From Vine to Wine to Consumer

Mardi Mileham
Linfield College

Linfield Magazine Staff

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Five Linfield College students are stepping into the Oregon wine industry with knowledge that takes others years to learn, thanks to the Oregon Wine Industry Experience (OWIE), concluding its inaugural year at Linfield.

When Jeff Peterson and Michael Hampton teamed up to create OWIE, they envisioned collaboration between wine professionals and Linfield to provide students with unique academic experiences and preparation for work in wine-related areas. Peterson, associate professor of sociology, founded the Linfield Center for the Northwest to engage students with topics and issues related to the region through research, internships and service learning. Hampton, director of Linfield’s Office of Career Development, is dedicated to helping students and graduates understand how their degrees prepare them for work in a wide variety of settings.

The program’s goal is to educate liberal arts students for work in the wine industry — not for growing grapes or making wine, but in marketing, distribution, graphic design, accounting and other business areas.

“We connect with employers who have job openings and who want Linfield graduates,” Hampton said. “We provide students a full background and picture of the wine industry from vine to wine to consumer so they are hitting the ground running in tasting rooms, accounting, distribution, marketing or any aspect of employment. They develop a range of experiences that give them insight and knowledge into most areas of the industry.”

Hands-on work

Since last summer, students have sweltered in the vineyards, clipped vines, counted clusters, taken core samples, washed barrels and driven forklifts. They learned subtleties in the pairing of food and wine and how wine can enhance and change the taste of food. They sorted grapes, punched them down in fermenting tanks, scooped out skins and cleaned the containers during the crush. They measured brix levels, interviewed owners and employees, and volunteered at the International Pinot Noir Celebration (INPC) at Linfield, which attracts professionals and connoisseurs from around the world. Students secured internships both fall and spring semesters to apply what they learned.

Students met with founders of Oregon’s wine industry, listening to stories of the hard work, dedication and passion that has gone into the growth and development of a distinctive wine region for more than four decades. They explored marketing and distribution, and even created a wine label. They learned the back stories and in the process, they learned that an enormous amount of work and attention to detail goes into producing world-class Oregon wines.

David Beck of Crawford-Beck Vineyard said OWIE provides a model for teaching students the business of the wine industry. “Linfield has done a tremendous job of making itself a part of the industry in very real ways,” he said. “Linfield has been very creative about grabbing pieces of this large and growing industry by bringing students into the vineyard and wineries, providing opportunities to help prepare for work in the business.”
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– David Beck, owner of Crawford-Beck Vineyard

Finding her career path

Shelby Duarte ’14 bubbles with enthusiasm about Oregon wine and the OWIE and has set her sights on a marketing career in the wine industry. While the work was physically taxing at times, she gained a newfound respect for vineyard workers, and an understanding of how critical the work in the vineyard is to the finished product.

“The passion these people have about the wine industry was infectious and I fell in love with the whole process,” she said. “Wine can be very intimidating. Oregon winemakers do a really good job of making people feel comfortable learning about wine.”

Although the summer classes and field trips were overwhelming at times, Duarte applied what she learned during her work at the Ponzi Wine Bar in Dundee fall semester.

“I was able to tie in everything I learned and share it with customers, telling them what it was like to work in the vineyard on a 95-degree day, learning about pairing food and wine, and the history of the industry in Oregon,” she said.

This spring, she was a marketing intern with Amber Fries ’00 at Duck Pond Vineyard, managing social media, developing ideas for promotional materials and maintaining brand standards. She also assisted in promoting the winery’s Conservation Cuvee, a limited edition pinot noir that supports Oregon conservation efforts.

Now with Linfield degree in hand, Duarte, who grew up around Napa, Calif., will remain in Oregon and capitalize on the contacts she’s made in the local wine industry.

“A year ago, I planned to move home and then I got into this and I found my niche,” she said. “My parents always told me to find something I love and I’m really excited about staying here.”
Comparing Oregon and Burgundy

Of course, learning about the wine industry wasn’t all hard, gritty work. During January Term, the OWIE students spent two weeks on campus, then two weeks in Burgundy, France. In Oregon they met with a variety of wine professionals to begin exploring the history and landscape of Oregon and Burgundy winegrowing regions and the international wine business. Coursework included the fundamentals of wine tasting, differences between the soils, climates and wines of Oregon and Burgundy, and the primary functions of various professional roles they might pursue.

