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A View from Melrose

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Wildcat champions on and off the field

When I first announced to my family that I had been appointed president of Linfield College, my Minnesota nephew immediately exclaimed, “Hey, they’ve got a great football team!” My nephew attends St. John’s, a college that has faced Linfield on the gridiron in the past.

This year one of my Midwestern colleagues, Paul Adanian, served as our interim CFO. Paul has taken to referring to Linfield as “the Notre Dame of NCAA Division III.” Paul is talking about more than football when he makes his quip: Notre Dame is one of America’s strongest academic institutions.

It is true: Linfield has a great tradition in football, we possess the most consecutive winning seasons in history. And this year we set a new mark at the college, when our softball players won the first national championship of any Linfield women’s team.

But like Notre Dame, we possess other great traditions as well. Not only do we excel in athletics, we excel in academics.

When Tim Benzel ’06 was a senior at Evergreen High School in Vancouver, Wash., he made two lists. The first ranked small college football programs; the second ranked by academics. Tim found the lists intersecting at Linfield College, where he eventually became our starting quarterback and graduated last December with a 3.56 GPA, majoring in economics and finance. Tim has just become an analyst with Lehman Brothers in New York City.

Another example is tennis player Becca Johnson ’07, the first Linfield athlete to be named NCAA West Region Senior of the Year. In addition to her accomplishments on the court, Becca majored in both physics and mathematics and graduated with a 3.78 GPA. After graduation she plans to continue to bring you stories, both past and present, of linfield champions.

The Linfield and McMinnville communities gathered to celebrate the women’s softball team’s national title, the first women’s national championship at Linfield. Those honored on their return are, back row, from left, Coach Jackson Vaughan, Amanda Allibarger, Scott Carramolino, Kelly Bird; middle row, Brittany Miller, Jenny Marshall, Meredith Brunette, Jena Loop, Stephanie Rice, President Thomas Halle, Cori Simmons, Lisa Smith, Michelle Silbernagel, Assistant Coach Lisa Allen, Assistant Coach Ben Blasier; front row, Erica Hancoc, Rochelle Friend, Candice Fujino, Jenessa Peterson, Jessica Papel, Danielle Stratton, Kendra Stratton, Rachelle Wildlen, Jessica Bock and Samantha Van Noy.

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