

Fall 2015

A View from Melrose

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Recommended Citation

Hellie, Thomas L. (2015) "A View from Melrose," *Linfield Magazine*: Vol. 12 : No. 2 , Article 2.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol12/iss2/2

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Quality comes first



When most of our 26,000 living alumni think of Linfield College, they picture Pioneer Hall in McMinnville or Peterson Hall in Portland. They remember one-on-one meetings with professors, intense debates in academic seminars, involvement in campus organizations, and study abroad programs.

But there are many alumni who don't share those memories and rarely set foot on either the Portland or McMinnville Campuses. They are the graduates of Online and Continuing Education (OCE), previously known as the Division of Continuing Education or the Adult Degree Program. In fact, Linfield has the oldest such program in Oregon, now dating back 40 years. The name change to OCE reflects the changing times.

At a post-commencement reception five years ago, I wandered through the crowd, congratulating joyful graduates and their families. I encountered a young auburn-haired woman in her late 20s, slightly older than our traditional graduates. I shook her hand and she gave me a happy smile, introducing herself as a graduate of our adult degree program. "We haven't met before," she said, "but I'm proud to be a Linfield alumna."

She said that she had begun working at a bank after high school, earning several promotions, but then learned that she needed a bachelor's degree to move higher. She chose Linfield's program because it had a good reputation and allowed her to pursue a college degree while holding down her full-time job in her hometown.

Now she possessed her diploma, and her next promotion was imminent.

"So, you've accomplished your goal," I said. "Yes," she replied, "and I learned a lot in the process. I signed up because I was told I had to, but my classes have really helped me in my job! It wasn't easy, but it turned out to be much more meaningful than I expected."

Just like programs in McMinnville and Portland, OCE focuses on individualized education for students in a select number of programs and majors. According to our alumni surveys, OCE graduates praise the quality of the instruction and the personalized attention. They may not be involved with campus organizations or live in residence halls, but they do get to know their classmates, and enjoy great success, not only at Linfield but beyond. In fact, OCE alumni have included CEOs of major companies like Tektronix and Bank of the Cascades, as well as medical professionals and entrepreneurs.

Today, most of our students – not just OCE but also in Portland and McMinnville – take at least a few courses online.

Our continuing education program has undergone significant change since its founding 40 years ago. Delivery methods have evolved; majors have been eliminated or added. And we anticipate more changes in the near future. OCE can also offer opportunities for educational enrichment for people of all ages in fields where we have unique expertise – creative writing, cultural studies, wine education, health care and business. Even as we continue to offer existing programs or create new ones, we will strive to uphold our commitment to the distinct advantages our alumni have praised: personalized instruction, meaningful interaction, and high quality. We have no interest in becoming a major provider of online education, but we do plan to be there for a select group of nontraditional students who look to enrich their lives with a Linfield education. 🍷

– Thomas L. Hellie, President