Linfield Magazine

Volume 8
Issue 3 *Winter 2012*

Article 5

2012

Not Just Business as Usual

Laura Davis
Linfield College, ldavis@linfield.edu

Mardi Mileham
Linfield College, mmileham@linfield.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine

Recommended Citation
Davis, Laura and Mileham, Mardi (2012) "Not Just Business as Usual," *Linfield Magazine*: Vol. 8: Iss. 3, Article 5.
Available at: http://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol8/iss3/5

This article is brought to you for free via open access, courtesy of DigitalCommons@Linfield. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@linfield.edu.

Not just business as usual

Jeremy Scott '03 has played arena football, taught at-risk children in Guatemala, co-founded the company Ilegal Mezcal in Guatemala and established an export company in China.

And that's just in the nine years since graduating from Linfield College. With majors in international business and Spanish, Scott is like many Linfield College business alumni. He has a thirst for adventure, embraces hard work, pays attention to detail and has an innate ability to recognize opportunities. He is not afraid to take risks. He is a liberal arts business graduate.

"There are so many opportunities out there if you just open your eyes and look around," said Scott. "Each of the companies I have helped found had some early movement before I got involved. I just made sure to get on the wagon before it started moving too fast. I guess I have a pretty good eye for picking out the wagons which are going to surge ahead of all the others."

Like many Linfield graduates, Scott is difficult to pigeonhole. His interests are wide and varied and he combines his passion for business with other values that drive his life. And, like his Linfield peers, he nurtured his many interests in Linfield's liberal arts environment.

Business is the largest undergraduate major in the U.S. But traditional undergraduate business education can be narrow, according to a national study of undergraduate business education by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Linfield's business program is different. Because the program is grounded in the liberal arts, Linfield students learn about business through a lens of critical thinking, are challenged to think creatively and to understand the roles and practices of business in a larger context.

When Harold Elkinton arrived in 1927 to establish the business department at the request of President Leonard Riley, he could not foretell the impact the department would have on the future of Linfield College. Elkinton pioneered internships and launched a professional program that has had broad appeal. Business majors are among the most popular both in the Adult Degree Program and on the McMinnville Campus. On average, one quarter of Linfield graduates have received degrees in business in recent years.

Linfield's integration of business and liberal arts was further enhanced when the business department recently moved into T.J. Day Hall (formerly Northup Library). Instead of being somewhat isolated in Taylor Hall, business faculty now rub elbows with philosophers, poets and economists, prompting Mike Jones, Elkinton professor of accounting, to call the move "the best thing that has happened to our department in a very long time."

Jeremy Scott '03 played football, studied abroad and majored in both Spanish and business. After graduating from Linfield and before he launched his business career, he wanted to work with children and spent two and half years volunteering with Safe Passage in Guatemala. Calling it a rewarding and memorable experience, he worked with poor children and families and helped establish an English program for the 600 students he worked with. The program continues to thrive today.

An explicit goal of the renovation project was to provide greater interaction among students and faculty in the liberal arts and the business department.

With a recently completed strategic plan in place, the business department is ensuring it remains relevant and distinctive. Linfield students need the knowledge and skills that will help them navigate the changing business environment, made more competitive and complex by the recession. The changing business climate has also provided faculty with tools and real-world examples pulled from daily headlines to use in the classroom. The Business Advisory Council, established in 2007 and composed of business leaders, advises the department on opportunities inside and outside the classroom to help mold the next generation of business leaders.

Sharon Wagner joined Linfield as business department chair in 2010. With a background that combines academics, consulting and work in private industry, she brings a fresh outlook and knowledge about the importance of linking business with other disciplines.

"We draw upon the liberal arts and professional programs to help our students look at problems from various perspectives," she said. "Other schools might have general education requirements, but we are deliberate about helping students integrate the liberal arts core courses with their business studies."

With the economic meltdown and scandals that rocked the business community in the last decade, ethics courses have

"A small liberal arts school allowed me the leeway to figure out what I wanted to do. Working on the newspaper helped me to be critical of all writing, which has been invaluable to my work. You don't mince words in the law and they mean everything in my career."

Julie Weston Wolff '91
Attorney, partner, Davis Wright Tremaine LLP
Business major

Virlena Crosley '89, visiting assistant professor of business, is a new faculty member in business and teaches courses in strategic management and human resource management. She has taught in the U.S. and China and held management positions with the State of Oregon and has also worked for companies and trade associations.

received greater scrutiny. How do you teach ethical behavior?

"I agree that a focus on ethics has never been more important in business education," Wagner said. "Our approach is to focus on ethical standards and the personal, organizational and societal consequences of ethical and unethical behavior. We help students think introspectively and carefully about their own values along with the ethical standards and how they will apply them in the workplace."

Instead of teaching one stand-alone business ethics course, the department is incorporating a substantial ethics section in each course.

"We want to integrate ethical questions and discussions throughout all topics and help students work through those issues," she added.

New content, new programs

The business department offers five majors (management, marketing, finance, accounting, international business), .unusual for a small college. Each has a required core of courses, as well as

> "With a finance and math degree, I'm very numbers oriented. It was helpful to have the writing and arts experience. I got the complete tool set to carry with me into the business world."
>
> Ashlee (Tucker) Moehring '02
> Consultant and principal shareholder,
> R.V. Kuhns and Associates

specialized classes. The department's strategic planning process is taking a closer look at how those objectives compare with external (or business) standards.

At the same time, the department is actively developing new content and new programs. A minor in business that attracted few students is being replaced by a minor in management that will be more relevant to students across campus.

"We think that the management minor will be a terrific way for students from other majors to obtain exposure to the study of business while at Linfield," Wagner said. "The minor is focused on the effective management of people (oneself and others) in organizations. All students are likely to be involved with organizations during their careers: for-profit, nonprofit, government or educational institutions."

