



Letter from the President

June 23, 2026

Dear Friends,

It has been my honor and privilege to serve as President of the Legal Writing Institute (LWI) since July 2024. It's been an amazing ride, full of ups and downs, sweat and sacrifice. I feel nothing but gratitude for everything I've learned along the way.

Leading an organization as large and dynamic as LWI is demanding and forces you to grow. It also teaches you to listen more, talk less, broaden your perspective, exercise discernment, choose your battles, and problem solve with pragmatism, compassion, and creativity. A true stretch role, it has often compelled me to look deep within myself to muster strength I didn't know I had. It has also taught me to lead with integrity and intention. Most of all, it gave me the unique opportunity to collaborate with and learn from exceptional colleagues whose wisdom and unwavering dedication continue to inspire me. As a result, I enter my next phase of service as LWI's Immediate Past President with a profound appreciation of LWI's devoted leaders, wonderful community, and important mission.

I am incredibly grateful for each person who has volunteered their time and talent this biennium to serve and strengthen LWI. Without you, none of the great work LWI has accomplished over the past two years would have been possible. I am especially thankful to the LWI Officers, Board members, Committee Chairs and members, Working Groups, Editorial Boards, the 2026 Biennial Planning Team, the Sirico Planning Team, the Applied Legal Storytelling Conference Planning Team, our One-Day Workshop and Bootcamp organizers, our Listserv Chair, and our Webmaster, among others, for their exceptional service and dedication.

As my presidency draws to a close, I am delighted to share a small sample of the countless ways that LWI members like you helped bring an ambitious vision centered on legacy-making, wellbeing, and innovation to life this biennium.

I. Legacy-Building

LWI continues to advocate for meaningful improvements in professional status for legal writing professionals. Led by Bob Brain, Mary Bowman, and Sue Liemer, our Professional Status Committee continues to powerfully advocate for revisions to **Standard 405** that would promote security of position and status equity for our members. In June 2026, LWI, ALWD, and the AALS Section for Legal Writing, Reasoning and Research submitted a joint letter advocating for security of position. In response to member feedback, which indicated that the most pressing *immediate* concern for most members is pay equity, we asked our Professional Status Committee to update our **Pay Equity Toolkit** and that important project is well underway. In response to member feedback, LWI also revised our Job Disclosure Form to include an expanded range of salary options more consistent with the equitable salaries our members deserve as well as more information regarding job titles. In response to member feedback and survey data and in an effort to promote greater transparency, the Board voted to require completion of the form to post on the LWI listserv and website. LWI also applied for and finally attained **Affiliate Status** with the ABA, which gives us a unique and meaningful opportunity to inform and shape ABA decision-making.

In an effort to preserve institutional memory and transfer knowledge, I hosted LWI's first **Presidential Summit** in the fall of 2024. Past presidents united to share their collective wisdom. To commemorate the fortieth anniversary of LWI's first Biennial, we also launched the **Institutional Memory Project**. As part of this long-term project, we have been recording conversations with beloved LWI founders and icons to preserve their stories for future generations.

Because LWI was incorporated on April 3, 1986, LWI also formally adopted April 3 as **LWI Founders' Day** to honor and celebrate the contributions of our iconic founders like Laurel Currie Oates, Chris Rideout, Karin Mika, Ralph Brill, Jill Ramsfield, Mary S. Lawrence, and other legends of legal writing. We celebrated this special day for the first time in 2026 by releasing the first few episodes in our new **LWI Remembers** podcast series, which aims to preserve the history of LWI.

LWI also created the **Emeritus Engagement Committee**, co-chaired by Jane Grise and Candace Centeno, which will honor, recognize, and engage emeritus and seasoned members of LWI. Among other things, the Committee will develop and support initiatives that celebrate emeritus faculty contributions, foster ongoing professional and intellectual engagement, and collaborate with the Institutional Memory Project to preserve LWI's institutional memory for the benefit of current and future members. The Committee will also honor members who are retiring at the end of each school year.

