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Reaching a Goal

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Reaching a goal

“Today, with online studies, you can be anywhere. I’ve been in Europe doing homework and communicating with my fellow students. What really made the difference were the online opportunities that Linfield offers.”

Craig Ostbo ’15 seems to have it all – a successful business, close family, community ties – and he’s even the drummer in the band Petty Fever.

But there is one goal that has eluded him until now – completing his college degree. That will change in May when he receives a bachelor’s degree in international business through the Division of Continuing Education.

Ostbo’s journey has taken him through community college, a decade or more touring as a professional musician, a stint recording and producing music and videos in Los Angeles, and a career in marketing and communication. He found marketing was the perfect combination of left brain and right brain, both creative and analytical. He returned to the Northwest more than 20 years ago and worked in advertising before partnering with Ken Koopman to form Koopman Ostbo Marketing Communications (KO) in Portland.

Completing his business degree was always a goal, Ostbo said, and if there had been online programs when he went on tour in 1973, he would have completed it long ago.

“Today, with online studies, you can be anywhere,” he said. “I’ve been in Europe doing homework and communicating with my fellow students. What really made the difference were the online opportunities that Linfield offers.”

Ostbo soon found that completing his degree was more than just fulfilling a commitment he made years before.

“I had no clue how much I would learn or how much it would inspire my business,” he said.

Taking classes online means you can’t hide in class or not participate. Part of the grade is based on participation and engaging with other students.

“The great thing is that you really get to know other people and you see a different world view, from students right next door and from around the world,” he said, noting he has worked with students



from around the U.S., the Middle East, Japan, China and Costa Rica.

Ostbo chose international business because it would apply directly to the work of his firm, which focuses on marketing natural, organic and sustainable products. He’s currently studying the German market and spent several weeks conducting a research study in Freiburg, Germany, considered one of the greenest cities in the European Union. The study has helped Ostbo understand how to reach consumers outside the U.S.

One of the challenges Ostbo faced returning to college as an adult was remembering how to learn. Colloquium, a class required for all students, was invaluable, he said, by helping him establish places that were dedicated to studying. Sometimes it’s the library, a specific room at home, or in a coffee shop where his brain is now trained that “this is a spot where I’m here to learn,” he said.

One tip he has for other adult learners is not to return to college just for a degree.

“There are so many more rewards,” he said. “Too many people think we go to college to get a piece of paper that leads to a bigger salary or a better job. Instead, it’s to learn how to learn, to become a life-long learner and expand your mind and opportunities.”

Ostbo has taken advantage of opportunities. He’s now a member of the Linfield Business Advisory Council, a group of faculty and practitioners from the business world advising and creating opportunities for business students. KO is the first Business in Residence at Linfield, designed, in part, to provide experiential learning opportunities to Linfield students. It was launched this fall and continues in the spring with a focus on impact entrepreneurship.

– Mardi Mileham

To see a video of Craig Ostbo ’17 discussing his Linfield experience, go to [youtube.com/linfieldcollege/videos](https://www.youtube.com/linfieldcollege/videos).