Faculty are also teaming up with other departments to consider interdisciplinary programs in areas such as social engagement and enterprise, and sport management. "This is a way in which we can further draw upon and combine the strengths of the professional programs and the liberal arts," she added.

Wagner said it's critical that students remain engaged with other departments and programs throughout their college career. The department strongly encourages students to select minors and places emphasis on studying languages and taking advantage of study abroad opportunities.

That encouragement led Jordan Bebee '03 to combine his interest in philosophy with a career goal in accounting that would ensure he could get a good job after college. And those two interests continue to complement each other.

"I look at everything through a philosophical lens," said Bebee, an accounting major and philosophy minor, who is now a director and partner at the Thomas Capital Group. "What is best for the world? I use my philosophy education every day in looking at our business decisions and internal policies.

"Numbers come easy to me, so a business major was a practical decision," he added. "Philosophy is something you do throughout your life, regardless of your job."

Work experience

Internships are a crucial component of the Linfield business education, and not only provide real-world experiences, but can lead to job offers after graduation. While some students receive credit, many others complete internships simply for the experience, according to Michelle Nelson, professor of business, who tracks internships for the department. Some 37 business students completed internships for credit last year, and Nelson believes that more than double that number completed non-credit internships, although students often don't report them.

"We encourage students to do as many internships as they can in order to gain practical experience and establish relationships in their fields," Nelson said. "We work closely with the Career Development Center and encourage employers to post internships online in addition to contacting me about openings."

In the past three years, students have completed internships at nonprofits such as museums, school foundations, service organizations, and in a variety of businesses including CPA firms, banks, law offices, hotels, insurance agencies, publishing houses and entertainment companies.

> "What's unique about Linfield is that you are working with professors who have the highest degrees in their field, who own businesses, who are doing research and who have connections outside the school. You can ask about a scenario and they have experienced it."
>
> Kyle Abeln '11
> Financial advisor, Edward Jones
> Economics and finance major

Amy Hasenoehrl '12, an economics and finance double major, served as an intern at First Investors Corporation in Beaverton, and currently puts her finance skills to work at two local businesses.

"Managing sales records and marketing distribution lists at Brickhouse Winery has exposed me to agricultural finance, something that I'm interested in pursuing in graduate school," said Hasenoehrl, who also assists portfolio managers at Headwater Investments.

Faculty

Members of the business faculty have richly diverse backgrounds. Many have worked or studied abroad and most have hands-on experience in private industry. They know the reality of the business world. Such broad interests and skills can lead to creativity and innovative ideas.

"All of our faculty have some connection with working for corporations or consulting or have developed strong relationships with local companies," Wagner added. "The real-world examples they take into the classroom bring concepts alive for students."

Tyler McGee can speak from experience about being a director at a marketing firm and what students need to consider beyond the textbook. Denise Farag '88 has practiced law and been a small-business owner, so she can speak from both the legal and

Rich Emery, professor of accounting, meets with Thomas Bryan '13 and Lydia Smith '12 in new quarters in T.J. Day Hall. Emery, along with nine business faculty colleagues, encourages students to remain engaged with other departments, select minors outside of the business department and to participate in Linfield's wide study abroad options.

the business side. Scott Chambers runs an investment advisory company. The business faculty are well connected with the McMinnville and Portland business communities, which helps the department to stay current and to make internship and job connections for students. The accounting faculty are extremely well connected in the local and state-wide accounting communities.

Resourcefulness

College provides an opportunity for students to develop a portfolio of skills and knowledge that can be translated into a variety of jobs. Students need to learn to write well, think critically and know how to condense and summarize information for different audiences. They need to be able to take theory and translate it into practice and learn how to work with people with different backgrounds, cultures and temperaments.

"The skills and knowledge students develop here are really the jumping-off point," Wagner said. "We need to help them understand

> "My degree gave me a broader understanding, rather than just straight business courses. The liberal arts component helped me with my leadership skills and helped me understand people better."
>
> Jeff Kresner '71
> Retired director, Emergency Service,
> American Red Cross
> Business major

that they are amassing a set of skills and knowledge that they will continue to build upon their entire life. They are most certainly not training right now for the job they may have in 10 years, but they are developing a set of competencies they will draw upon.

"It's a tough market out there, but a student who develops a portfolio of competencies at Linfield, takes advantage of our multidisciplinary offerings, and develops the perspective of a lifelong learner is in a strong position to build a rewarding career, "she said."

Jeremy Scott's upbringing in a family with ties to both ranching and bankig contributed to his business acumen and ability to identify opportunities. He admits he has confidence and enjoys taking calculated risks.

"My family has taken some great risks and reaped some great rewards in their businesses," he said. "I enjoy proving that I can do it on my own."

But he also brings a sense of personal values to his work, which pulled him to work with children in Guatemala. Through Safe Passage he spent more than two years working with desperately poor children and families who live next to and work in the Guatemala City landfill, helping set up an English program that is thriving today. He calls it one of his most memorable and rewarding experiences.

Good business sense, combined with social responsibility equals win-win scenarios.

– Laura Davis, Mardi Mileham

"I'm able to combine things from other disciplines and when learning business, that's really important. I can bring other ideas to the table because I have been able to combine what I've learned in business with what I've learned in other subjects. It has made me look at business from a different perspective."

Nicole Szanto '12
International business major

Wayne Bailey, left, owner of Youngberg Hill Vineyards and Inn, explains the importance of biodynamic farming to business students Taylor Vandecoevering '12, Emily Zegar '12 and Aaron Williams '12 during a January Term class, Career Exploration: The Wine Industry Lens. "The best fertilizer you can put on your vineyard is your footprint," Bailey said.