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A View from Melrose

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Saying farewell to our graduates

I am writing this essay on the day before baccalaureate, just 40 hours until commencement. It’s a glorious Friday afternoon. Bleachers, chairs and stage are now filled with the commencement green. Students are loading their cars, hugging their friends and chatting about their return in the fall. Others, staying for the summer, are sprawled on the lawn, enjoying the sunshine that separated the clouds as finals ended.

And then there are the seniors. Some are with their friends on the grass, not quite as relaxed but trying to savor the last few moments of Linfield sun. Others are walking around campus with their parents, pointing out buildings where they took classes or athletic fields where they competed. A few are at their computers, frantically updating (or creating) their résumés and finally facing a future outside the Linfield bubble. Many are emptying their rooms and packing their cars, hugging their friends and chatting about the trek to new apartments and jobs in distant cities.

All week long I’ve seen students signing their names on the senior bench, painted this year with the outline of an oak tree. It is one of the happiest weekends of the year. It is the one of the saddest weekends of the year.

In higher education, we expend all of our energies to reach this day. We embrace our calling because we believe so fiercely in the development and success of our students. And we celebrate their arrival as Linfield students have a tradition of being busy, which is evident in Marvin Henberg’s snapshot of student life, the final in our sesquicentennial series. Students are still involved and engaged, as shown through several student features in this issue. In one we follow a student during a marathon. Another tells about the combined work of students and community members in Guatemala. We say farewell to three extraordinary professors and share some of the wisdom of Professor Emeritus Win Dolan, who at 99 years young, addressed the class of 2008. Even as we look to the end of our sesquicentennial celebration, we anticipate the rich and vibrant future that lies ahead for Linfield College.

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