Furthermore, upon the 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**. A generous donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, also donated funds to permit the winner of the Laurel Currie Oates Influential Teaching Award to also earn a generous cash prize. In 2026, the Board also voted to rename our President's Distinguished Service Award to the **J. Christopher Rideout Presidential Service Award** to honor the legacy and contributions of LWI's co-founder and first president, **Chris Rideout**.

LWI also had the opportunity to recognize the wonderful achievements of some of our most outstanding community members, including but not limited to: Blackwell Award recipients **Kathy Vinson** (2024) and **Tamara Herrera** (2025), Phelps Award winners **Carolyn Williams** (2024) and **Danielle Tully** (2025), Courage Award winner **Aysha Ames**, Golden Pen winner **Emily Bazelon**, Emerging Scholar Award winner **Katrina Robinson**, Laurel Currie Oates Influential Teaching Award winner **Anne Mullins**, and the Mary S. Lawrence Innovation Award winners, **Kirsten Davis** and **Rebekah Hanley**. Celebrating these exceptional colleagues was one of the highlights of my presidency.

II. Scholarship and Discipline-Building

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 two generous grants. 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.

In 2026, LWI also launched *LWI Voices*, which will provide a modern, reimagined space where colleagues can connect beyond their research and teaching areas. It will highlight the stories and backgrounds that make our peers who they are and spotlight their personal interests, creative pursuits, and lived experiences. Congrats to the inaugural board members: Katelin Shugart-Schmidt, Diana Simon, Taylor Farr, and Betsy Byra. And special thanks to Wayne Scheiss, Rebecca Rich, and Nancy Soonpaa for leading this initiative.

Our **Research & Scholarship Working Group's** special charges included hosting a scholarship speed mentoring event and creating resources regarding effective research techniques. Among other things, this energetic, dedicated group led by Brian Larson and Elizabeth Berenguer co-sponsored a wonderful One-Day Workshop with the University of Florida Levin College of Law that heavily featured presentations on conducting empirical research.

The 2025 **Sirico Scholars' Workshop** was held on July 24-27, 2025, in St. Mary's, Florida. Scholars and facilitators enjoyed enriching discussions and the exchange of valuable feedback. The **2026 Sirico Scholars' Workshop** will be held on July 10-13 at St. John's College in Minnesota and promises to be another amazing retreat. Special thanks to our fabulous Sirico

organizers, especially Brian Larson, Elizabeth Berenguer, and Kristen Gerdy Kyle. They have done a terrific job!

Moreover, in 2026, our Global Legal Skills Committee, co-chaired by Rosa Kim and Kathy Vinson, hosted a wonderful “**Global Gathering**” regarding civility and professionalism in the global context.

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. In 2026, our Bench & Bar Committee, led by Sylvia Lett and Kate Brem, created a **Bench & Bar Committee Advisory Board** comprised of an all-star group of jurists and practitioners.

Under the leadership of Laura Graham, (now Judge) Anna White Howard, and Kari Gallagher, 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 brand new **Clerkship College** in 2024 and 2025. 234 people registered for the inaugural event, representing 77 law schools nationwide. Programming at the Clerkship College addresses everything from resilience, civility, and flourishing to opinion-drafting, effective editing, and using social media responsibly. This new event has been a big success!

III. Institutional Knowledge & Data-Gathering

Like our committees, publications, and working groups, the LWI Board has also been hard at work. In the fall of 2025, the Board reviewed and amended the bylaws. Board members also liaised with committees, conference planners, and publications. To promote accountability and clearer communication, we also established a regular quarterly schedule for committee reports and a formal process for committees to request funding. In 2024, I hosted a virtual **Committee Retreat** 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 facilitate effective communication with members, LWI increased its presence on Instagram, Facebook, Threads, Bluesky, YouTube, and LinkedIn. 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, LWI launched a wonderful 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 Listserv/PR/Website Committee Chair, 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 to encompass modern platforms like podcasts.

To promote clear communication and raise awareness of LWI, we sent a *Letter to the Deans* in 2025 and 2026, which showcased the diverse contributions of LWI, thanked the deans for their support, and welcomed future and ongoing collaboration. Among other things, our May 2026 letter showcased our summer offerings, including the Biennial, Sirico Workshop, and summer bootcamp, encouraged deans to sponsor conferences and support member attendance, explained our job posting policy, and provided our revised job disclosure form.

