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More Than Bricks and Mortar

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Vivian Bull's legacy

More than bricks and mortar

With her office and residence at the heart of Linfield, Vivian Bull can be seen walking on campus almost any hour of the day or night. Next July, after her trademark size nine sneakers no longer tread the campus, Bull will have left an enormous footprint at Linfield.

By Mardi Mileham

When Vivian Bull interviewed for the job as Linfield College's 18th president, she asked the trustees whether any new buildings were planned.

To her relief, the answer was a resounding "no," since the college had just finished a capital campaign that included a new athletic complex and a major renovation of Riley Hall.

Now, 12 years later, Linfield has undergone a dramatic transformation, more than doubling the size of the McMinnville Campus, adding some 14 new buildings and raising a record \$74 million in a capital campaign.

Not bad for a president who wasn't interested in bricks and mortar.

When her 13-year tenure as president ends next June, Bull will have led the college during a period of unprecedented change. The college's visibility and stature have grown along with the campus. There has been a steady rise in the quality of students. Applications for admission are at an all-time high and graduation rates have soared. Study-abroad sites have increased from four to 10. A collaborative research endowment strengthens students' education and supports faculty members' scholarly interests.



Bull still recounts her first day as president to first-year students. The furniture had just arrived and was sitting randomly around her new residence. She couldn't get the door locked at the president's house. And as she

started walking across the Oak Grove to Melrose Hall, she realized she had no idea what a president did on the first day at work.

"It didn't matter because everybody was ready for me," she said. "People wanted to help — that's the Linfield tradition. They wanted to make sure that answers were available to any questions I had. They allowed me to say 'I don't know.'" She laughs when she recalls her first decision as president — whether the fountain located between Riley and Walker Halls should, indeed, be a fountain or be turned into a large flower pot. She chose the fountain.

One of her first initiatives at Linfield was dealing with technology — or the lack of it.

Within her first year a new direct-dial phone system was installed, providing voice mail and access to all offices 24 hours a day and replacing an antiquated system that routed all calls through a switchboard. That started a technological revolution on the campus, with the installation of fiber-optic cable that created a network linking all offices, residence halls, the Portland Campus and Division of Continuing Education branch sites. Today, technology at Linfield, which also includes web-based library resources, video conferencing and Internet access, including wireless networking, is among the most comprehensive in higher education in the region.

But technology was just the first of a series of extraordinary changes at Linfield.

Upon arriving, Bull intended to focus on academic

and program concerns, while also laying the groundwork for another capital campaign. One of her first tasks was to meet with each academic department, to get an understanding of needs and concerns of the faculty. In addition, a planning group discussed and set priorities for future needs of the institution – a new library as well as theatre and music facilities were high on the list, but space on campus, as well as resources, presented some challenges.

Bull knew that changes were inevitable. While many schools were retrenching and struggling to attract students, Linfield was in the enviable position of meeting enrollment goals. But in order to recruit top students, the academic program required a systematic update and overhaul.

“Linfield had the potential and the people to do it,” Bull said. “But we needed to realize that we could be better than we were. We needed to understand we could expect more from ourselves and our students. And we needed to learn we could expect more of the institution because people here have a willingness to work with and for the students.”

That meant changing to an interactive learning environment, where learning takes place 24 hours a day and not just in the classroom. It meant asking more of students outside the classroom. It meant stimulating the learning environment so that conversations in the coffee shop weren’t just about social activities, but also about what had happened in the classroom and laboratory.

In 1997, after two years of work by a special com-



Vivian Bull made her Linfield acting debut in November 1992, playing “the little lady” in “The Madwoman of Chaillot.” Featured in the production were, from left, Ryan James ‘97, Joel DeYoung ‘95 and Charles Johnson ‘95.

mittee, the faculty adopted the Linfield Curriculum, with inquiry learning at its core. This development engaged the intellectual energies of many faculty members who found new ways of working together in the process. They designed Inquiry Seminars to introduce first-year students to the new mode of learning, incorporating novel ways of seeing their own disciplines and

Washing windows, weeding, counseling – a normal day at home



Working in the flower beds

Vivian Bull has moved easily through campus life. It’s not unusual to find her cleaning the house or washing windows, working in the flower beds, picking up litter or helping clean up the grounds after a particularly bad storm. People are sometimes startled when they realize she’s the president.

