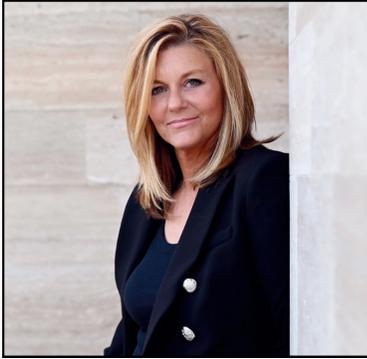




# The Center for Wine Education

Linfield University

*Newsletter*



## A note from the director

Dear Friends,

As the promise of Spring approaches and with it, the bright burst of cherry blossoms and breaks of sunshine, we're reminded of the natural beauty that surrounds our charming campus. How fortunate to be located just minutes from one of the world's most renowned wine growing regions and the ability to experience the changes of the vineyards while attending classes. This is at the heart of our educational program, the rare access to the winemakers and the winery operations at our very doorstep. Our students are privileged to have this opportunity as evidenced in recent final projects where they imagined and presented on their very own wines, vineyard, winery and wine brand - without any budgetary restrictions. How great is that!?

We invite you to our many upcoming events to share our passion for wine and all that it offers.

Cheers!

Maria  
Anna Maria Ponzi  
Director of The Center for Wine Education |  
Endowed Chair of Wine Studies

## Reimagine the winery experience: from golf-integrated estates to family- friendly vineyards

Inspired by winery visits, hands-on learning, and an understanding of the financial realities of the wine industry, students in Introduction to Viticulture and Introduction to Winemaking put their creativity on full display in a final showcase and flash talks.

Sixteen viticulture students and nine winemaking students presented original vineyard and winery concepts designed entirely from the ground up. Each project balanced place, grape selection, product vision, winery design, and costs. Concepts ranged from a winery integrated with a golf course and fine dining to family-friendly vineyard spaces that blend fun in the vineyard with artistic design.

The showcase brought together fresh ideas, thoughtful planning, and a strong grasp of financial realities, with the added fun of an unlimited imaginary budget.



## Save the date

**February 21** — OR Chardonnay Celebration: TCWE Sensory Activity Booth

**March 19, 4-6 PM** — 'Built to Last' How Brands Thrive Through Generations - Marka and Thomas Hughes Wine Lecture Series

**March 24, 9-5PM**— The Second Annual Wine Business Executive Workshop

**April 15, 2-3PM**— Wildcat Wine Chat: Lisa Schroeder, Author, Chef and Owner of Mother's Bistro & Bar

**April 20** — Organically Grown Wine Conference

**April 29**— A Taste of Oregon Wine History with women wine trailblazers: Pat Campbell, Elk Cove; Luisa Ponzi, Luisa Wines; Anna Matzinger, Matzinger Davies Wines

**Register for events:**



**CHOOSE WINE.**

## **Student Spotlight: Sam Ruder, Economics and Wine Studies double major**



We recently caught up with Double Major Sam Ruder to ask about standout moments from his viticulture coursework and midterm. His favorite part of the midterm project was getting out into the field and visiting vineyards at three different scales, from a large commercial operation to Linfield's own vineyard. Sam said seeing these sites firsthand helped him better understand the scope of the industry and the variety of approaches used in grape growing.

What surprised him most was how much the vineyards had in common. Sam noted that even in larger operations, the human element of viticulture was unmistakable at every site. The experience allowed students to connect classroom concepts to real vineyard practices, including trellising systems and identifying signs of disease.

When asked to sum up the wine studies coursework in one word, Sam chose "explorative." He also shared that studying wine at Linfield feels unique because of direct access to one of Oregon's most influential wine regions, providing hands-on learning opportunities that simply aren't possible at larger institutions.

## **Alumni Wine Circle: Holiday Soirée at Domaine Serene**



The Alumni Wine Circle gathered for a festive holiday soirée at Domaine Serene, bringing together Wine Studies alumni and Linfield staff and faculty. Thank you to everyone who joined us and to Domaine Serene for graciously hosting an evening of connection, conversation, and great wine. Interested in joining the Wine Circle and receiving invitations to future events? Email [wine@linfield.edu](mailto:wine@linfield.edu) with "Wine Circle" in the subject line.



## **A One-Day Intensive for Wine Industry Professionals Navigating Today's Business Challenges.**

We are excited to announce the return of the Wine Business Executive Workshop, a one-day professional development intensive created for wine industry professionals. Now in its second year, the workshop will take place Tuesday, March 24, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the Linfield University campus.

Launched in 2025 to address the growing economic, operational, and market pressures facing wine businesses, the workshop quickly established itself as a valued resource for small and mid-sized producers. Following the inaugural program, 90% of participants rated the workshop content and speakers as "excellent," citing its practical focus, thoughtful format, and meaningful opportunities for connection.

Designed for immediate, real-world application, the Wine Business Executive Workshop focuses on wine sales and marketing, financial planning, and business operations. The program emphasizes discussion, networking, and shared problem-solving, creating space for candid conversations and peer learning that are often difficult to find at larger conferences.

