

Summer 2004

Linfield Link: A Creative Outlet in a Real-World Setting

Mardi Mileham
Linfield College

Laura Davis
Linfield College

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

Recommended Citation

Mileham, Mardi and Davis, Laura (2004) "Linfield Link: A Creative Outlet in a Real-World Setting," *Linfield Magazine*: Vol. 1 : No. 1 , Article 9.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol1/iss1/9

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

Linfield Link

A creative outlet in a real-world setting

The tension is palpable in the control room.

In the studio, lights are set, mic checks are complete and cameras are ready. With a final “Are we ready to go?” the music comes up and tape begins to roll on another edition of *Linfield Link*. Produced weekly by Wildcat Productions, the show airs on McMinnville Community Media (MCM), the local cable access channel. Part spoof, part social commentary and part interviews, the program features segments that range from April Fools’ pranks and politics to social commentary, sports, and activities and issues on campus. It’s something like Linfield’s own edition of *Saturday Night Live* with elements of *The Daily Show*.

Jordan Baines ’06, executive producer, director, cameraman and sometimes talent, breathes a sigh of relief when the show is in the can for another week.

Nancy Cornwell, associate professor of mass communication and an award-winning producer, came to Linfield in 2002 to revitalize the broadcast major. Fast-talking, energetic and an expert in the profession, she’s a tough task master, but gives the students as much as, or more than, she demands in return.

After resurrecting Wildcat Productions, students decided they wanted to produce a television show. The club joined MCM and has spent the last three semesters

using MCM facilities to tape live segments of the show and insert various remote pieces shot in advance.

At first, Cornwell said, the students were intimidated by the studio and control room equipment at MCM. She would set the students up on the cameras and run everything else by herself. Slowly, she began to train them on the equipment, and now, by the time she shows up for the Tuesday night taping, students are set up with equipment in place.

“I’m there to make them

accountable, but I really don’t have to do anything now,” she said. “They own this show, and I’m surprised every week by how creative they are.

“It’s important for students who want to go into television or news or film to have a place to explore, where they can make mistakes,” she added. “It’s an important extension of their education to have this creative outlet and to explore the medium.”

The students develop the ideas and the scripts. Program credits list Cornwell as adviser, but producer



Once taping begins on *Linfield Link*, Jordan Baines ’06, executive producer, watches the monitors in the control room, while Nancy Cornwell, professor, mentor and part-time “mother” to the show and its crew, offers advice and direction.

Nancy Cornwell sets up the shot while Niki Hunter '05 tries to contain her laughter as the Scrabble Streaker invades the studio during the taping of *Linfield Link*. The students have the freedom to develop their own ideas and scripts, but also set their own limits on content. "Some content we just won't do because we are not comfortable with it," Jordan Baines '06 says. "It's not about getting people's attention, it's about saying something."



Ryan McCann '04, prepares to tape a segment, while Niki Hunter '05, center, and Nancy Cornwell, associate professor, adjust the camera. Since arriving, Cornwell has bought new digital cameras, along with tripods, software and editing suites. "These students are working on state-of-the-art equipment and software," she says.



Don Fisher '06 checks the monitor as Niki Hunter '05 and Robin Cangie '06 tape "Between the Lines." Fisher and Laura Penland '07 are two of the students who have volunteered as crew members for *Linfield Link* this past year.

Baines refers to her as the "mother" of the show.

"The first semester, nothing would have been possible without her because no one knew what they were doing, no one knew what was involved, no one knew what kind of effort was necessary," he said. "She bounces ideas off us all the time. There's a lot of interplay because we are still trying to push the envelope and still want to have fun."

And Cornwell encourages them to be creative. Scrabble Streaker is a man in disguise sprinting through a segment of the show each week, clad in gym shorts with words written across his chest.

"Scrabble Streaker was half her (Cornwell's) idea," Baines said. "If we were going to have a streaker on the show, why not make it

worthwhile and teach viewers how to spell?"

Baines hunches over the switcher in the control room, a frown creasing his forehead. As executive producer, he is responsible for making sure the show gets done. He's been director, cameraman and talent. He has shot remote segments and he spends sleepless nights worrying. He spends 20 hours a week on the show – in addition to carrying a double major in philosophy and mass communication. He gets no credit, no pay, for the show but comes back week after week.

"It's something I feel I belong to, and it's something that needs to be done," he said. "We live in a world where mass media is covered

by six major conglomerates. It's good to know there's a place for people to have their opinions and voices heard. What we are doing with *Linfield Link* isn't for our viewers because I'm not sure we have any. It's about free expression, and we are providing an outlet for that. And if not us, I'm not sure who would."