To encourage data collection and promote data-driven decision-making, LWI created and administered the **2024 Biennial Exit Survey** and the **2025 Presidential Survey**, which both enjoyed a robust response from community members. The surveys provided very helpful data that has informed Board decision-making and given a voice to every community member. Among other things, we were happy to learn from the Presidential Survey 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.

Several LWI committees, like the AI Committee and Academic Success Committee, followed suit and conducted membership surveys of their own. The AI Committee's LWI Faculty Survey regarding members' use of generative AI in the legal writing classroom was particularly illuminating, and the Survey Subcommittee gave an excellent presentation about the data to the membership in February 2026. The Subcommittee is currently conducting a follow-up survey.

IV. Wellbeing

To promote member wellbeing, we established LWI's new **Wellbeing Committee**, which is planning programming for the upcoming Biennial. In addition, LWI's New Member Outreach Committee, chaired by Rebecca Rich and Candace Centeno, has hosted wonderful virtual **New Member Roundtables** on various topics, co-hosted networking events at conferences and workshops, matched new members with seasoned mentors, and is currently developing a **New**

Member tab on the LWI website with terrific resources. They've done an outstanding job developing creative ways to engage new members! Our wonderful Teaching Resources Committee led by Brenda Gibson and Kristen Gerdy Kyle has also been hard at work revamping our Teaching Bank in response to member feedback.

Under the exceptional leadership of Suzanna Geiser and Tenielle Fordyce-Ruff, our **One-Day Workshop Committee** led a fantastic array of workshops in the winter and spring of 2024 and 2025 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. Suzanna and Tenielle also went above and beyond by creating an extremely detailed and helpful **One-Day Workshop Guide** to preserve institutional knowledge for future co-chairs of this important committee.

With regard to *institutional* wellbeing, I'm thrilled to report that **LWI's 2024 Biennial**, which took place on July 17-20, 2024, at IU-McKinney School of Law, was a huge success. Hundreds of 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, drink-naming contest, 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, including approximately \$57,500 from law schools, \$62,000 from corporate sponsors, \$5,680 from wellbeing sponsors, and \$2,000 from bench and bar sponsors. Combined with careful cost management throughout the conference planning process, the 2024 Biennial ultimately generated an overall profit of approximately \$190,000. Much of that revenue was used to replenish reserves that were significantly depleted during the pandemic when LWI could not meet in person. In my service as President-Elect from 2022-2024, I had the honor of overseeing the planning of the 2024 Biennial, and I want to again extend my heartfelt gratitude to every member of the outstanding 2024 Biennial Planning Team (Carolyn Williams, Heidi Brown, Tessa Dysart, Allison Martin, Joel Schumm, Elizabeth Berenguer, Eun Hee Han, Sylvia Lett, Jane Grise, Bryan Schwartz, and Sarah Parks) as well the Biennial Subcommittee members for their hard work in organizing a truly unforgettable conference!

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, in combination with the Board's responsible fiscal stewardship guided by Treasurer Carolyn Williams, helped restore LWI's depleted reserves and return us to sound financial footing. As a result, LWI

currently has about \$35,000 in operating funds, but operating expenses continue to rise due to circumstances beyond our control like inflation. 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 fiscal responsibility in mind, I established a **Fiscal Health Advisory Group** in 2024 that was comprised of former LWI Treasurers. They reviewed our past budgets and expenditures to make recommendations regarding how to wisely manage our funds during this biennium. We also encouraged all conference planners to designate a Budget Chair and attain budget approval from LWI's Treasurer Carolyn Williams. I 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 created a **Giving Link** on the LWI website where anyone can make a tax-deductible donation at any time. Since its creation, LWI has received over \$16,000 in gifts, including the two largest donations from private individuals in our history, in addition to a pledge of a second \$10,000 gift in five years. We are incredibly grateful to our beneficent donors for their unparalleled generosity. These efforts reflect our broader commitment to thoughtful, sustainable growth that protects LWI's future, while continuing to serve the evolving needs of community members.

