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A View from Melrose

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The heart of learning

Whenever I talk with Linfield alumni, I ask them what mattered most in their education. I often hear about a campus organization or a group of friends or an off-campus study experience. But I always hear about professors. Sometimes more than one professor; always at least one.

There is the story of the professor who urged his student to seek an MBA at Stanford. That student had never had a teacher or professor express that kind of faith in him before. And he now has both a Stanford MBA and a master's degree in geology. The professor's name is Dave Hansen.

There is the veterinarian in Arizona who says that she discovered her love of biology from John Hare. The businessman in Portland who discovered his calling thanks to Harold Elkinton. The Mayo Clinic physician whose life was transformed by Jane Claire Dirks-Edmunds '37. The Yale professor who names both Dawn Nowacki and Howard Leichter. The list goes on and on, including both veteran professors and newcomers to the college.

Just the other day I sat at lunch with a group of sophomores and juniors who were taking January Term classes on the McMinnville Campus. "What has been your best class so far?" I asked. They looked at each other for a moment and then the answers began to spill out: "Financial accounting with Mike Jones," replied a sociology major. "Bill Apel's course on monks and mystics," exclaimed a business major. "My inquiry seminar with Hillary Crane," answered a chemistry major. "Anything taught by Peter Richardson," replied a language major.

Last fall, Professor Peter Richardson was named Oregon's outstanding college professor. There were major articles in the state newspapers, congratulations from Oregon's U.S. senators, and a ceremony and luncheon in Washington, D.C. All of us who know Peter understand why he received this award; he is truly a great teacher, scholar and mentor. He is also a wonderful person.

When Peter and I learned that he was to be honored in this way, we were sworn to secrecy for several weeks – partly to respect the candidates not chosen, partly perhaps to create some suspense. But when I first spoke to Peter in private, he told me that he was humbled



– and proud – not because of his own personal recognition, but rather because he knew that Linfield was full of candidates for this honor. He truly believed that it could have gone to any number of his Linfield colleagues and

that, in a sense, he was representing all of them even when it came time to accept the award.

Peter Richardson is one of Linfield's legendary great professors. He has changed many lives. And he is also one of Linfield's many great professors, who change lives every day as they

inspire, encourage, challenge and educate our students. For students, Linfield College can be a place to grow (or grow up), a place to make friends, a place to try new things. But fundamentally Linfield is a place to learn. And at the heart of the learning are the professor and the student, seeking truth and finding it. That's why Linfield's professors set us apart, and that's why Peter Richardson's award is so richly deserved. ■

– Thomas L. Hellie

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And at the heart of the learning
are the professor and the student,
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