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A View from Melrose

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Thirteen years in review

*I*t is Tuesday night, following commencement, and I have just had my evening walk about the campus. It is very quiet, especially in contrast to these last hectic days and nights as the semester ended.

As I walked through the light rain, marveling at the beauty of this campus, I realized it was time for assessment, a look back to better enable us to go forward. We regularly review and assess our annual goals and objectives, but what about these past 13 years?

Some of you may remember in the spring of 1993 the students presented a charge at my inauguration. It has been in a prominent place on my bookshelf since the day I received it, reminding me of their expectations.

“We charge you to remain dedicated to the task of educating students in the tradition of a liberal arts education. In a changing world, we ask that you remain sensitive to the evolution of ideas and skills which will be required by college graduates in the future.”

With the work of our faculty, students and staff, we have responded to this charge. The new Linfield curriculum, new majors and regular reviews of the departmental offerings have kept our curriculum alive and vital - Connecting Learning, Life and Community, as our mission requires. An interactive learning environment, service learning, an expanded international program and collaborative research provide exciting opportunities for the students and faculty.

“We trust that you will consider the environment in which Linfield students must learn. Please accept the challenge to care for the programs, facilities and campus grounds in a way that will continually provide for the intellectual, emotional, social, physical and spiritual development of Linfield students. Help us to honor our diversity and yet recognize the similarities among all of us.”

We have done well in meeting this charge. The acquisition of the HP property, new residence halls and apartments, the Keck Campus with its arts facilities and the wonderful new library, the field house and greatly improved athletic facilities...all have enhanced the academic environment and programs. The grounds have never been more beautiful the year around. We have a more diverse population and we have learned how much richer our community can be when we are inclusive.

“We invite you to become acquainted with student life. Join in our work and in our play in such a way that you will understand what it means to be a student at Linfield College.”

What a joy this has been! There have been wonderful lectures, concerts, plays, athletic events, opportunities to perform with many groups and time for discussion, quiet conversations and celebrations. How many presidents can be totally out of step line dancing, or play Shakespeare in a modern re-write, or warm up the audience in a improvisational moment with the cast...or engage in all the other fun things that have allowed me to understand what it means to be a student...even the all-night sessions I had to meet deadlines for my projects. And how kind of so many of the graduates to wear their sneakers, “in tribute to the president.” We have learned and taught together.

“Make each department strong in its resources; help us to honor our traditions; and most of all, protect the sense of personal attention that students receive from this institution.”

This is a charge to which all of us must respond. None of us could have been a part of Linfield College today without the work of the generations who came before us. It is up to us to continue to strengthen Linfield, to respect and honor the traditions while recognizing our changing world. We must continue that very special component of the Linfield Experience - close personal relationships that will enhance the life and work of future Linfield generations.

I thank you all for letting me be a part of this great institution for these past 13 years. They have been special times in the life of this college and in my own personal life. My husband Bob and I, along with our family, have been richly blessed during our Linfield Experience and we commit ourselves to the support and enrichment of Linfield College into the future. I hope you join us in this commitment.

With appreciation and best wishes,

Vivian A. Bull



Clockwise from top: President Vivian A. Bull is presented with a bouquet during commencement; Bull and Peter Richardson, professor of German, examine a quilt made by staff members in her honor; Bull is presented with a flower by Jeanine Ishii '03 during a retirement reception at the Oregon Historical Society.



Saying farewell: She has taken us to wonderful destinations

How do you say thank you for 13 years of service?

In Vivian Bull's case, it's via a deluge of plaques, citations and photographs. She's had tributes in Portland, in McMinnville and around the region. She received an honorary degree from the University of Portland, was named Alumna of the Year at one of her alma maters and the Educator of the Year by the Northwest House of Theological Studies at Willamette University. She leaves Linfield as not only president emerita, but also professor emerita of economics.

And those are just a few of the accolades since she announced her retirement over a year ago. Numerous speeches have been given, but one was especially poignant.

During a farewell reception at the Oregon Historical Society, Marvin Henberg, vice president for academic affairs and dean of faculty, said that Bull's labor for Linfield has been a thing of beauty because she is impervious to despair.

"She has her moments of doubt, but she responds to doubt by pulling together those around her for conversation, and out of that conversation a solution grows — a solution larger, more inclusive, and wiser than any

single one of us could ever have concocted on our own," Henberg said. "She embodies what William James has called the 'will to believe,' knowing that belief may sometimes be powerless to succeed, but also knowing that unbelief leads inescapably to failure. Vivian has always believed in wonderful destinations only dimly perceived by the rest of us. She has taken us there."

While most will remember her for the growth and development on the McMinnville Campus, many will recall the quieter, more personal moments. The gentle word of encouragement when the demands seemed overwhelming. The humanity she brought to a job that often demanded superhuman effort. The compassion she showed to students and parents confronted by dilemmas and difficult choices. The humor she readily shared.

She believed not only in Linfield College, she believed in the people of Linfield, from senior administrators and faculty to groundskeepers and custodial staff. She helped each of us look a little farther, reach a little higher, dream a little bigger.

— Mardi Mileham