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Requiring Three Years of Real-World Legal Writing Instruction: Law Students Need It; Prospective Employers Want It; The Future of the Legal Profession Demands It

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REQUIRING THREE YEARS OF REAL-WORLD LEGAL WRITING INSTRUCTION: LAW STUDENTS NEED IT; PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYERS WANT IT; THE FUTURE OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION DEMANDS IT

Adam Lamparello and Charles E. MacLean

INTRODUCTION

“Reforming legal education—an urgent societal need—is a glacial process… [and] the glacier has been flowing the wrong way.” The problem is not “spending too much time in law school,” but instead an “[e]ntrenched pedagogical mediocrity,” that “infects even the best law schools.” In other words, law students “are not mastering the essential skills.”

Law schools—and professors—have been the target of substantial and ongoing criticism for failing to provide the type of “real-world” training that is vital to producing “practice-ready” graduates. As one recent graduate states, “[t]he big problem for many people is that law school and the practice of law are so different.”

As a result, law firms have been forced to implement formal training programs, often at substantial cost. A recent survey, for example, found that 47 percent of law firms had a client

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1 Assistant Professors of Law, Indiana Tech Law School, Fort Wayne, Indiana.
3 Id.
4 Id.
5 Id.
6 Id.
10 Id.
11 Id.
who refused to pay for legal services rendered by a first or second year associate. As Georgetown law professor Deborah Epstein explains, “[c]lients at large law firms are now saying they won’t pay for new associates to work on cases because they aren’t sufficiently trained on how to do the work when they graduate from law school.” Chief Justice John G. Roberts has criticized law professors for producing scholarship that is of “no value to the practitioner, or would-be practitioner.”

There have been tangible consequences. In the fall of 2013, law school applications dropped 17.9 percent and the number of applicants decreased 12.3 percent. In October of 2013, the number of LSAT test-takers fell 11 percent from the previous year and 45 percent from the 2009 peak. The Law School Admission Council has reported that law school applications have dropped from 602,300 to 385,400 in the last three years. Stated simply, the legal academy is at a crossroads, and the time for change has arrived.

Ironically, however, these turbulent times present a golden opportunity for legal writing professors across the country to be on the vanguard of transformative change in the legal academy—and achieve the institutional parity that is much deserved and long overdue. Just as

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18 Adam Todd, “Neither Dead Nor Dangerous: Postmodernism and the Teaching of Legal Writing,” 58 Baylor L. Rev. 893, 942 (“[l]egal writing teachers however are underpaid and under-recognized in much of the law school academy”).
“narrative is a powerful tool for persuasion,”19 a ‘real world’ legal writing curriculum can be a potent force in merging the acquisition of legal knowledge with the practice of law.

Indeed, law students, commentators, and scholars are hungry for change in legal writing pedagogy. In July of 2013, the Clinical Legal Education Association, comprised of over 1,000 law professors, drafted a letter to the American Bar Association advocating for an increased emphasis on practical skills training.20 Professor and scholar Bryan Garner didn’t mince words: “the biggest failure at most law schools is the dearth of seriously good skills courses, especially training in legal writing.”21 Garner states as follows:

So what’s the cure? For starters, the second and third years of law school ought to include much more research, writing, and editing, with three to six short papers required in each course. Each paper should be subjected to rigorous editing, then rewritten and resubmitted…Short of such reform, the future for new law school graduates looks dismal…[l]aw schools should get their priorities straight and better meet the needs of their students’ future employers.22

Garner states that this is “perfectly doable.”23 The authors agree, and in this three-part series hope to begin a collaborative discussion with legal writing, clinical, and doctrinal faculty about what “change” should mean.