This year's featured speakers include Amanda Wittstrom Higgins, owner of Full Cup Solutions; Rebecca Oliver, general manager of Domaine St. Laurent; Joseph Orlando, ASA, vice president of valuation services at Exit Strategies Group, Inc.; and Bill Sweat, former proprietor and winegrower at Winderlea Vineyard and Winery.

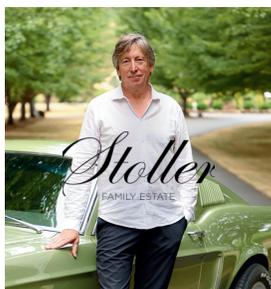
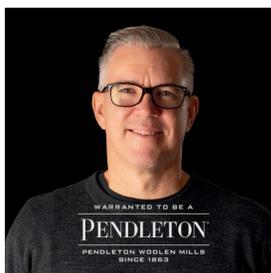
Participants from last year's workshop highlighted the value of in-depth discussions with seasoned professionals, as well as the actionable tools, candid industry insight, and peer connections gained throughout the day.

The program includes a light breakfast, lunch, and wine reception, along with expert-led sessions designed to support informed decision-making and long-term success in today's evolving wine industry.

**[Register Here:](#)**



**Built to Last:  
How Businesses Thrive Through Generations  
March 19<sup>th</sup> 4-6PM**



What does it take for a business to endure? Linfield University's Center for Wine Education presents Built to Last: How Businesses Thrive Through Generations, a conversation with iconic company representatives to examine how they remain relevant and resilient amid shifting markets and evolving consumer expectations.

Featured panelists include Kela Driggs, brand leader at fifth-generation Wente Vineyards, Scott Dylag, vice president and managing director of direct-to-consumer sales at Pendleton Woolen Mills established in 1909, Gary Mortensen, CEO of Stoller Wine Group which follows a 200-year plan and Mia Ponzi Hamacher of Sosta House and Winery Lane Collective, bringing a third-generation perspective to regional wine and hospitality.

Moderated by Wine Director Maria Ponzi, the discussion will explore the real challenges legacy businesses face, how leaders evolve without losing identity and what it takes to build organizations designed not just to last, but to thrive across generations.

The event is presented by the Marka & Thomas Hughes Wine Lecture Series. It is open to the public and includes a wine reception. Ticket proceeds support Linfield University wine studies students.

Public admission is \$10, and the event is free for Linfield students, faculty and staff.

Registration is required at: <https://www.linfield.edu/wine/news/events.html>  
For more information, email [wine@linfield.edu](mailto:wine@linfield.edu).

**Register for  
events here:**



**2027 JanTerm Abroad Course:  
Terroir and Sustainability of Pinot Noir  
—Register by February 20th**



Professor Toni Ketrenos will lead an immersive travel abroad course, Terroir and Sustainability of Pinot Noir, offering students the opportunity to study wine in both Oregon and France.

The course explores the cultural and economic value of geographically structured food systems through the lens of the wine industry in the Willamette Valley, Burgundy, and the Loire Valley.

Students will begin with one week of study on the Linfield campus, followed by nearly three weeks in France visiting vineyards, wineries, and other terroir-driven food producers.

Applications are due February 20th, 2026. After applications are submitted, Professor Ketrenos will meet individually with students and select up to 12 participants for the course.

**A Taste of Oregon Wine History  
April 29<sup>th</sup>, 4-6PM  
Marka & Thomas Hughes Lecture Series**



Immerse yourself in the early days of Oregon wine with storytelling by local women wine trailblazers:

- Pat Campbell of Elk Cove Vineyards
- Luisa Ponzi of Luisa Wines
- Anna Matzinger of Matzinger Davies Wine Company

Moderated by Rich Schmidt of the Oregon Wine Archives & Wine Director Maria Ponzi. A tasting of older vintages is included for this limited capacity event.

Public admission is \$10 and free for Linfield students, faculty and staff.

## Maria Ponzi Honored with Board Service Award at 2026 Oregon Wine Industry Awards



Congratulations to our director, Maria Ponzi, on receiving the Board Service Award from the Oregon Wine Board as part of the 2026 Oregon Wine Industry Awards. In announcing the honor, the Oregon Wine Board recognized Maria for “guiding the organization through a pivotal time, her incredibly thoughtful perspective, steady leadership, and deep commitment to the advancement of Oregon wine.”

Maria was honored alongside fellow Board Service Award recipient Gary Mortensen, as well as an outstanding group of industry leaders recognized this year: Jeanne Feldkamp received the Outstanding Industry Leadership Award, Bill Fuller was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award, Dai Crisp received the Founders Award, Mario Fandino was recognized with the Vineyard Excellence Award, Carole Skeeters-Stevens received the Industry Partner Award, and Shannon Maylor was honored with the Sustainability Champion Award. Together, the 2026 award recipients reflect the leadership, innovation, and dedication shaping the future of Oregon wine.