The grounds crew has been especially patient with her passion for working with plants.

“They have let me play in the garden here and rescued me periodically when I got into mischief,” she said, laughing. “But they also put up with my whims and interests, letting me offer suggestions and work with landscaping.”

The president’s house has been her home, with her personality displayed, but it’s also part of Linfield and open to all. Students are known to drop by to borrow an egg, share cookies, tour the house, or just to talk when they are feeling stressed. At one time, her front porch served as Hole No. 7 during games of Frisbee golf.

“I had to remember to look before I went out so there wasn’t a Frisbee zooming in the door,” she said with a laugh.

their relationships with other disciplines. Faculty on the Portland Campus transformed the nursing curriculum to a community-based model. The Transcultural Nursing Program has given the Linfield-Good Samaritan School of Nursing an international and multicultural outlook.

And in the midst of everything else, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity presented itself.

Bull still talks about the day she got the call informing her that Hewlett-Packard was closing its McMinnville facilities. She vividly remembers walking out to the fence that separated Linfield from HP to consider the possibilities. She saw it as an opportunity that would set the stage for Linfield's next 100 years, an opportunity that would dramatically change the course of campus planning and "The Defining Moment" fund raising campaign.

The negotiations and planning for the Hewlett-Packard property took some of Bull's time and energy away from the academic issues.

"But to miss that opportunity would have been tragic," she said. "I think I was able to bring a vision to that project because of my experience elsewhere. My background in finance made it easier for me to facilitate the process and articulate that we needed not just to acquire the property, but to also find ways to generate revenue from it."

Bull's legacy to Linfield is far more than the college's growth, although that may be what she is most remembered for, said Peter Richardson, professor of German.

"She has a genuine interest in so many different sides of the institution, areas that would be easy for a CEO to



Vivian Bull has taken an active role at Linfield, immersing herself in college life, particularly athletics. She accepted the challenge to serve as "coach of the day" for the swim team and took her role seriously, checking stats for a team member. She is a regular at athletic events, cheering on the Wildcats.



William H. Gray III, former congressman and retired chief executive officer of the United Negro College Fund, visited Linfield twice at the invitation of Vivian Bull, a close personal friend. He was one of many dignitaries and internationally known individuals Bull hosted, including Nobel Laureates Oscar Arias and Mairead Corrigan Maguire; authors such as Cornel West and Linfield alumna Amy Tan; journalists Nick Kristof, Sheryl WuDunn and Terrence Smith; former hostage Terry Waite; and former law professor Anita Hill.

overlook or disregard," he said. "She has been everywhere from the stadium to the theatre, commenting and encouraging, listening hard to our ambitious plans and doing her best to accommodate where finances would allow.

"She has tended her vineyard with great skill and knows an astonishing amount about the details of both curricular planning and construction progress," he added.

Barbara Seidman, professor of English and former associate dean of faculty, said the growth of the faculty and its intellectual breadth are among the most important contributions Bull has made at Linfield.

"Vivian's vision of Linfield's liberal arts potential and the dynamic role of ideas in an exciting curriculum presented by an engaged, accessible faculty will be her lasting legacy," Seidman said. "I think she believes in her bones that education is a way of life."



Bull is known for her seemingly boundless energy and interest in everything that happens on campus. Unless she's out of town on college business, she attends virtually every event, from faculty and guest lectures to athletic contests and concerts.