In Part I24, the authors rolled out a blueprint for change, which includes: (1) more required skills courses that mirror the actual practice of law; (2) a three-year program that includes up to four writing credits in every semester; and (3) increased collaboration between legal writing professors and doctrinal faculty. In this essay, we get more specific, and propose a three-year legal writing curriculum that builds upon the previous generations’ impressive

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21 Garner, supra note 2 (emphasis added).
22 Id.
23 Id.
scholarly and curricular accomplishments. In others words, the new legal writing pedagogy represents an evolution, not a revolution. The proposed curriculum includes the following:

- **A linear approach to legal writing**: Law students should not just learn to “think like lawyers,” but should be trained to “do what lawyers do.” Recent law graduates often lack an understanding of the role that various documents play in the litigation process or the specific writing skills, purposes, and strategic considerations that apply uniquely to certain documents. The lack of a linear perspective of how cases proceed from fact investigation to appeal, coupled with assignments that are divorced from their context in litigation, cause students to miss out on a ‘big picture’ understanding of how law is practiced in the real world. The proposed curriculum adopts a contextual approach, requiring students to draft the most common litigation documents from fact gathering through the appellate process as it happens in the real-world. This provides context, breadth, and repetition—essential elements of a practice-ready graduate.

- **A required course each semester, and the opportunity to take a second, skills-based elective**: Each semester will have one required legal writing course that focuses on a different litigation document, and re-enforces the persuasive advocacy skills that are characteristic of the country’s excellent advocates. The proposal below includes recommendations for both required and elective courses.

- **Suggested textbooks and supplemental materials**: A list of suggested texts is included to guide legal writing professors.

Legal writing for the next generation will take with it the foundational and analytical skills that all writers—not just legal writers—must possess. The new approach, however, will connect legal writing and law practice, and merge the classroom with the courtroom. As
Harvard professor Alan Dershowitz explains, “[t]he law school of tomorrow will have to be a different place than the law school of yesterday and today if legal education is to prepare the next generation of lawyers for a quickly changing profession and world.”25 In a nutshell, this requires legal writing faculty to add a story line to a developing narrative, and the tag line is legal writing for the real world.

THREE-YEAR PERSUASION CURRICULUM – THE FIRST YEAR

From the first day of law school, legal writing courses should engage the students in the actual or simulated practice of law. Whether through real—or hypothetical—cases, legal writing professors should present first-year students with cutting-edge legal issues involving, for example, civil liberties, race and gender equality, and access to the political access.

From day one, law students should be trained to analyze legal problems from a variety of perspectives, and to propose original—and persuasive—solutions. The goal is not simply to create excellent advocates, but to produce graduates who value ethics, diversity, and service.

I. PERSUASION I: THE AMICUS (OR HABEAS) MODEL OR STORYLINE APPROACH (3 CREDITS)

Persuasion I can be taught in two ways: (1) the amicus (or habeas) model,26 or the storyline (linear) approach. Professors who choose the amicus model will not, however, forfeit the linear approach, because both introductory courses teach the same skills (objective writing). Furthermore, Persuasion II, which begins with the Complaint, logically follows from the assignments given under either option.

To begin with, the dichotomy between objective and persuasive writing is false. Like other courses in law school, legal writing should be taught in the “gray” area, and take a nuanced

approach. For example: different writing techniques apply to documents within the objective (or persuasive) category, e.g., a motion to dismiss versus an appellate brief. In addition, lawyers can still be persuasive in ‘objective’ formats, e.g., the Complaint, and Question Presented and Table of Contents or Authorities in an appellate brief.

A. THE AMICUS AND LEGAL RESEARCH CONNECTION (THREE CREDITS)

The greatest movies—and novels—are not always linear. Some begin in the middle, others at the end. All of them, however, excite and inspire the viewer from the beginning. The amicus model recognizes that, to have a powerful introduction (the first semester of law school, you should begin in the middle.

