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A View From Melrose

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Studying the wine industry

How did I first learn about Linfield College 25 years ago? No, it wasn't the football team, or the Linfield Research Institute, or my visit to Oregon relatives. I learned about Linfield College while reading *The Wine Spectator*. Back in those days — and even now — *The Wine Spectator* was not read by millions of people. And the article wasn't very long. But I was intrigued to learn that a liberal arts college was hosting an international wine event.

How unusual, I thought to myself, and what an opportunity!

For years Linfield College has enjoyed a well-earned reputation for success in athletics. In enlightened quarters across the nation, we are also known for our long-standing reputation in the sciences, nursing, creative writing and other fields. But among academic leaders and others in the general public, we are also developing a reputation for our connections to the wine industry.

Oregon boasts more than 540 bonded wineries. We have at least 350 wineries in the Northern Willamette Valley, about 200 of them within a 30-mile radius of McMinnville. In Oregon, wine has become a \$3 billion business. And Linfield is in the heart of it all. Thousands of wine enthusiasts and winemakers have attended the International Pinot Noir Celebration at Linfield over the last 28 years. Five members of our Board of Trustees are associated with the wine industry. Many Linfield alumni have gone on to work at wineries. But in the past five years, we have created new distinctive opportunities for our students and built a unique identity for our college.

Linfield now houses the Oregon Wine History Archive. Through the Linfield Center for the Northwest, faculty and students have conducted numerous research projects, in many disciplines, on Oregon wine. Thanks to a grant from the Kemper Foundation, our students are participating in wine studies locally and in France. Professors in accounting, biology, history, management, marketing, mass communication and sociology are undertaking wine industry-related research and/or incorporating wine-related topics in their classes. Our graduates are now securing jobs in the wine industry, not only in Oregon but also in California, Washington, even New York. There is not another liberal arts college in America that can boast such achievements.

The majority of Linfield graduates will not pursue careers in the wine business. But through the lens of that industry, they can learn principles and practices of science and business, conduct historical and sociological research, or explore how language and art enhance the promotion and enjoyment of food and drink. They can complete internships or work in tasting rooms locally, learning to serve customers and interact with the public. They can visit wineries in France, Germany, Australia or New Zealand to learn how wine is appreciated, produced and regulated in different cultures. In short, it's another way to connect learning, life, and community at Linfield College — and we are in a unique position to build on these opportunities.

That was brought home to me recently at a national meeting of college presidents, when an East Coast president asked me where Linfield was located. "We're right in the middle of Oregon's pinot noir country," I replied. The president of our nearest rival college added, "Yes, and Linfield has really capitalized on it." 🍷

— Thomas L. Hellie
President

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