



LegalWriting
institute

Letter from the President

May 15, 2025

Dear Friends,

It has been my honor and privilege to serve as President of the Legal Writing Institute (LWI) since July 2024. I approached the presidency with the same cautious optimism that inspired the theme of the 2024 LWI Biennial Conference—my sincere belief that for LWI and its members, the best is yet to come.

At the July 2024 LWI Board Retreat, I articulated my presidential vision for LWI, which included three overarching goals: legacy-making, wellbeing, and innovation. As the 2024-2025 school year draws to a close, I am delighted to share a highlight reel of some of the incredible accomplishments of LWI this past year that are bringing this vision to life. But first, I want to thank each person who has volunteered their time and talent to serve LWI. Without you, none of this great work would have been possible.

I. Goal One: Forging our Legacy

LWI continues to advocate for improvements in professional status for legal writing professionals. Led by Bob Brain, Mary Bowman, and Sue Liemer, our Professional Status Committees crafted a powerful [response](#) to the ABA's proposed revisions to Standard 405, which largely supported the ABA's proposal but also suggested some thoughtful and important revisions. In response to member feedback, which indicated that the most pressing *immediate* concern for most members is pay equity, our Professional Status Committees are also updating our pay equity toolkit. We have also revised our Job Disclosure Form to include an expanded range of salary options more consistent with the equitable salaries our members deserve.

Guided by Nantiya Ruan and Ruth Anne Robbins, our wonderful Discipline-Building Working Group has facilitated rich discussions aimed at raising awareness of our discipline and scholarship. Our Joint ALWD/LWI Scholarship Grants Committee not only reviewed and updated our grant eligibility criteria, but also awarded a generous grant for a provocative article addressing qualified immunity and non-precedential opinions. Our [publications](#)—*Legal Writing: The Journal of the Legal Writing Institute*, *The Second Draft*, and the *LWI Monograph Series*—featured rich articles from diverse perspectives.

To further promote scholarship in our discipline, LWI also resurrected the **Research & Scholarship Working Group** in July 2024. The group's special charges include hosting a scholarship speed mentoring event and creating resources regarding effective research techniques. This energetic, dedicated group led by Brian Larson and Elizabeth Berenguer also recently co-sponsored a wonderful One-Day Workshop with the University of Florida Levin College of Law that heavily featured presentations on conducting empirical research.

To raise awareness of our discipline and scholarship among the bench and bar, we hosted a Bench and Bar Day during the 2024 Biennial, which encouraged professors and practitioners to meaningfully engage with one another. Our Bench & Bar Committee led by Sylvia Lett and Kate Brem also plans to create a **Bench & Bar Committee Advisory Board**. Under the leadership of Laura Graham and (now Judge) Anna White Howard, our newly created Judicial Clerkship Committee collaborated with Wake Forest University School of Law and Wake Forest's Program for Leadership and Character to co-host the first **Clerkship College** on November 14-15, 2024. This two-day virtual event featured a diverse array of excellent speakers. 234 people registered for the event, representing 77 law schools nationwide. Programming addressed everything from resilience, civility, and flourishing to opinion-drafting, effective editing, and using social media responsibly. Planning for the 2025 Clerkship College is already underway.

To improve the transfer of institutional knowledge, Board subcommittees are reviewing and updating our bylaws and LEAP selection process, creating a **Committee Handbook** for incoming committee chairs and members, ensuring that outgoing chairs provide helpful transition memos, and liaising with committees, conference planners, and publications.

To promote transparency, accountability, and effective communication, we also established a regular quarterly schedule for committee reports and a formal process for committees to request funding. I also hosted a virtual **Committee Retreat** in August 2024 that brought together all committee and working group chairs to exchange ideas, provide constructive feedback, ask questions, and brainstorm creative ways to accomplish their charges, alone or collaboratively.