Traditionally, first-semester, first-year legal writing courses require students to learn the basics of legal research, citation, and draft objective memorandums. This often involves numerous citation exercises, and two or three writing assignments analyzing hypothetical legal issues. Importantly, however, this approach can be dry and theory-driven, and is entirely divorced from the context and practice of law. In other words, traditional predictive writing courses fail to excite students about the writing craft—and the profession they will soon enter. It is a mediocre beginning to what should be a great introduction.

Under the amicus model, professors will focus the first semester—or opening scene—on an amicus brief of substantial public import. Under close faculty supervision, the students will participate by researching the relevant legal issues and preparing two or three memorandums that predict how a court—whether it is the United States or Maine Supreme Court27—will rule.

27 The authors had the opportunity to submit an amicus brief before the Maine Supreme Judicial Court in State v. Spencer Glover, where we argued that a suspect’s refusal to consent to a pre-arrest, warrantless DNA sample could not be used as “consciousness of guilt” by the state at trial. In addition, we filed an amicus brief in Freddie Lee Hall v. Florida, currently scheduled for oral argument on March 3, 2013, arguing that “IQ cutoffs” violated the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition against Cruel and Unusual Punishment. Cases such as these allow students to be involved in transformative litigation and to apply their reasoning, research, and citation skills in a closely supervised environment.
The amicus model neither conflicts with nor undermines the traditional analytical model. Classroom instruction—and assignments—will focus on paper and electronic research as well as foundational legal writing technique. Problems sets and exercises from textbooks are also essential.

First-year students will acquire the same skills as taught in traditional predictive writing courses, including:

- Basic citation;
- The structure of our state and federal court system;
- How to identify and interpret different parts of a judicial opinion;
- The distinction between policy and law;
- Differences between primary and secondary authority;
- The ‘IRAC’ or ‘CRAC’ model;
- Addressing and responding to counter-arguments; and
- Writing to ensure flow, organization, grammar, and style

Additionally, the legal writing professor can require students to prepare client letters and electronic mail communications, conduct simulated client interviews as if they were advising the actual party, and keep records of hours billed.

In this setting, students will learn the skills knowing that their work product will have a ‘real-world’ impact. That can transform the classroom into a dynamic learning environment, encourage group work, and facilitate collaboration with doctrinal and clinical faculty members. For example, legal writing instructors can work with clinical faculty in a law school’s amicus or habeas project, volunteer to assist local organizations (or law firms), or simply search online for the many amicus opportunities that state and federal courts provide.
Law students should be involved in cases that matter, not only to prepare them for law practice, but to show students that what they do has an impact on the lives of others.

B. THE STORYLINE OPTION (LINEAR MODEL) (THREE CREDITS)

This option teaches the skills outlined above and mirrors actual law practice. Students start at the beginning—the client interview—and transforms the classroom into a law firm.

On day one, students will be presented with a hypothetical fact pattern and client. The professor can serve as the “client,” or collaborate with another faculty member, preferably in the doctrinal area, to create real-world simulations that involve cutting-edge legal issues.

In addition to the skills outlined above, students would gain experience in:

- Client counseling (simulated client meetings);
- Professional email communications (between lawyer and client);
- Billing and recordkeeping;
- Basic citation;
- Legal research;
- Two or three objective memorandums; and
- A client letter

The semester would begin with a simulated client meeting where, among other things, additional facts are gathered and students answered the client’s question and addressed all relevant concerns that client may have. This is an excellent opportunity for professors to get creative, e.g., including clients from diverse backgrounds, and therefore focus on interpersonal communication.
After the client meeting, the students will: (1) identify the relevant legal issues, which should not be overly complex or numerous (we suggest three); (2) follow-up with the client via email; and (3) bill the client for that time.