Thanks to the assistance of Whitney Schubert ’01 (see page 31), former IPNC director and now a wine distributor based in New York, the group spent two weeks meeting and talking with some of the top experts in the region and the world.

They returned with an understanding of how vastly different – and alike – the two regions are.

Students learned about the relationship between Burgundy and Oregon from French winemakers at Domaine Drouhin in Beaune and Evening Land, both of which have vineyards and wineries in Oregon. They met with French professors who discussed wine economics, viticulture, oenology and sensory studies, and learned about the effect of oak barrels on aging. They explored the notion of terroir – a sense of place – and how climate, geography and soil affect the wine – or how the "grapes are an ink blotter of the soil," as one person described it. They learned about the historic and current roles of négociants – merchants who may not own vineyards, but who buy grapes and finished wines for blending and bottling under their own label.

They walked in the vineyards and along the small streets of Burgundy villages, listened to the histories of various vineyards and families and studied the characteristics of the different regions. They met with brokers, growers and with the world’s premier wine critic.

As a result, Peterson and three students – Duarte, Patrick Hickok ’14 and Whitney Weber ’14 – completed a research project on the differences and differing perspectives between the Oregon and Burgundian wine industries. The project explored the history of the two regions, how climate, soils and location affect the wine, and some of the differences in labeling, marketing and distribution.

The art of the label

The colors and patterns of the Oregon vineyards and the streets of Burgundy served as inspiration for Kelly Carmody ’14 when she and Caren Siegel ’14 tackled the challenge of developing a wine label. It was used for a special Linfield College bottling of pinot noir donated by Moe Mootazi, Maysara Winery owner and Linfield College trustee.
An electronic arts major with an interest in graphic design and photography, Carmody said the inside knowledge she gained about the wine industry gives her in-depth understanding about wine that she can apply to her designs.

“I think that everything I learned – how grapes are planted, grown, picked and crushed and how the wine is fermented – is vital for designing labels,” she said. “That depth is reflected in the design, even in subtle ways.”

Carmody worked at Dominio IV winery fall semester, learning the steps of the crush, and created a video to capture the camaraderie among vineyard and winery workers. In addition, she visited Crawford-Beck Vineyard during the harvest and followed the grapes from the vineyard to Owen Roe Winery to observe the pressing process.

**Responding to workforce needs**

Peterson said that the students’ broad exposure to the wine industry, coupled with internships both spring and fall semester, is a perfect example of how the liberal arts can respond to the workforce needs of the growing wine economy.

“Students are able to discern what piece of this industry they might want to be a part of,” he said. All five students in the inaugural class hope to capitalize on what they learned and contacts they made to build careers in the wine profession.

Maria Stuart, owner of R. Stuart Winery & Co. in McMinnville, said there is great potential for Linfield to step into the arena of educating future employees for the wine industry.

Caren Siegel ’14, left, and Kelly Carmody ’14 designed a label for a special Linfield bottling of pinot noir donated by Moe Montaz of Maysara Winery. Carmody said the in-depth understanding she gained about the wine industry – both in Oregon and in Burgundy, France – was essential in developing the label, adding she was inspired by the classic look of the Burgundy wine label when it came to creating one for Linfield.
Students, faculty and staff visited with Jacques Lardière at the winemaking facility at Maison Louis Jadot in France during January Term. Students in the Oregon Wine Industry Experience spent two weeks on campus and two weeks in France learning how different, and alike, the two regions are. For example, Lardière just retired from working at Maison Louis Jadot, and will be coming to Oregon as part of Jadot’s recent purchase here.

Susan Sokol Blosser, left, one of Oregon’s wine pioneers, is interviewed by Lydia Heins ’14 and Julian Adoff ’16 for the research project “Latinos and Latinas in the Oregon Wine Industry.” The project was a collaboration of the two students, history Professor Sharon Bailey Glasco and Linfield Archivist Rachael Woody to explore the role of migrant workers in shaping the Oregon wine industry. Heins and Adoff developed an exhibit that was on display during the International Pinot Noir Festival last July.
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Stuart said Linfield students are well educated in the most valuable ways for an employer.

“They can think on their feet, they can write and speak clearly and they are creative,” she said. “I can teach them about wine, hospitality and marketing, but having those fundamentals is half the game.”