To encourage data collection and promote data-driven decision-making, I created and administered the **Presidential Survey** this spring, which enjoyed a robust response from community members and provided very helpful data that will inform the Board's future decision-making. Among other things, we were happy to learn that 63% of respondents believe that LWI is doing a "very good" job in advancing the discipline of legal writing with another 37% describing our performance as "good." The survey also revealed that LWI has "meaningfully impacted" respondents' careers in countless ways, especially with regard to professional status, teaching, and mentorship. We also learned that for most respondents, teaching support, particularly in the form of conferences and workshops, is the most important resource we provide.

During the late fall of 2024, I also had the honor of hosting LWI's first **Presidential Summit**. Past presidents came together to share their collective wisdom with LWI's current leaders. To commemorate the fortieth anniversary of LWI's Biennial, we also launched the **Institutional Memory Project**, which I am facilitating along with LWI's first official Board Historian, Robert Parrish. As part of this long-term

project, we will record conversations with beloved LWI founders and icons to preserve their stories for future generations and eventually create an interactive timeline.

II. Goal Two: Wellbeing

To promote member wellbeing, we established LWI's new **Wellbeing Committee** chaired by Shailini George and Heidi Brown, the Wellbeing Chairs for the 2024 Biennial. In addition, LWI's New Member Outreach Committee, chaired by Rebecca Rich and Candace Centeno, has hosted eight virtual **New Member Roundtables** on various topics, co-hosted networking events at conferences and workshops, matched many new members with seasoned mentors, and is currently developing a **New Member tab** on the LWI website with terrific resources.

Under the leadership of Suzanna Geiser and Tienielle Fordyce-Ruff, our **One-Day Workshop Committee** led a fantastic array of [workshops](#) this winter and spring on everything from cultural competency and empirical research to process-oriented teaching, professional identity formation, and the future of legal education. We thank our gracious host schools, the organizers, presenters, and attendees for these enriching events. Be on the lookout this summer for an invitation to host a One-Day Workshop in December 2025.

Furthermore, upon the unanimous recommendation of the Awards Committee, the LWI Board also voted to rename our **Influential Teaching Award** in honor of beloved LWI founder and icon, Laurel Currie Oates. We also had the unique opportunity to honor our **2024 Blackwell Award winner Kathy Vinson** during the 2025 AALS Conference in San Francisco as well as countless other award winners during our 21st Biennial, including Golden Pen Recipient and treasured colleague, Joe Kimble.

With regard to institutional wellbeing, I'm thrilled to report that **LWI's 21st Biennial**, which took place July 17-20, 2024, at IU-McKinney School of Law, was a huge success. Over 400 attendees came together from law schools around the world. Highlights included our Opening Reception at the NCAA Hall of Champions, our unforgettable Gala at the Indiana State Museum, our unique wellbeing offerings, our Bench & Bar Day, our new discussion groups, and our enriching array of presentations. In no small part thanks to the creativity and ingenuity of Sponsorship Chair Heidi Brown and the tremendous generosity of our sponsors, we raised a record-breaking \$127,180 in sponsorships.

The Biennial is LWI's primary source of income to cover our operating expenses and programming for the entire two-year biennial period. After carefully navigating the period of financial hardship and uncertainty caused by the unforeseeable cancellation of the 2020 LWI Biennial due to Covid, the success of the 2022 and 2024 Biennial Conferences helped restore LWI's depleted reserves and return us to sound financial footing. However, operating expenses continue to rise due to circumstances beyond our control, and the devastating impact of the pandemic has inspired us to proceed with a renewed commitment to responsible stewardship so that we can successfully weather any unexpected challenges that may arise in the future.

With this in mind, we created a **Fiscal Health Advisory Group** comprised of former LWI Treasurers to review our past budgets and expenditures to make recommendations regarding how to wisely manage our funds. We also encouraged conference planners to designate a Budget Chair and attain budget

approval from LWI's Treasurer Carolyn Williams. We also created an **Alternative Revenue Generation Working Group** to explore creative ideas for revenue streams that will reduce our near-exclusive dependence on the Biennial for income. In addition, we have created a [Giving Link](#) on the LWI website where anyone can make a tax-deductible donation. Since its creation, LWI has received the two largest donations from private individuals in our history, totaling \$13,000 in addition to a pledge of a second \$10,000 gift in five years. We are incredibly grateful to these two beneficent donors for their unparalleled generosity.