The next phase of the course involves research and basic citation skills, followed by the first memorandum. Importantly, the first memorandum should not be lengthy. The professor can, for example, focus solely on the “Discussion,” section, emphasizing organization (e.g., IRAC or CRAC), presentation of legal authority (e.g., primary versus secondary authority), favorable versus unfavorable law, tone (objective rather than persuasive), and flow (e.g., avoiding repetition, esoteric words, Latin, and legalese). Individual conferences should also be conducted at this time to provide feedback and individual attention, which we believe is crucial to an effective legal writing pedagogy. As three well-known legal writing scholars explain, “[s]eeking feedback earlier in the process gives both author and responder space to grow.”

After the first memorandum, a second client meeting will allow the students/lawyers to advise the client regarding their findings and to answer all relevant questions. A second memorandum will follow, integrating the facts (and additional components) of a memorandum, and the final memorandum will incorporate revisions (and rewrites, as necessary), and allow students to do their own research.

The semester will conclude with a letter advising the client about, among other things, the likelihood of success and recommended courses of action. The storyline approach retains the fundamental techniques taught in the traditional model, but does so in a real-world context that requires client interaction and strategic decision-making.

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The authors also believe that grading rubrics are invaluable. While good writing cannot be quantified with mathematical precisions, it can identify a student’s strengths and weaknesses, and be a fairer way to grade the course. With respect to weighting each assignment, we offer the following as a starting point for discussion:

- Client meetings: pass/fail
- Email communications: pass/fail
- Billing and recordkeeping: pass/fail
- Citation exercises: 5 percent
- Memorandum One: 15 percent
- Memorandum Two: 30 percent
- Memorandum Three: 40 percent
- Client letter: 10 percent

**Suggested Texts (Limit—Three and Consider Others for Inclusion in Future Courses)**

- Mary Barnard Ray & Jill J. Ramsfield, *Legal Writing: Getting it Right and Getting It Written* (West 5th ed. 2010);
- Deborah E. Bouchoux, *Concise Guide to Legal Research and Writing*, (Aspen Publishers 2010);
- William Strunk, Jr., E.B. White, Roger Angell, *The Elements of Style* (Longman 4th ed. 1999);
- The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation (Harvard Law Review Association 19th ed. 2011);
- Manual on Usage and Style (University of Texas Law Review 12th ed. 2010); and

How should the instructor choose the legal issues? As explained below, the hypothetical should lead to a lawsuit: (1) venued in federal district court; (2) based on diversity of jurisdiction; and (3) giving rise to a motion to dismiss for either: (a) lack of personal jurisdiction; or (b) failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. Of course, the instructor can use a hypothetical for Persuasion II, or create a new fact pattern (which will be required for those using an amicus model).

II. PERSUASION II: THE COMPLAINT AND MOTION TO DISMISS (THREE CREDITS)

The second semester focuses on the complaint and a motion to dismiss. Drafting these documents in one semester will force students to analyze the law and facts from opposing points of view, and encourage robust classroom discussion.

A. THE COMPLAINT

As stated above, the preferable approach is to venue the Complaint in a federal district court where the law school is located. This will familiarize students with the relevant federal, state and local court rules.

In this part of the course, students will practice the writing skills that apply with particular force to a complaint. They include:

- Knowing how to draft a “short and plain” statement of the facts;
- Alleging subject matter jurisdiction, personal jurisdiction, and venue;
- Organizing factual allegations;
- Alleging facts sufficient to support each cause of action without revealing too much information;
- Pleading facts with particularity when required;
- Attaching and incorporating documents into the complaint;
- Offering expert support for claims when required;
- Alleging facts sufficient to support claims for punitive damages and attorney fees; and
- Avoiding a motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim

One of the goals is to facilitate strategic thinking, *e.g.*, developing a theory of the case, and anticipating the adversary’s legal and factual responses. Two drafts of the complaint should be required to ensure practice in re-writing and revision. Additionally, individual conferences should be conducted after the first draft to ensure adequate supervision and instruction.

