2010

A View from Melrose

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The heart of learning

Whenever I talk with Linfield alumni, I ask them what mattered most in their education. I often hear about a campus organization or a group of friends or an off-campus study experience. But I always hear about professors. Sometimes more than one professor; always at least one.

There is the story of the professor who urged his student to seek an MBA at Stanford. That student had never had a teacher or professor express that kind of faith in him before. And he now has both a Stanford MBA and a master's degree in geology. The professor's name is Dave Hansen.

There is the veterinarian in Arizona who says that she discovered her love of biology from John Hare. The businessman in Portland who discovered his calling thanks to Harold Elkinton. The Mayo Clinic physician whose life was transformed by Jane Claire Dirks-Edmunds '37. The Yale professor who names both Dawn Nowacki and Howard Leichter. The list goes on and on, including both veteran professors and newcomers to the college.

Last fall, Professor Peter Richardson was named Oregon's outstanding college professor. "What has been your best class so far?" I asked. They looked at each other for a moment and then the answers began to spill out: "Financial accounting with Mike Jones," replied a sociology major. "Bill Apel's course on monks and mystics," exclaimed a business major. "My inquiry seminar with Hillary Crane," answered a chemistry major. "Anything taught by Peter Richardson," replied a language major.

And Peter Richardson is one of Linfield's legendary great professors. He has changed many lives. And he is also one of Linfield's many great professors, who change lives every day as they inspire, encourage, challenge and educate our students. For students, Linfield College can be a place to grow (or grow up), a place to make friends, a place to try new things. But fundamentally Linfield is a place to learn. And at the heart of the learning are the professor and the student, seeking truth and finding it.

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– Thomas L. Hellie