And we're just weeks away from what promises to be another amazing Biennial! President-Elect Brad Desnoyer and his amazing planning team (Kim Holst, Bryan Schwartz, Joshua Jones, Jake Carpenter, David Ziff, Wendy Shea, David Cleveland, and Ruth Anne Robbins) are hard at work putting the finishing touches on the **2026 Biennial**, which will be held on July 15-18, 2026, at the **University of Minnesota School of Law**, in Minneapolis. The conference theme—*LWI Assemble*—promotes a spirit of unity and reminds us that there is nothing we cannot face together. Over 350 members have already registered. The program features a diverse array of interesting, timely topics and gifted speakers. The Gala will take place at the Science Museum of Minnesota, and the exciting keynote speaker worked on the popular Marvel series, *She-Hulk*. Please reserve your room in LWI's hotel block at the Moxy hotel before June 30, so that we can avoid contractual damages resulting from a failure to fill our room block. The 2026 Biennial promises to be an incredible gathering! We hope to see you there!

And we're already looking ahead to 2028. Our wonderful 2028 Biennial Site Selection Subcommittee (Lori Johnson, Adam Eckart, and Jake Carpenter) received some excellent proposals, and the Board has chosen an incredible host for 2028, which I am excited to announce at the 2026 Biennial. Stay tuned!

But wait ... there's more! The **Applied Legal Storytelling Conference**, which took place on July 9-11, 2025, at the **University of Michigan** in lovely Ann Arbor was by all accounts, a resounding success. We thank Aysha Ames and the entire Storytelling Planning Committee

for organizing an amazing conference. Congratulations to the **University of Louisville**, which will host the 2027 Applied Legal Storytelling Conference! Special thanks to JoAnne Sweeney, Ellie Margolis, Anne Ralph, and Heather Baxter for selecting an amazing site for our next gathering.

On July 23-24, 2025, LWI hosted its **New Law Teacher Virtual Bootcamp**, which was an incredible event. A winter bootcamp was held in December 2025, and the 2026 Summer Bootcamp will be held on July 22-23, 2026. Special thanks to Charles Oldfield, Elizabeth Sherowski, Em Wright, Hollee Temple, the committee members, incredible presenters, and the enthusiastic attendees for making this enriching workshop possible. Whether you are new to teaching or interested in mentoring the next generation of legal writing professors, we hope you'll participate in this incredibly popular workshop!

V. Innovation

To promote innovation, LWI sponsored the ***AI & Innovation Writing Contest***. Congratulations to contest winner, Professor Samantha Moppett! She will receive a \$1000 cash prize for her excellent scholarly article, which addressed the intersection of legal writing and artificial intelligence (AI). Thanks to Meghan Sholy-Wells, Desmond Wu, and Margie Alsbrook for judging the contest.

I 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 maintaining our website and to **Listserv Committee Chair Joshua Jones** for maintaining our listserv. They've both done excellent work!

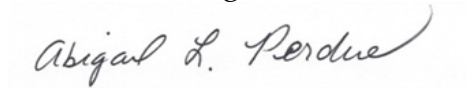
Furthermore, on June 3, 2025, our AI Committee led by Rebekah Hanley and Katrina Robinson co-hosted an amazing one-day virtual conference — **AI & Legal Skills: Innovation, Impact, and Integrity** — with the University of Wisconsin Law School. Over 100 people attended this dynamic event, which explored 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, it was 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. In May 2026, the AI Committee hosted another online, one-day conference designed to introduce current law students and recent law graduates to the fundamentals of generative AI and its responsible use in legal practice. Both conferences were hugely successful! We look forward to more wonderful offerings from our fabulous AI Committee!

Be sure to check out the **LWI Event Calendar** and follow us on social media to learn more about upcoming LWI 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. 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, a publication, or a committee, make a donation, present at a conference, write for a publication, or attend a workshop, we appreciate you and your valuable contribution. You making our important work possible!

Thank you for an amazing and productive biennium! I look forward to the future of LWI with excitement and optimism.

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
Professor of Law, Wake Forest University School of Law