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A View from Melrose

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Nourish the roots



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hen I left the presidency of a foundation in 2006 to become president of Linfield College, one of my friends, himself a college president, joked that I was crazy. “Now instead of giving money away you’re going to be begging for it,” he said. He wasn’t serious – at least not entirely – but the more common path is to go from a college presidency to a foundation

job. In fact, many college presidents used to say that they envied my opportunity to award grants at the foundation rather than apply for them.

I have now begun my final year at Linfield, and I know that I made the right decision to come here. I also know that there’s no shame in asking for money if your cause is just and the need is great. Growing up, my parents made sure my siblings and I understood our obligation to give back – with our treasure as well as our time and talent. That principle has driven much of America’s success and prosperity; it’s been at the heart of my professional calling; and it’s been fundamental to the history of Linfield College.

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and then find a way to give back.”

Every year, I meet a new group of Linfield students. Their stories are compelling, and often their financial needs are great. Every time I enter a campus building, I’m struck by the quality of facilities and equipment – as well as the need to provide more. Every time I meet a new group of alumni, I hear about their relationships with Linfield faculty and staff – different names, different people, but similar stories of inspiration, transformation, and success; alumni say they owe much to Linfield.

I will have one more opportunity to write this column, so this is not my final word, but I hope you will reflect on what Linfield has meant to you and then find a way to give back. You can recommend the college to a prospective student, offer an internship or job interview to a current student or alum, attend a gathering of our parents and alumni, or make a financial gift to enhance aid for needy students, reward talented faculty, and improve campus facilities and equipment. I ask you to do this proudly, fervently believing that our college and our students are making a difference in the world. I think my friend was wrong when he joked about begging for money; this is an exhortation, a challenge, and I believe, a responsibility to invest in the college we love.

– Thomas L. Hellie, President