A View from Melrose

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You have heard me often say; a liberal arts education is the best preparation for a lifetime of learning and serving. But how do we define the liberal arts? The Association of American Colleges and Universities defines and describes a liberal education: “A philosophy of education that empowers individuals, liberates the mind from ignorance and cultivates social responsibility.”

A liberal arts education provides students the opportunity to explore important issues and is more a way of studying than a specific content. A liberal arts college, such as Linfield, can be defined as a particular type of college, often small, often residential, that facilitates interaction between faculty and students. Its curriculum, like Linfield’s, is grounded in the liberal arts disciplines – the humanities, the social sciences and the sciences.

As a student in search of a liberal education, you will learn an appreciation for complexity. You will be able to see issues and approach problems through your work in many disciplines. Breadth in one’s education leads to breadth in one’s perspective.

As a student in search of a liberal education, you will appreciate the importance of effective communication. This institution, this community, this world require better understanding and new systems of communication. There is a crucial role for expression in the development of humankind. That is clear in the humanities, but also in the history and understanding of math and the sciences. Liberal arts students love ideas, and the goal is to understand and engage in the dialogue of ideas.

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Let us develop habits of the mind and habits of the heart, and let the waves and ripples of this Linfield community extend far and wide.

Let us find joy in what we do, wherever we may be, and let us celebrate the liberal arts tradition at Linfield: connecting learning, life and community.

Joan Austin, senior vice president and treasurer of A-dec, Inc., in Newberg, received an honorary bachelor of arts degree from Linfield College during opening Convocation ceremonies Sept. 1.

Austin, who is a member of Linfield’s Board of Trustees, is only the second person to be awarded an honorary bachelor’s degree in Linfield’s history. Although Austin did not have the opportunity to attend college, “her life has embodied the principles and spirit of the liberal arts,” according to Linfield President Vivian A. Bull who presented the degree.

Forty years ago, Austin and her husband, Ken, founded A-dec, now the largest private dental equipment manufacturer in the U.S. From the beginning, Austin managed the administrative, personnel, financial and legal areas.

“Her personal approach to these tasks has brought A-dec fame as one of the best places in Oregon to work,” Bull said. “The company not only compensates in people well and shares its profits with them, but it encourages them to pursue lifelong learning by providing in-house seminars and paying full tuition for college courses and certification programs.”

Austin is a philanthropic force in her hometown of Newberg, at Linfield and at Oregon State University. For example, each year A-dec pays for the entire kindergarten through eighth grade classes of Newberg, Dundee and St. Paul public schools to attend a cultural function in Portland, and it funds a free local concert by the Oregon Symphony.

She is also active in civic and community affairs beyond the Willamette Valley. She was the first woman appointed to the Oregon Economic Development Commission, served on the advisory council of the Federal Reserve Bank Board in San Francisco and currently serves on The Kennedy Center President’s Advisory Committee on the Arts.

Linfield Digest

Joan Austin honored by Linfield

“A Cicero Speaks” to Oregon audiences

Following the show, Miller will lead a discussion with the audience about issues raised by the performance. Miller said the program focuses on connections to political, social and ethical issues, and draws on the disciplines of history, philosophy, theatre and rhetoric.

“It’s a great honor,” he said. “One of the really neat things about the program is it allows me to take Cicero and the humanities to other parts of Oregon. The issues Cicero talks about apply to our broader communities.”

“Cicero Speaks” is Miller’s third one-person show with previous programs focusing on the lives of American philosopher and educator John Dewey and literary critic Rufus Griswold.

Audiences across Oregon will be treated to a glimpse of Cicero, famous Roman orator and politician, during the coming months.

Jackson Miller, assistant professor of communication arts and director of forensics at Linfield College, will present “Cicero Speaks: A Performance and Discussion on the Art of Oratory” for the 2004-2005 Oregon Chautauqua season. Miller compiled, directs and performs in the original one-person show, focusing on the life and ideas of Marcus Tullius Cicero. The show, which premiered at Linfield in October 2003, features excerpts from five of Cicero’s speeches and passages from his scholarly writings and letters.

Oregon Chautauqua is a public humanities program of the Oregon Council for the Humanities, which brings vibrant public lectures, discussions and presentations to communities throughout Oregon. The council will fund approximately 200 Oregon Chautauqua programs during 2004-2005.

Miller’s first performance will be Oct. 25, at 7 p.m., at the Cedar Mill Community Library in Portland. Additional performances will be scheduled throughout the year. A schedule can be found at www.oregonhum.org.

Jackson Miller as Cicero

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