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Alumni Profile

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A perfect blend of career and passion

It's been more than a dozen years since Whitney Schubert '01 earned her Linfield College degree, but she remains connected to the college in ways she could not foresee.

Most recently, she shared her extensive knowledge of the French wine industry by playing a key role in coordinating a January Term class to France that included visits with some of the top wine professionals in the region and the world. The class was part of Linfield's inaugural Oregon Wine Industry Experience designed to give students the skills and understanding to work in the Oregon wine industry (see page 6).

"The experience combined two of my passions – wine and Linfield," she said. "I gained satisfaction and fulfillment from the work we did together and I was honored to be able to give back in a small way."

In her role as French brand manager for Polaner Selections, a prominent wine importer and distributor, Schubert serves as a liaison between French wineries and Polaner's restaurant and retail clients in the New York and New Jersey markets. She works with more than 80 French winemakers and some of the top sommeliers and wine retailers in the country, traveling to France two to three times a year to visit winemakers and taste the new vintages. From her New York office, she connects with growers, the sales team and customers via email and phone. Half the time, she corresponds in French.

"I love communicating with people in another language," she said. "The opportunity to hone my French language skills has been an added bonus."

Schubert's career is a blend of the things she values most – language, international travel, French culture and the outdoors. "My admiration for farmers and their connection to the land is really what drew me to the industry," said Schubert, who spent much of her childhood in her grandparents' Eastern Oregon pastures and at the family cabin in the Elk Horn Mountains. Schubert came to Linfield, initially drawn to the welcoming campus, strong sense of tradition, small classes and direct contact with professors.

"The opportunities both in and outside of the classroom seemed endless," she said. She embraced the liberal arts environment, serving as vice president of the Associated Students of Linfield College, playing volleyball and studying abroad in Paris for a semester.

"Although I came to Linfield craving knowledge and new experiences, I could not have imagined the opportunities and relationships that would shape and influence me."



"Linfield College cultivates intellectual curiosity. I believe this is among the most important qualities for finding happiness and success in life."

After earning a bachelor's degree in international business with minors in French and European studies in hand, she spent a year as a French Government Teaching Assistant, a position awarded by the Fulbright Commission.

In the wine regions of Provence and the Rhône Valley, she was hooked.

"I was isolated in the best sense of the word and had no choice but to make significant progress with

the language," she said. "The culinary and cultural traditions of Provence inspired me to explore the wine regions of the south and ultimately led me to pursue a career in the wine business."

After her return, she worked at Rex Hill Vineyards and Triage Wines Inc., then spent four years as executive director of the International Pinot Noir Celebration, held annually at Linfield. She continues to volunteer at IPNC.

Schubert said her career has been shaped by her broad liberal arts education – from French and international business classes to English and writing classes – which provided her practical skills and the ability to communicate.

"Linfield College cultivates intellectual curiosity," she said. "I believe this is among the most important qualities for finding happiness and success in life."

– Laura Davis