Under the capable oversight of President-Elect Brad Desnoyer, planning for the LWI's 22nd Biennial Conference is moving full steam ahead. The **2026 Biennial** will be held on July 15-18, 2026, at the University of Minnesota School of Law, in Minneapolis. Its theme—*LWI Assemble*—promotes a spirit of unity and reminds us that there is nothing we cannot face together. The Gala will take place at the Science Museum of Minnesota. A call for proposals will come out early this summer. If you're interested in hosting the Biennial in 2028, please contact a member of our 2028 Biennial Site Selection Subcommittee (Lori Johnson, Adam Eckart, or Jake Carpenter).

To facilitate effective communication with members, we have also increased our presence on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Threads](#), and we have created a [Bluesky](#) and [LinkedIn](#) page. Be sure to follow us to stay up to date on all things LWI! If you have content you'd like us to share, please contact our Communications and Public Relations Officer, [Heather Baxter](#). Additionally, thanks to the hardworking members of our Public Relations, Website, Social Media, and LWIC Committee, we are thrilled to announce a new video web series—*Professor to Professor*—which is available on LWI's [YouTube channel](#)! It features fun and lively conversations between LWI members. To nominate yourself or someone else to be featured, contact [Heather Baxter](#) or Joshua Jones. And don't forget to subscribe to LWI's YouTube channel so you never miss an episode! Under Joshua's excellent leadership, our very busy PR/SM/LWIC Committee has also created an extremely informative listserv guide, developed an official logo for joint ALWD/LWI sponsorship, and is currently updating our Visual Identity Manual.

III. Goal Three: Innovation

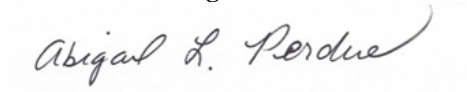
To promote innovation and scholarship, the Board is sponsoring the *AI & Innovation Writing Contest*. Up to three winners will receive a \$1000 cash prize for a scholarly piece addressing the intersection of legal writing and artificial intelligence (AI). We have also created a **Technology Advisory Working Group** of savvy technophiles chaired by Bryan Schwartz to advise LWI on our growing number of tech platforms from Eventzilla and Mailchimp to PayPal and Brick Factory. We are especially grateful to **Webmaster Afton Cavanaugh** for keeping our website accessible, updated, and beautiful. Furthermore, on June 3, our AI Committee will co-host a one-day virtual conference—[AI & Legal Skills: Innovation, Impact, and Integrity](#)—with the University of Wisconsin Law School. This dynamic event will explore the rapidly evolving role of generative AI in legal education and law practice. Whether you're an early adopter, a thoughtful skeptic, or simply curious, this is a great chance to connect with colleagues and advance our shared understanding of AI's impact on our work. We are especially grateful to Rebekah Hanley, Katrina Robinson, and Desmond Wu for organizing this event.

But wait ... there's more! The [Applied Legal Storytelling Conference](#) will take place on July 9-11, 2025, at the University of Michigan in lovely Ann Arbor. On July 23-24, 2025, LWI will host our [New Law Teacher Virtual Bootcamp](#), and our [Sirico Scholars' Workshop](#) will be held on July 24-27, 2025. Check out the [LWI Event Calendar](#) to learn about more upcoming events.

In closing, these highlights barely skim the surface of the wonderful work that our dedicated LWI volunteers do every single day to advance the discipline of legal writing and support you. Thus, I want to finish as I began by extending my heartfelt gratitude to each and every unsung hero who supports LWI. Whether you serve on the [Board](#) or a [committee](#), [make a donation](#), present at a conference, write for a [publication](#), or just attend a workshop, we appreciate you and your valuable contribution.

Thank you for an amazing year! I look to the future with excitement and anticipation. The best is yet to come!

With immense gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Abigail L. Perdue". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Abigail L. Perdue
President, Legal Writing Institute