**B. THE MOTION TO DISMISS AND RESPONSE (REPLACING THE APPELLATE BRIEF)**

The motion to dismiss, *e.g.*, for lack of personal jurisdiction or failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted—and reply—will replace the appellate brief and be used for end-of-the-semester oral arguments (and selection to Moot Court). In this part of the course, professors have the option to: (1) omit the response, and require two (or three) drafts of the movant’s motion; or (2) require two drafts of movant’s motion, and one draft of the response. In this part of the course, students will learn, among other things, the following:

- The value of a strong introduction
- Storytelling and narrative;
- Knowing the standard of review;
- Understanding the audience;
• Outlining the relevant facts persuasively but accurately and addressing unfavorable facts;
• Presenting the law persuasively and accurately and addressing unhelpful law;
• Analyzing the facts in light of the law, making your strongest argument first;
• Effectively addressing actual or likely counterarguments; and
• Creating a strong conclusion.

Under either option above, the first draft of the motion to dismiss should focus exclusively on either the “Statement of Facts” or “Legal Argument.” Preferably, the first draft should focus on narrative storytelling,29 and therefore require the students to craft a persuasive statement of facts. The second draft would incorporate a procedural history, introduction (optional), and legal argument. Importantly, including a response brief would allow students to “switch sides,” cognitively, and re-enforce the value of analytical thinking.

The course concludes with a section-wide Moot Court Competition that can be administered using: (1) the same hypothetical (provided it was used by all instructors); or (2) a pending case, where the parties’ briefs and relevant research are provided.

In *Persuasion II*, the instructor should focus on no more than two legal issues, one procedural, *e.g.*, lack of diversity, and the other substantive, *e.g.* defamation.

With respect to grading, the authors suggest the following:

• The Complaint: 15 percent
• First draft of the motion (Statement of Facts or Legal Argument only): 20 percent
• Second draft of the motion: 45 percent
• The response: 20 percent

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If the professor decides not to include a response brief, the authors suggest allocating an additional 5 percent to the first draft of the motion and 15 to the second.

**SUGGESTED TEXTS**

Ross Guberman, *Point Made: How to Write Like the Nation's Top Advocates* (Oxford University Press, 1st ed. 2011);

Antonin Scalia and Bryan Garner, *Making Your Case: The Art of Persuading Judges* (Thomson West 1st ed. 2008); and


**THREE-YEAR PERSUASION CURRICULUM – THE SECOND YEAR**

In recent years, law schools have added a substantial number of legal writing courses to their curriculum. At least one school, Mercer University’s Walter F. George School of Law, has a legal writing concentration. In most curriculums, however, the amount of required writing courses remains low. This should change.

The second and third years should include one required course for each semester, and give students the option to take one additional writing or skills-based course. In so doing, professors should continue the linear approach, provide individual feedback, and emphasize the importance of writing and re-writing. Furthermore, in the authors’ view, law schools should eliminate the scholarly paper requirement because is too attenuated from real-world practice.

**III. PERSUASION III: THE ANSWER AND DISCOVERY (TWO CREDITS)**

In the first-semester of their second year, students will: (1) draft an answer; (2) draft the first set of interrogatories and document requests; and (3) conduct a simulated deposition.

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*Note: Professors certainly have the option to choose a different fact pattern, provided they retain the linear approach.

A. THE ANSWER

This part of the course will include the following:

- Responding to each allegation in the complaint by admitting, denying, or stating that you lack sufficient information to answer the allegation;
- Admitting or denying allegations in part;
- Responding to allegations without providing excessive information;
- Responding to each and every allegation in the complaint;
- Raising all potentially applicable affirmative defenses (especially those 12(b) defenses that may be waived); and
- Making counterclaims and third-party claims.

B. DISCOVERY

1. INTERROGATORIES AND DOCUMENT REQUESTS

In this part of the course, the students can be paired into groups of two or four, representing the opposing parties, and propound an initial set of interrogatories and document requests in accordance with the relevant court rules. This will provide practical training in the following areas:

- Knowing what information you need to prove your claims or disprove the opposing party’s claims;
- Defining terms;
- Asking the right questions;
- Narrowing your focus to avoid objections;
- Knowing the rules about the number of discovery requests permitted, the grounds for objections, and when to file a motion to compel; and
• Using care when recycling prior discovery requests.