The second year of this two-year pilot project funded by the James S. Kemper Foundation begins this summer. Ten students – with majors ranging from music and chemistry, to business, English and philosophy – will spend 12 months in the vineyards and in classes, giving credence to the claim that one can do almost anything with a liberal arts degree, whatever the industry or enterprise. The college is exploring ways to continue the OWIE in subsequent years.

– Mardi Mileham

Recording history

Linfield is partnering with the Oregon wine industry in other ways. The Oregon Wine History Archive, launched in 2011, collects and preserves papers and historical materials relating to the wine industry throughout the state (see Linfield Magazine, Winter 2013). Several public exhibits have been mounted, including “Bringing Vines to the Valley,” a history of the IPNC, and “Women in Wine.”

The latest, “Latinos and Latinas in the Oregon Wine Industry,” explored the role of migrant workers in shaping the Oregon wine business. Sharon Bailey Glasco, associate professor of history; Linfield Archivist Rachael Woody; and Julian Adoff ’16 and Lydia Heins ’14, developed the exhibit that was displayed at the International Pinot Noir Festival at Linfield last July.

The group collected oral histories from a mix of men and women who have been involved in the wine industry, capturing the stories of how people migrated to Oregon, what propelled them to come, how they got involved in the vineyards, and the nature of the work. In some cases, the interviews included the second generation of individuals who have moved beyond the vineyards to take on other roles such as winemakers and vineyard managers.

The project has been useful in Glasco’s courses. Her classes on the history of Mexican migrants into the U.S. and an advanced course on U.S.-Mexico borderlands have benefited from the research by allowing Glasco to bring in local case studies to illustrate the material.

“As a historian, I think students need to realize that there is history all around them and local history can be really interesting,” Glasco said. “We teach classes about the big historical events and big historical people. I try to get them to look at their surroundings to see if there is something local that they would like to learn more about. The benefit of this project is really delving into local history and taking my students along with me.”

Glasco said this project represents the initial stages of emerging research on Latinos in the Oregon wine industry specifically, and more broadly on Mexican migrant labor in the Willamette Valley and Pacific Northwest.

Adoff and Heins’ work included videotaping interviews, transcribing tapes and editing them into short video segments for the exhibit.

As a result of the experience, Heins secured an internship with The Pacific Coast Immigration Museum, an online museum that has accepted an article she submitted about Latinos in the Oregon wine industry for publication. She plans to attend graduate school in museum studies.

Adoff has undergone a seminal change, switching his major to studio art beginning in the fall to pursue his interest in graphic design.
Reputation and marketing key to wine industry

What were two Linfield professors doing at February’s Oregon Wine Symposium, the annual summit for grape growers and winemakers? Why, presenting their research, of course.

Sharon Wagner, professor and chair of the business department, and Lisa Weidman, associate professor of mass communication, along with students, have spent several years studying the reputation of Oregon wines and how those wines are promoted and marketed. They spoke about their findings at a panel discussion at the symposium.

“The use of social media is exploding in the world of public relations and marketing,” Weidman said. “This is one way we can apply our expertise in the areas of public relations and reputation to help the Oregon wine industry.”

Oregon wineries benefit from this type of research because it provides objective validation of the reputation of Oregon wine with consumers and the wine trade, according to Charles Humble ’71, communication director for the Oregon Wine Board.

“As a small wine region, Oregon lives and dies on its reputation,” he said. “Being able to articulate exactly what wine professionals and consumers think about Oregon wine is critical to shaping and evangelizing that reputation.”

Humble said that Linfield has done a tremendous job supporting Oregon’s wine industry, beginning with the wine history archive. “This kind of project highlights Linfield’s understanding of the Oregon wine industry. We place tremendous value on the partnership with Linfield and look forward to many more years of mutual benefit.”

The professors and their students have given professional presentations on their research in each of the past three years. This summer, Wagner and Weidman have been invited to present their research, “Reputation Management on the Internet: Content and Impact of Oregon Wineries’ Websites and Facebook Pages,” at the Academy of Wine Business Research Conference in Germany. In May, they presented another paper stemming from their collaboration, “Communicating the Good Life: How Oregon Wineries Use Facebook to Connect with Consumers,” at the International Communication Association conference in Seattle.