



Linfield Magazine

Volume 7
Number 1 *Summer 2010*

Article 2

Summer 2010

The Power of a Small College

Linfield Magazine Staff

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine

Recommended Citation

Linfield Magazine Staff (2010) "The Power of a Small College," *Linfield Magazine*: Vol. 7 : No. 1 , Article 2.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol7/iss1/2

This article is brought to you for free via open access, courtesy of DigitalCommons@Linfield. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@linfield.edu.

The Power of a Small College.

Gandhi showed the world what a small body of determined spirits could accomplish together. At Linfield, we know something about determination and the power of a small community.

"We need to better articulate what makes us special."

"We are better than the public knows."

"I would love to see our academic reputation elevated without losing the power of this community and becoming elitist."

"People don't realize how much they can benefit from a small school."

In a recent research study, our students, alumni, parents, faculty and staff talked passionately about Linfield's close-knit environment where students from different backgrounds and disciplines are encouraged to grow and flourish. They spoke about working side-by-side – and even developing friendships – with professors. Many said that, at Linfield, their lives were transformed by opportunities to study abroad, find their true calling, and become the kinds of people who influence their local and global communities. "That's the power of a small college," they told us.

Those who know Linfield, love Linfield. But we need to spread the word. That's why, nearly 18 months ago, we launched a long-range project designed to help us tell the Linfield story with clear and compelling graphics and messages. We asked more than 1,200 of those who are closest to us to share their perceptions about Linfield and here's what we heard:

Pair these observations with the reality of a radically changing higher education sector – and Linfield's place within that sector as a small, private liberal arts college – and we see how, more than ever, it is imperative to shape a consistent and accurate public perception of Linfield's unique identity.

A Journey of Self Discovery

"I have three different letterheads I can use. In nine years we have had seven styles of business cards."



There are so many positive things to say about Linfield that we've been saying them all, in many ways. As a result, Linfield has lacked a clear, strong public identity.

FOLLOW THE STEPS TAKEN

Step one

was to understand how Linfield is perceived.

In 2009, working with the Discovery Collaborative, we conducted perception research that yielded informative findings.

SUMMARY: WHAT WAS HEARD

- Strong consensus about the need and desire for a defined, overarching and integrated identity.
- Clear and consistent internal understanding of Linfield's culture which develops students through a caring and nurturing community and personal connections with professors.
- Overall desire to raise the awareness and perception of Linfield's academic and professional programs equal to its level of athletic achievement and reputation.

SUMMARY: WHAT WAS HEARD

- Balance evaluating the perception of academics with not appearing elitist and losing what has attracted students to Linfield.
- No strong attachment to any existing visual identity with exception of the Linfield Wildcat mascot and purple and red colors. The tagline, "Connecting Learning, Life and Community," which many feel is accurate, lacks aspiration.
- General understanding of the changing and competitive terrain of higher education and the desire to not just survive, but thrive within it.
- Those who know Linfield, love Linfield.

It's the little things that make a big difference

A common chord ran throughout the research identifying five traits that define Linfield's spirit:

- Personal connections with professors
- Tight-knit, supportive community
- Challenging academics
- Excellent international studies and emphasis on study abroad
- Well-rounded experience with many opportunities to get involved

Athletics, development of the whole person, integration of the liberal arts with professional programs and real-world learning, class size, a beautiful campus and a connection to the McMinnville community completed the picture.



Step two

was to engage a talented firm that specializes in branding.

We selected Brand Navigation, located in Sisters. Bill Chiaravalle, the firm's CEO, helped us home in on the most engaging way to communicate what makes Linfield distinctive – by focusing on the way our educational experience is shaped by Linfield's size. *Every attribute that makes us great is made possible by the fact that Linfield is small.*

In the months ahead, you will see the influence of Brand Navigation's work in Linfield communications – from our website to the stories you hear in the media, to the magazine you hold in your hands.

Linfield: The Power of a Small College

Logos are funny things. We want ours to say so much, to communicate all there is to know and love about Linfield College. But Linfield College's identity is much more than a new logo and tagline. It is the entire embodiment of what you told us makes the college special. It is the collective public perception of Linfield's character. Truly, it is the power of a small college.

Our size is an advantage, not a weakness. Like the acorn, great potential lies within. It is a metaphor that reflects our history and the heritage of the Oak Grove, while pointing to the vibrant future ahead for the college.

The Power of a Small College was on display recently, as it is every spring, when more than 500 Linfield graduates met in the Oak Grove for commencement ceremonies. Acorns give birth to oak trees, and the dreams of a small college become powerful when realized. Linfield is a small college with a large vision.

What about you?

→ Step three 3

in this process involves

you. You can help enhance the public perception of Linfield College by contributing three things: your ideas, advocacy and action.

Ideas.

Share with us your feedback and experiences you've had with other institutions at alumni@linfield.edu.

Advocacy.

Help us tell our story. Wear your Linfield apparel with pride. Talk with your neighbors, co-workers and the parents of college-bound students. Connect with the enthusiasm of alumni, students, parents and fans at Linfield games, reunions and events.

Action.

All of us who care about strengthening Linfield are agents of social good. Education at a small, private liberal arts college costs more to deliver than we can possibly charge in tuition. And we believe it should be available to all qualified students, regardless of income. By making annual gifts, offering internships to students and employing Linfield graduates, you exercise your power to make Linfield a better, and a stronger, college.

Who knows better than you what a group of determined spirits can accomplish? Join us in telling the world about the power of a small college.



JUST WHO IS BRANDNAV?

brandnav

Brand Navigation is a strategic brand firm located in Sisters that helped Linfield develop a concise, cohesive message that builds on the college's strengths. Bill Chiaravalle, principal and creative director, founded the firm in 1999 and has spent more than two decades focusing on and specializing in brand strategy, design and marketing for a range of global, regional and national companies in a variety of industries, including the Annenberg Foundation, FedEx, Microsoft and Sunkist.