter is serving as the Director of the MfM program at Belmont, with additional support provided by Merrie King and Nanci Alsop from the Teaching Center.

The MfM program at Belmont is being developed with the belief that an extended mentoring program can help both newer and experienced faculty achieve an integral sense of identity and mission through one-to-one mentoring of second-year faculty by experienced faculty, and through gatherings, readings, and discussions for all participants. Group meetings (for the nine second-year faculty members and their mentors in the MfM program) in the fall semester will focus on understanding and living our mission and in the spring semester will center on teaching and learning. Common readings on the topics will frame the sessions; the cohort will read Parker Palmer’s Let Your Life Speak during Fall 2009 and Ken Bain’s What the Best College Teachers Do during Spring 2010. Additionally, mentor pairs will participate in teaching- and mission-related events through symposia, on-campus events and service projects. By learning about Belmont’s history and reflecting and dialoguing on Belmont today, participants will be able to gain a stronger sense of identity and mission, and, in turn, contribute to the ongoing campus conversation on mission and vision.

The MfM program was initiated for the 2009-10 faculty cohort with a workshop and retreat on Thursday, August 20. Kim Daus (Professor of Chemistry) assisted with the workshop session. Robbie Pinter (Professor of English) led and facilitated the retreat portion during which MfM participants began to explore questions about Belmont’s mission with each other. Several emeritus Belmont faculty members—including Don Ramage, Jerry Warren, Paul Godwin, Betty Wiseman, and Stephen Campbell—joined the MfM group for dinner to wrap up the day’s activities by sharing their Belmont experiences and perspectives from the last 30-40 years.

### 2009-10 MENTORING FOR MISSION COHORT

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<th>Student</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sally Holt (Religion)</td>
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<td>Danny Biles (Math)</td>
<td>MENTOR: Jon Thorndike (Honors Program)</td>
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<td>Julie Hunt (Social Work)</td>
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<td>Sarah Bowles (English)</td>
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<td>Carrie Harvey (Nursing)</td>
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<td>Chuck Wainwright</td>
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OMNIVORE’S DILEMMA
by Jenny Rushing, Reference Librarian, Library Services

THANK YOU MICHAEL POLLAN? After reading Omnivore’s Dilemma this summer and participating in a wonderfully insightful reading group through the Teaching Center, I’m not sure if I should thank Michael Pollan for challenging my way of thinking about food or curse him for ruining my appetite! I have been looking forward to reading this book, realizing my ignorance when it comes to industrialized food, especially since the organic and local food movements have exploded in Nashville this past year. I hear of friends’ visiting the Farmer’s Market, of them joining food co-ops, buying organic and shopping at Whole Foods, and I feel guilty, or behind the curve, or maybe just not hip enough to be part of this crowd. Pollan’s book has given me a lot to chew on but has raised even more questions and left me more confused than before!

AHHH, BLISSFUL IGNORANCE While I was looking forward to reading the book, I was also anticipating uncomfortable results. For a number of years now I have been perfectly content being blissfully ignorant about the food I consume. I can recall many times eating a suspect “food product,” being asked what’s in it and replying with something like, “oh, you don’t want to know!” How else can you really enjoy those chicken nuggets or Cheetos or Krystal burgers? I really thought I was doing okay before Pollan got into my head. I don’t eat fast food very often, although I admit I love an occasional Krystal burger, perhaps the worst of the worst when it comes to industrial meals. Is that real meat on those burgers? You really don’t want to know! I thought that I didn’t eat very much processed food in general, but now I’m not so sure. Just because I don’t eat frozen dinners or Hamburger Helper doesn’t mean I’m not consuming plenty of high-fructose corn syrup, xanthan gum, monosodium glutamate, and any number of other strange substances. Now I see corn everywhere!

WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS? Now I really do feel a dilemma every time I go to Kroger (still haven’t made a trip to Whole Foods). I have started buying organic apples, but feel guilty about how far they have been shipped. I’m wary of all the meat because all I can think about are the feedlots, drugged up cows, and those poor, cooped-up chickens. If as omnivore, my brain is wired to avoid unsafe foods based on recognition and memory, then very little in the supermarket seems safe to eat. It is at this point, standing in Kroger with an empty cart and growing anxiety, that I start to question Pollan’s work. Who does he think he is anyway? What gives him the authority to tell me what to eat? It is part of my job, as a librarian, to question authority. That is what we are trying to teach those freshmen in First Year Seminar after all. Maybe if I find he is a fraud and can discredit his claims, I can buy that frozen pizza that I want so badly! Well, it turns out that he is well-credentialed and has written extensively on the subject. But more than his impressive curriculum vitae, I am swayed by the fact that it all just seems like common sense. Pollan says this himself and then backs it up with some pretty convincing evidence. So, whether I like it or not, I have to face this dilemma now. There is no turning back.