She has also had opportunities to return to the classroom, teaching an occasional economics course, serving as



Vivian Bull greets a group of fifth graders during the "I'm Going to College" day at Linfield. The program is designed to encourage children to plan for a college education, and "enrolls" them in college for the day.

a guest lecturer in classes or sharing her life experiences with students in gender studies and communication classes.

"The joy of this job is in seeing what the community is doing," she said. "That helps me tell Linfield's story. I learned very early on the importance of storytelling. As an economist, I learned to work with data. People don't remember data, but they do understand what is happening at Linfield through the stories of the people who are here."

She takes the time to listen to everyone on campus - students, faculty, administrators, clerical staff, grounds crew and custodians.

"I've always believed that everyone has something to share with me, regardless of who they are and what they do," she said. "I've worked in the corporate world and the church world and lived around the world. I've always felt I could talk with anyone on a one-to-one basis."

That carried over into the McMinnville community, where Bull is engaged and visible. She has served on boards and committees, regularly attended community events and made herself available as a speaker, participant and interested citizen.

"She is an integral part of the community," said Toni Chodrick, corporate secretary at Oregon Mutual Insurance and a long-time member of the Partners-in-Progress steering committee, which organizes a community fund raising campaign for Linfield each year. "She immerses herself in what is going on and makes herself available to all kinds of organizations, which is what makes our community strong."

Tom Tankersley, local attorney and chair of the McMinnville Water and Light Commission, said her work on the commission is extremely helpful.

"She brought intelligence and wit, and also different skills," he said. "Her experience as an economist, along with her experience on bank and corporate boards, is very helpful. She has enriched the community, is a delight to work with and is very insightful."

Patti Webb, executive director of McMinnville Downtown Association, was stunned when Bull responded to a call for volunteers to serve on the association's board, a position Bull held for six years. "I think the number one thing is her accessibility," Webb said. "I would think that some presidents remain a little aloof and she is never that way. You can call her and if she is in she'll see you or talk to you."



While the successes are numerous, they haven't always come easily. Yet, Bull didn't shy away from tackling difficult issues, including sexual harassment, sexual



In 1995, Vivian Bull was interviewed for a video broadcast when the Urban League of Portland presented her an Equal Opportunity Award for her leadership in supporting the cause of equal opportunity. Bull was honored for her creative efforts to increase diversity among the students, staff, lecturers and programs at Linfield.

assault and Title IX.

“I’ve seen the personal side and public face of Vivian,” said Bill Apel, professor of religion and former college chaplain. “I’ve found her to be compassionate and courageous. She’s courageous in the sense that she has never backed away from difficult issues. She has always tried to act in a straightforward fashion with a sense of honesty and fairness.”

Bull was a catalyst behind the growth of women’s athletics at Linfield, said Dawn Graff-Haight, professor of health and chair of the Department of Health, Human Performance and Athletics.

“She helped many young women realize that college was a possibility they might not otherwise have considered,” Graff-Haight said. Her support included Linfield’s sponsorship of the National Girls and Women in Sports Day, which brings more than 100 girls to campus to explore the variety of athletic and college activities available to them.

Bull helped to link learning with living and community more clearly, Graff-Haight said.

“The ties between the college and the community have continued to be symbiotic,” Graff-Haight added. “New, young faculty, along with long-time professors,



Former New York Yankee Scott Brosius '02, right, began working on his degree in 1984, but took time out for a pro baseball career. After retiring, he completed his course work and received his diploma from Vivian Bull in 2002. Dave Hansen, vice president of student services and dean of students, assists Registrar Eileen Bourassa in handing out diplomas.

bring meaningful learning experiences to their students while making an impact on local schools and community agencies.”



Bull’s leadership has taken Linfield to the next level. “I see her deep personal interest in people, com-

The next chapter: family, travel, church and education



The Bull family, from left: son Camper, Vivian, Robert, daughter-in-law Alexandra, son Carlson and grandson Eddie. Since this photo was taken, a granddaughter, Annalise, has also joined the family.

Vivian Bull may be retiring, but that doesn’t mean she will spend much time relaxing.

