

2009

A View from Melrose

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Recommended Citation

Hellie, Thomas L. (2009) "A View from Melrose," *Linfield Magazine*: Vol. 6: Iss. 1, Article 2.
Available at: http://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol6/iss1/2

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Teaching students how to live

Our nation's second President, John Adams, contended, "There are two types of education. One should teach us how to make a living, and the other how to live." At Linfield College we strive to provide both forms of education, but the second is much more important than the first.

We just held commencement at Linfield. It was a glorious, sun-soaked day, with the largest number of graduates in the college's history. Despite anxiety about the job market, students celebrated on the commencement green and in the Oak Grove. Graduates tearfully hugged faculty and expressed their thanks. Families cheered as their loved ones crossed the stage. There were wry comments about the unemployment rate and the economy, but the air was filled with optimism.

I don't think the optimism was misplaced, for our graduates are prepared to make a living, and they have learned how to live. In some cases, they have been trained for specific professions — accounting, nursing or teaching for example. In other fields, they may not have been trained for a particular profession, but they have acquired the skills that will make them successful employees and leaders: they have learned how to think critically, to communicate clearly, and to work with others. In fact, liberal arts majors often become the leaders of companies, even if they haven't taken business courses as undergraduates.

But it's learning how to live that is at the heart of what we do at Linfield. As I shook the hands of our students crossing the stage, I found myself remembering what this class had already accomplished: January Term service courses in Cameroon and Guatemala; publications in national journals; championships in a variety of

sports; regional and national recognition in the arts; creation of small businesses; and successful applications to medical school, law school and graduate school. Tiffany Cook, Chris Schuldt, Rafe Rafahi and Wesley Mitchell will go into business. Lizzie Martinez will work for a non-profit organization that educates Mexican orphans. Kendra Strahm will become a medical doctor. Carrie Kralicek is now a patients' rights advocate.

At commencement we gave an honorary degree to David Lett, the founder of Oregon's pinot noir industry. Because David passed away in October, his son

Jason accepted the award on his behalf. As he spoke about his father, Jason described the piece of paper that David always carried with him and eventually passed on to his son. It contained the words of Henry David Thoreau: "If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours...."

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."

The class of 2009 has bold dreams, but they will be realized because our graduates are prepared to build the foundation for their dreams. They have learned how to make a living, and they have learned how to live.

— Thomas L. Hellie
President

David Lett, Yamhill County wine pioneer, was presented an honorary degree posthumously during commencement. David's son, Jason Lett, left, accepts the ceremonial hood from President Thomas L. Hellie on behalf of his family.

"Our graduates are prepared to make a living, and they have learned how to live."