You can almost see Niki Hunter '05 wind up before the cameras go live and the tape starts rolling. As the anchors for "Between the Lines," she and Robin Cangie '06 are the hosts for *Linfield Link*, introducing the segments and delivering their own version of the news on a weekly basis. They divide the writing duties based on each other's work load, although Robin is solely responsible for the zany "Inanimate Objects" segment, which features conversations between muffins, shoes, rubber duckies and whatever piques her interest.

Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* inspired Hunter, who said her writing skills, delivery on camera and comedic timing have all improved with her experience on *Linfield Link*.

Her goals are to attend graduate school at Syracuse University and ultimately to direct and produce television. Before Cornwell joined the faculty, there was little emphasis on broadcast. Now Hunter and the other students are getting some hands-on experience in front of the camera and behind the scenes.

"I am learning the workings of putting together a show, what goes into it and how you manage people," she said. "It's really important for us to have this opportunity. We aren't working for anyone. We are volunteering and getting some good experience. This is our product, and we are doing it all together as a collective group."

Revamping the voice of Linfield

Linfield and Cornwell were a nearly perfect match. She was looking for a community she could love and a liberal arts environment.

“My whole idea of being a professor was wrapped up in the idea of teaching in a liberal arts college,” she said. “It’s rare to find a college with a commitment to the liberal arts tradition that offers a program in what I teach. That’s why I came. It represented what I believe being a professor is all about.”

In addition to teaching she was seeking the freedom to explore creative activities, and Wildcat Productions/*Linfield Link* is part of that.

“I would not be happy and could not be at a place without a creative outlet,” she said. “My love of this is what I want to pass on to my students. I look at what they are doing and I want to do whatever it takes to make it happen.”

– Mardi Mileham

Kristen Moores '07, a mass communication major, delivers news and commentary between musical sets during her DJ shift in the KSLC studio. Enhanced programming, including increased news and syndicated shows, can now be heard around the clock in most of Yamhill County.

Julia Kanago '05 is a KSLC junkie.

She listens to the Linfield College radio station in her car, in her apartment, on her cell phone. She can reel off a two-page list of favorite music without hesitation. And when pressed, she'll reluctantly narrow the list to one — “Music for Imaginary Films” by Arling and Cameron.

Kanago is not only a devout listener, but also a KSLC staff member.

“Most of us work here for the joy of music,” said Kanago, general manager for KSLC 90.3 FM, also known as “The Station Behind the Movement.”

Led by the energy of Nancy Cornwell, associate professor of mass communication, Kanago and other radio enthusiasts have revamped KSLC. Thanks to technological enhancements such as overnight automation and webcasting, the station now can be heard 24 hours a day and soon will be broadcast over the web around the world.

With a signal covering most of Yamhill County, programming has exploded as well. Nationally syndicated programs, including “Democracy Now” by Amy Goodman, “Free Speech Radio” and “Counterspin,” are interspersed among a variety of musical genres and beefed-up news segments.

Expanded news coverage was a major goal during the revamp, and it has been boosted by the addition of Cornwell's electronic media class, in which students research, write and present daily headline news. Art Cuscaden, a McMinnville community member, also delivers a weekday evening news show assisted by students.

“We have a combination of local live news and syndicated news coming from a perspective that you can't hear around here,” Cornwell said. “It's intended to reach an underserved market in the McMinnville area.”

Meanwhile, staffers have worked to rebrand KSLC as McMinnville's community radio station, serving an audience beyond the Linfield campus. After conducting a market assessment, Cornwell and students identified a need for a station to serve high school students and offer children's programming. They hope to introduce Hispanic news in the fall.

Under Cornwell's direction, the station is entirely student-run, drawing staffers from across academic disciplines. In addition to a handful of student management positions, some 35 disc jockeys supply lively commentary at the mic.

The station provides a rich training ground for students to learn about broadcasting, Cornwell said. They develop public speaking skills and on-air composure, while learning about deadlines, timing and current legal issues involving the broadcasting industry.

“This is one of the few places on campus where students can function in a way that really mimics the professional world,” Cornwell said. “The responsibilities are identical to a real-world radio station, so it's a good place for students to simulate professional experience. It's a great place to make mistakes and learn how it works.”

Tracy Forrester '03, an assistant at mPR:m Public Relations in Los Angeles, Calif., gleaned experience in entertainment and special event planning, an aspect of her current position, at the station.

“College radio gives students confidence in themselves,” said Forrester, who took on lead roles as news director and program director during her four years at KSLC. Forrester also sees webcasting as a valuable tool for alumni.

“For me, it will mean an ongoing relationship with Linfield and something that was a big part of my college career,” she said. “Having this link back to the college will provide an opportunity to view the ways that Linfield has changed and/or remained the same. It is coming straight from the students at Linfield.”

– Laura Davis