Her family has grown and changed during her years at Linfield. In 1992, son Camper had just graduated from college and son Carlson was in his final year. Now she has a daughter-in-law and two grandchildren, Robert Edward and Annalise, the first girl born in the Bull family in many generations. She plans to get better acquainted with both of them.

She’ll return to New Jersey next summer – probably on one of her typical red-eye flights. She and her husband Robert, well-known at Linfield and in McMinnville and an internationally acclaimed archaeologist, plan to spend a year in Jerusalem, reflecting on their experiences with friends and visiting sites that have been a part of their lives for more than 45 years. Robert served as director of the Drew Institute for Archaeological Research and headed the Joint Archaeological Expedition to Caesarea Maritima in ancient Palestine. Vivian worked alongside him as administrative director and registrar. They will work together preparing the archaeological work for publication.

Bull will continue her work with Africa University in Zimbabwe, helping it prepare for an accreditation review, and will serve as a consultant for the Board of Higher Education of the United Methodist Church.

From her native northern Michigan to Europe, Africa and the Middle East, Bull has spent much of her life traveling and working around the world. As she begins yet another chapter and another journey, she has promised to keep Linfield and McMinnville in her thoughts and on her itinerary, knowing this place has become part of her heart and soul.

bined with her extraordinary skills as an educator, administrator and scholar as her outstanding contribution,” said Rod Romney ‘54, chair of the academic affairs committee of the Board of Trustees and a member of the presidential search committee. “I think she cares very deeply for Linfield and wants to see it grow and expand and be better for the generations to come.”

Retired Sen. Mark Hatfield, a close personal friend, said her influence extends far beyond Linfield.

“She retires at a time when everyone has said, there is a powerful lady,” Hatfield said. “You were never overpowered by her power, but you were overpowered by her humility, knowledge, intellect, her accomplishments, her vision for Linfield and education in general. She is an extraordinary lady of talent and skills, but also authentic, straightforward and honest. I consider her a great friend.”

Apel agrees that Bull’s influence has extended far beyond Linfield and the Northwest. She is well-known nationally through the many boards and commissions on which she has served. She is also known internationally.

“I accompanied her to the dedication of Africa University and it was clear that she was a leader in the creation of that school,” Apel said. “She has made her mark as far away as Africa and provided leadership not just at Linfield, but elsewhere, yet always keeping Linfield first.”

Bull said that Linfield knows it is a college that is better than it was.

“Linfield has risen in excellence across the board



Vivian Bull can add heavy equipment operator to her resumé. She’s driven backhoes and trackhoes, breaking ground, breaking walls and tearing down fences. Here, she breaks ground for the Ad and Joan Rutschman Field House.

from curriculum, research, students and faculty to facilities and grounds,” she said. “The college has blossomed. It’s not just the forensics program, or the music program, the collaborative research, the sciences or athletics. It’s all those things together and the total quality of the learning experience.”

One example she often cites is that Linfield students are now being accepted in increasing numbers to nationally prominent graduate schools, which is a direct outgrowth of expanded research opportunities across the curriculum.

“Everything that has happened, all of these successes, are the result of the dedication and commitment of Linfield faculty, staff and students, along with alumni, parents and friends,” Bull said. “This has happened because of the energy, creativity and dedication of the many people who have strengthened Linfield as an institution.”



It’s the people Bull will miss most. For they are what make Linfield special.

“Faculty and staff don’t come here for the salaries,” she said with a small smile. “They come because they sense there is something special here, a sense of community. Everyone talks about the great care we take of our campus. I tell parents that the same care is given to the individuals in our community as well. It’s difficult some days, but Linfield works because people care.”



Vivian Bull chats with Mark and Christina (Waddell) Lund, both ‘93, during the 2003 Homecoming barbecue. One of Bull’s favorite tasks as president has been traveling across the country, meeting with alumni and listening to stories about their Linfield experiences.