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## A View from Melrose

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# Saying farewell to our graduates

I am writing this essay on the day before baccalaureate, just 40 hours until commencement. It's a glorious Friday afternoon. Bleachers, chairs and stage now fill the commencement green. Students are loading their cars, hugging their friends and chatting about their return in the fall. Others, staying for the summer, are sprawled on the lawn, enjoying the sunshine that separated the clouds as finals ended.

And then there are the seniors.

Some are with their friends on the grass, not quite as relaxed but trying to savor the last few moments of Linfield sun. Others are walking around campus with their parents, pointing out buildings where they took classes or athletic fields where they competed. A few are at their computers, frantically updating (or creating) their resumé and finally facing a future outside the Linfield bubble. Many are emptying their rooms and thinking about the trek to new apartments and jobs in distant cities.

All week long I've seen students signing their names on the senior bench, painted this year with the outline of an oak tree.

It is one of the happiest weekends of the year. It is one of the saddest weekends of the year.

In higher education, we expend all of our energies to reach this day. We embrace our calling because we believe so fiercely in the development and success of our students. And we celebrate their arrival as Linfield alumni, as our equals in the world of learning and work, as citizens and leaders in communities all over the world. We take pride in who they are and what they have become.

And yet we also know that we will not see these graduates very often in the future. We will miss them because they have enriched the life of this college. We know that they will succeed, we rejoice in their future, but we also feel a sense of loss when they walk across the commencement green for the last time.

We are reassured by two facts. First, we know that a new set of Linfield students will arrive this fall. And second, we hope that our Linfield alumni will return to their college home, that even as they make new friends and pursue new opportunities, they will carry a bit of us with them, and they will remember.

To those who have graduated, and to those who are about to graduate, we wish you all the best, and we invite you, at any time, to rejoin us even briefly here at Linfield. We will think of you often. We will await you with open arms.

And meanwhile, we will look forward to meeting the class of 2012.

— Thomas L. Hellie

President Thomas L. Hellie congratulates Katie Dolph '08 during commencement exercises on June 1.