## The Center for Wine Education Programs

- + Bachelor’s Degree or Minor in Wine Studies
- + MS in Business: Wine Business Leadership
- + Graduate Certificate: Wine Business Leadership
- + Study Abroad 5 Year Dual-Degree: Bachelor’s & Master’s
- + Wine & Spirit Education Trust Courses (WSET)
- + Wine Education Workshops
- + Lectures and Events

**[Find out more about us here:](#)**



## Upcoming Wildcat Wine Chats

Join us at Linfield for a Wildcat Wine Chat, where the Center for Wine Education celebrates the region’s wine community through fireside conversations led by Wine Director Maria Ponzi. These events feature special guests who share their personal journeys in wine with the public and our campus community.

### Exploring Wine Through Travel & Writing

#### Wildcat Wine Chat

With guest:

#### Kristy Wenz

Wine Writer, Judge and Educator

Wednesday, 2/11  
2-3 PM

Linfield University, Riley Campus Center

Join Wine Director Maria Ponzi for a fireside conversation as Wenz shares her experiences exploring global wine regions and how a career was built through curiosity, travel and writing.

Light bites, wine, and non-alcoholic beverages served.

Open to the public & under 21 welcome.



REGISTER HERE:



### The Business of Hospitality

#### Wildcat Wine Chat

#### Lisa Schroeder

Author, Chef & Owner of Mother’s Bistro & Bar

Wednesday, 4/15  
2-3 PM

Linfield University  
Riley Campus Center

Join Wine Director Maria Ponzi in a fireside conversation as Schroeder shares her culinary journey building one of Oregon’s most beloved restaurants, and her insights on hospitality, and entrepreneurship.

Light bites, wine, and non-alcoholic beverages served.

Open to the public & under 21 welcome.



REGISTER HERE:



## Oregon Wine History Archive Earns Grant and Podcast Honor

The Oregon Wine History Archive has been awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Oregon Wine Board to support a research trip to southern Oregon, where the Archive will continue documenting the people and stories that have shaped the region’s wine industry.

This visit builds on a similar trip made in 2013, also funded in part by the Oregon Wine Board, which allowed the Archive to begin relationships with many of southern Oregon’s founding wine families. This year’s trip will focus on reconnecting with established wineries, meeting second-generation family members now carrying those legacies forward, and preserving new stories from across the region. Over the course of a week spent between Medford and Roseburg, the Archive aims to record approximately 15 new oral history interviews.

In additional news, the Oregon Wine History Archive Podcast was named a Top 100 Wine Podcast in 2025 by the Italian Wine Podcast. The recognition highlights the Archive’s growing reach and impact beyond Oregon. In the past year alone, the Archive recorded 105 interviews, preserving 8,479 minutes of Oregon wine history..

Together, this grant support and international recognition affirm the Archive’s core mission: capturing and sharing the personal stories of individuals across Oregon’s wine industry, ensuring they are preserved for future generations.



## WSET at Linfield: Now embedded the wine studies curriculum



This year marks an important milestone with WSET Level 2 now fully integrated into the Wine Studies major, giving students the opportunity to earn an internationally recognized credential as part of their degree program.

In addition, Linfield has expanded WSET courses to Hood River, partnered with Chemeketa Community College to offer courses at its Eola campus, and extended its reach with new satellite classes in Walla Walla.

Through WSET, we’re proud to support wine enthusiasts and professionals at every stage of their journey—from introducing novices to tasting skills that enhance their travels and dining experiences, to helping restaurant owners, hospitality teams, and winery staff deepen their knowledge and confidence. Whether pursuing wine for personal enrichment or professional advancement, TCWE is here to support the next step.

### WSET Course Schedule:

Level 1			
Format	Location	Date	Reg Deadline
1 Day In Person	Linfield	Feb 21st	Feb 20
1 Day In Person	Chemeketa - Eola	Mar 14th	Feb 25th
1 Day In Person	Hood River	Apr 11th	Mar 25th
1 Day In Person	Walla Walla	Apr 14th	Mar 29th
Online	4 wk courses – begin first week of each month		
Level 2			
Format	Location	Date	Reg Deadline
3 Day In Person	Hood River	Feb 20th-23rd	Feb 4th
3 Day In Person	Chemeketa - Eola	Feb 27th-29th	Feb 10th
3 Day In Person	Walla Walla	Mar 29th-31st	Mar 13th
Weekly In Person	Linfield	Mar 10th-May 5th	Feb 25th
Online	5 wk courses - begin first week of each month		

### WSET Club Program

The Center for Wine Education has launched the WSET Club Program, offering wineries a new way to elevate their wine club experience by providing members with exclusive discounts on Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) courses. Courses are available both online and in person at Linfield’s McMinnville campus, Chemeketa’s Salem campus, in Hood River, and at the Walla Walla Valley Wine Academy. Wineries interested in participating in the program are encouraged to contact WSET Program Manager Trevor Hertrich at [thertrich@linfield.edu](mailto:thertrich@linfield.edu)



**WSET@LINFIELD.EDU**