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A View from Melrose

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Small is powerful

When I have lunch with students, I invariably ask them questions – most notably, “Why did you choose Linfield?” At least 90 percent of the time, they begin by saying, “I wanted to attend a small college.”

In our society, we have tended to prefer large, not small. Fast food companies have discovered the marketing potential of super-sizing their orders. We have measured success by the size of our houses or cars or stock portfolios. “Bigger is better” has been our cultural mantra.

And yet many of us love small colleges, especially this small college. And social views are beginning to change. Many now question whether bigger is always better because that mentality has led to record obesity, overconsumption of energy and financial malpractice. Ironically our nation has lost power thanks to our relentless drive to get larger.

In fact, you don’t have to be large to be powerful. Certainly Linfield is powerful: academically, altruistically, athletically and artistically. The secret of our power lies in our small size. Our professors work individually with students to help them find their passion and path. Our students feel a justified sense of ownership of this community, leading them to work for its improvement. Our coaches and directors guide and inspire our athletes and performers to fulfill their potential and develop life-long skills.

A Linfield professor was named Oregon’s best professor this year. Linfield students performed 25,000 hours of service and did important research on homelessness in Yamhill County. Our athletes finished second, third or fourth in the nation in softball, baseball, football and the decathlon. And four of our seniors won Fulbright Awards, a much higher percentage than at Oregon’s large universities.

Linfield is powerful because we are a small college, a special small college. Our alumni are professors at Harvard and Yale; they lead Fortune 500 companies and oversee professional football teams; they conduct missions overseas and serve churches in America; they teach and inspire students at hundreds of public schools; they treat patients and manage hospitals; they own businesses and run accounting firms. Our students find individual and collective power when they study and live at this small college. And then they graduate. And then they change the world.

That’s the power of a small college. That’s the power of Linfield.

– Thomas L. Hellie
President

“Our students find individual and collective power when they study and live at this small college.”