A View from Melrose

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Teaching students how to live

Our nation’s second President, John Adams, contended, “There are two types of education. One should teach us how to make a living, and the other how to live.” At Linfield College we strive to provide both forms of education, but the second is much more important than the first.

We just held commencement at Linfield. It was a glorious, sun-soaked day, with the largest number of graduates in the college’s history. Despite anxiety about the job market, students celebrated on the commencement green and in the Oak Grove. Graduates tearfully hugged faculty and expressed their thanks. Families cheered as their loved ones crossed the stage. There were witty comments about the unemployment rate and the economy, but the air was filled with optimism.

I don’t think the optimism was misplaced, for our graduates are prepared to make a living, and they have learned how to live. In some cases, they have been trained for specific professions — accounting, nursing or teaching for example. In other fields, they may not have been trained for a particular profession, but they have acquired the skills that will make them successful employees and leaders: they have learned how to think critically, to communicate clearly, and to work with others. In fact, liberal arts majors often become the leaders of companies, even if they haven’t taken business courses as undergraduates.

But it’s learning how to live that is at the heart of what we do at Linfield. As I shook the hands of our students crossing the stage, I found myself remembering what this class had already accomplished: January Term under them.”

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.”

The class of 2009 has bold dreams, but they will be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.”

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“Our graduates are prepared to make a living, and they have learned how to live.”

— Thomas L. Hellie

President