In this and other contexts, the importance of peer review cannot be overstated. Thus, students should have the opportunity to receive in-class feedback on their work and offer feedback of other’s work, in an environment that encourages collaboration and constructive feedback.

2. **DEPOSITIONS**

In this part of the course, students will conduct a mock deposition where they learn, among other things, the following:

• Formulating the right questions;
• Asking questions that will not lead to objections;
• Knowing how and when to object (and preserve an objection);
• Understanding the value of a deposition outline; and
• Responding to questions without revealing too much.

With respect to grading, the authors suggest that that this course can be graded on a pass/fail basis. If graded, we suggest the following:

• The Answer: 30 percent;
• Interrogatories and Document Requests: 40 percent;
• The Deposition: 30 percent

**ADDITIONAL TWO-CREDIT ELECTIVES**

- **LOOKING AHEAD: BAR EXAM OVERVIEW**
- **ETHICS & THE LEGAL WRITER**
- **REWRITING AND REVISION**
- **TRIAL ADVOCACY**
- Advanced Legal Writing: The Trial Brief
- Drafting in the Transactional Context
- Mediation and Arbitration Statements

Suggested Texts

- Paul W. Grimm, Charles S. Fax, Paul Mark Sandler, Discovery Problems and Their Solutions (American Bar Association, 2d ed. 2010); and
- Shane Read, Winning at Deposition (Westway Publishing 2012).

IV. Persuasion IV: Mediation, Negotiation, and Summary Judgment (Two Credits)

In Persuasion IV, students will: (1) conduct a simulated settlement conference or mediation; and (2) prepare a motion for summary judgment and reply, where they marshal the facts gleaned in discovery to further develop their narrative and legal argument. This course will teach the following skills:

- Knowing the standard and crafting a persuasive explanation of the standard;
- Creating a theme using principles of equity, logic, emotion, and the like;
- Drafting a persuasive narrative of the undisputed facts (in a separate document if required by the local rules);
- Supporting all facts with citations to admissible evidence in the record;
- How to create a disputed fact;
- Performing an analysis of the law and facts, explaining why a statute does or does not apply, why a helpful case is applicable, why an unhelpful case is inapplicable, and why public policy or equitable principles support your client’s position; and
- Summing up your argument in a concise conclusion.

This course should also require students to draft an undisputed statement of material facts to accompany the summary judgment motion. Professors may choose to: (1) focus solely on the summary judgment motion (two or three drafts); or (2) incorporate the response. In addition,
professors may choose to include an end-of-the-semester oral argument, to give students additional practice in oral advocacy.

- First Draft of the Motion for Summary Judgment: 25 percent;
- Second Draft of the Motion for Summary Judgment (with statement of undisputed material facts): 45; and
- The response (if required): 20 percent
- Oral argument (if required): 10 percent

If the professor decides not to include a response brief, the authors suggest allocating and additional 10 percent to the first and second drafts, respectively. If the response brief and oral argument is not included, we suggest adding 20 percent to the second draft and 10 percent to the first. If the oral argument is not used, the authors suggest adding 5 percent to the response and second draft, respectively.

ADDITIONAL ONE-CREDIT ELECTIVES

- LOOKING AHEAD: MULTIPLE CHOICE AND THE MULTI-STATE
- JUDICIAL OPINION WRITING
- NARRATIVE SKILLS IN THE LEGAL CONTEXT
- TRIAL ADVOCACY
- PRE-TRIAL PRACTICE: THE MOTION IN LIMINE
- CRIMINAL LAW PRACTICE: THE MOTION TO SUPPRESS

SUGGESTED TEXTS

THREE-YEAR PERSUASION CURRICULUM – THE THIRD YEAR

The third year curriculum gives students additional practice in two areas that are essential to real-world success: (1) narrative and persuasion; and (2) re-writing and revising. In addition, for those wishing to pursue a focus on transactional work or alternative dispute resolution, we provide alternative required course for those areas.