WILL I EVER CHANGE? I am pleased to report that I have taken a few baby steps since reading the book. I made my first trip to the Nashville Farmer’s Market, which resulted in a delicious squash casserole and butter beans. Just last week I happened upon a produce stand close to my house. I can say with certainty that I will never buy another mushy, tasteless Kroger tomato. I have started to purchase some organic produce, although as Pollan points out, it’s hard to judge the value, both for my health and the environment. I also stopped buying bagged lettuce, instead going for the bunch of red leaf. Does this count? I wonder how long I will stick with these changes, as minor as they are. I recall swearing that I would never eat McDonald’s again after watching Supersize Me a few years ago. I still avoid their burgers, but admit I am a sucker for those French fries. After a little time passed, it was pretty easy to put that documentary out of my mind. And will the minor changes really make any difference anyway? This is where it gets overwhelming again. I’m not sure how much more I am able or willing to do at this point. Pollan says it is just a matter of making our food a priority, but time and money are realistic barriers.

THE GREAT FOOD DIVIDE While it may be common sense to eat organic and local whole foods, it seems completely out of reach for much of the population. As Pollan put it, the “plague of cheap corn” has created an industrialized food industry that 1) is apparently making us less healthy and more obese than ever before, 2) is getting rich in the process, and 3) seems impossible to dismantle. A privileged few can opt out by shopping at Whole Foods or joining a co-op, but that simply is not an option for many people. For this reason, the organic/local food movement seems like a trend, or at least a luxury. One of the best meals I’ve had in awhile was at City House, a Germantown restaurant that uses mostly local, seasonal ingredients, but it was also the most expensive. I laughed recently when I saw that “organic foods” and “farmer’s markets” appear in the top ten list of Stuff White People Like, a hilarious but also provocative website and book by Christian Lander. I heard an interview with Lander recently on NPR, which also makes the list along with “Whole Foods and grocery co-ops.” Lander is making fun of racial stereotypes, but there is an economic divide when it comes to food consumption, as with so many other things. This could be just one of countless issues our students might take on after reading Omnivore’s. There could be some great argumentative papers in First Year Seminar this year.

GREAT COMMON BOOK I felt frustration with the book because I want the answer! What should I eat, and where should I buy it? How do we make healthy food more affordable and accessible to everyone? I feel like the student who comes to the library reference desk asking me for the perfect article. You know, the one article or book that answers all of their questions in the title. Well, Omnivore’s Dilemma is not that book. It has left me confused, overwhelmed, and irritated but has also shifted my way of thinking in a profound way. Like I said, there is no going back now. I have so many more questions that I must answer, so many choices for what’s for dinner. That Pollan really got into my head, and I hope he will do the same to our students. What a great common book! Has anyone warned Sodexho? ■

REFERENCES
http://www.michaelpollan.com/
http://stuffwhitepeoplelike.com/
http://cityhousenashville.com/
Like Jenny, I was aware of some of the issues raised in *Omnivore’s Dilemma* before I read it, not because I had sought out information about our industrial food system, but because it has been gaining more prominence over the last few years. I’ve had a few limited conversations with people about some of the issues, but most of my information has come from a *New York Times* blog called Bitten, written by Mark Bittman. (Bittman is the author of *How to Cook Everything* and *Food Matters*). I found *Omnivore’s Dilemma* to be very informative, and when I finished it, I promptly went through the bibliography, looking for more about the websites and other resources that Pollan had mentioned.

Thanks to the Teaching Center’s Summer Reading Group that I was participating in, I learned about *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, by Barbara Kingsolver. While I had checked out many books from the resource list of *Omnivore’s Dilemma*, I wound up reading *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* instead of those. Kingsolver approaches the same topics covered by Pollan in a much more hands-on manner. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is the story of the Kingsolver family’s year of giving up the “industrial-food pipeline.” Some of the information offered in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is the same as in *Omnivore’s Dilemma*, but it’s a much more personal book. While living off our own acres of land is not feasible for most of us, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* offers a wealth of information on gardening, canning, what foods are in season when, and the challenges of giving up the traditional ways of obtaining food. This information is helpful in figuring out what small steps you can take to help break out of the Western diet. This book was much more eye-opening for me than *Omnivore’s Dilemma* because I realized that I had approached my own garden all wrong. Next year (starting this fall, actually), I will be paying much more attention to my garden and how and when I plant the vegetables I want to grow.

After finishing *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, I was still looking for more information on what I could do about the issues raised in *Omnivore’s Dilemma*. My garden certainly isn’t big enough to support me for a full year (and I don’t think I’m quite ready for that level of commitment yet, either). I returned to Michael Pollan’s writing, picking up *In Defense of Food*. Written after *Omnivore’s Dilemma*, *In Defense of Food* talks more about the science (nutritionism) behind the food industry and what the Western diet does to the human body. He also discusses how to escape the Western diet and gives more of a how-to on the topic than he does in *Omnivore’s Dilemma*. The third section of *In Defense of Food* focuses on three phrases – “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.” Pollan deconstructs each phrase and offers many tips on how to actually act on these phrases.

*Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* and *In Defense of Food* gave me more of the tools and information that I needed to start acting on the disturbing information presented in *Omnivore’s Dilemma*. I still feel the confusion and frustration that Jenny mentioned, and I’m still eating fast food and shopping at Kroger. But I’m hoping that my garden will do better next year and that I can start cooking more and being much more careful about what I do eat. These changes are hard, though, since it feels like I have no time to put into cooking SOLE (seasonal/sustainable, organic, local, ethical) meals on a regular basis. I gave up (or thought I had) super-processed foods a while ago, but *Omnivore’s Dilemma* made me realize that maybe I hadn’t given up as much as I thought. I have friends who’ve given up things like sugar and HFCS (high fructose corn syrup) for health reasons, and I’m amazed by their strength. I’m hoping that the changes I intend to make in my eating habits will carry over to my soon-to-be husband as well. Since he is a fairly recently diagnosed diabetic, much of what I’ve read about the effects of the Western diet makes me think that maybe we can reverse some of the effects he’s already feeling. I’m not sure he believes that I’ll actually make him eat his vegetables, though!

There are many other books and resources available to help with these changes (large and small), but I’m glad I started with *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* and *In Defense of Food*. I do intend to continue reading and learning about this topic and will probably continue reading Michael Pollan’s books on the subject. Another author I’ve seen recommended is Wendell Berry, whose books will certainly be added to my reading list as well.

You can find a list of the websites that are mentioned in these books, as well as others I’ve found at [http://delicious.com/library_chic/omnivoresdilemma](http://delicious.com/library_chic/omnivoresdilemma).
**THE GREAT FIRE** Everyone who was associated with Belmont College the evening of December 30, 1972, will never forget. The fire lit up much of the South Nashville sky as the hallowed and highly utilized Ward-Belmont era structure called Blanton Hall burned all the way to the ground, with the remains of all four stories ending up in the basement by the next morning. The well-seasoned wood, which comprised most of the building, once ignited, burned without stopping or even slowing. The next morning faculty, staff and students could only stand next to the eight stately columns that had long welcomed visitors and them, and gasp at the sight, realizing that their professional home was gone. For at least two faculty members who were doctoral candidates, it meant the destruction of all their writing, documents and research. For one of these two, it meant beginning dissertation research again, since some of his original doctoral committee at N.C. State had drifted apart or left, and a new committee would not approve the dissertation topic in which he had already invested his time and research for several years. Approval of a new topic and beginning of new research took more than 12 months.

For Belmont College, then 21 years old, it could have easily been time to close the doors forever and secure what little was left of the campus. After all, Blanton Hall had housed about 90 percent of Belmont’s academic departments and administrative offices, as well as all the classrooms for the 700 or so students. Only two departments—physics and physical education—were housed elsewhere. What a disaster!

How did such a destructive fire start when the campus was closed for Christmas vacation? No one has ever come forth to either accuse someone or shed light on the mystery of how the roaring fire began. Dr. Don Ramage, former Dean of Sciences, who was in his second year as a faculty member, firmly believes the antiquated electrical system was the culprit (Interview with Dr. Don Ramage, August 14, 2009). After all, he had stood many times in the office of Belmont’s lone Chemistry professor, where all the electrical circuits and boxes were housed, and listened as the lines hummed, groaned, and surged as electrical use varied throughout the building at various times of day and night. The system powering this huge building which housed 50 faculty members, all business employees and administrators, and all the classrooms was anything but up to date.

If you’d like to see some of the bricks from Blanton Hall today, enter either the Science Building or Wheeler Humanities Building, and you will find in each a commemorative wall built from bricks salvaged after the fire.

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**FUTURE COLUMNS**

**Next Steps: How can a fledgling institution rebuild?**

A Basement Full of Snakes!