V. PERSUASION V: THE APPELLATE BRIEF AND ARGUMENT (THREE CREDITS)

This course mirrors the traditional appellate advocacy courses currently taught in either the second or third semester of law school. This course will now be offered in the first semester of the third year, at which time the legal writing instructor will draft a written opinion based on the factual record. The opinion should create a factual and legal basis for an appellate brief, thus requiring students to analyze their case under different standards of review (de novo and abuse of discretion). This course will impart the following skills:

- Crafting a persuasive statement of the issues on appeal, recognizing that, generally, only issues preserved for appeal may be presented to an appellate court;
- Outlining the facts—but only the facts that are found in the record;
- Beginning with your best argument, but generally limiting your brief to three issues;
- Considering and addressing policy implications, the impact of the ruling you seek on future litigants, and where your case might fit in the evolution of the law;
- Avoiding attacks on the trial court or your adversary;
- Paying attention to details such as font size and style, characters, page limits, and the colors required on brief covers; and
- Following the local rules and including all sections required by the court’s rules.
This course should require two or three drafts of the appellate brief, organized in a manner similar to the motion to dismiss, and conclude with an oral argument before a panel of judges composed of faculty members or judges from the community.

For students preferring to focus on transactional drafting or alternative dispute resolution, the appellate brief can be substituted with one of the following courses:

- TRANSACTIONAL DRAFTING
- ARBITRATION AND MEDIATION STATEMENTS
- NEGOTIATION

**ADDITIONAL ONE-CREDIT ELECTIVES**

- LOOKING AHEAD: ESSAY STRATEGY FOR THE BAR EXAM
- ORAL ADVOCACY: ARGUING LIKE THE NATION’S TOP ADVOCATES
- THE ART OF DIRECT AND CROSS-EXAMINATION

**SUGGESTED TEXTS**

- Linda Edwards, *Reading in Persuasion: Briefs that Changed the World* (Aspen Publishers 2012); and

**VI. PERSUASION VI: WRITING AND RE-WRITING (TWO CREDITS)**

In their final semester of law school, students will be required to take two courses from the following three options: (1) *Re-writing and Revising*; (2) *Judicial Opinion Drafting*; and (3) *Voir Dire & Jury Instructions*. Students should have the option, however, to take (as an elective) the course they did not choose as a requirement.
These courses will teach the following skills:

- The macro edit—(ensuring proper flow, organization, and clarity organization;
- The micro (or copy) edit (reviewing for style, grammar, and spelling);
- Analyzing arguments from opposing points of view; and
- Drafting a written work that combines objective and persuasive writing, considers policy arguments, and balances competing interests.

The authors offer no suggestions for grading, as there are countless ways to organize these courses, and opinions will differ regarding the depth and complexity of the material.

For students preferring to focus on transactional drafting or alternative dispute resolution, the appellate brief can be substituted with one of the following courses:

- **REAL ESTATE CLOSINGS AND PROCEDURES**
- **DRAFTING FOR MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS**
- **DRAFTING FOR THE TAX LAWYER**
- **SETTLEMENT STRATEGY AND NEGOTIATION**

**ADDITIONAL ONE-CREDIT ELECTIVES**

- **THE BAR EXAM: SIMULATED EXAM**
- **RE-WRITING & REVISING**
- **JUDICIAL OPINION DRAFTING**
- **VOIR DIRE & JURY INSTRUCTIONS**
- **AMICUS OR HABEAS PROJECT**

**SUGGESTED TEXTS**

- Bryan A. Garner, *The Winning Brief: 100 Tips for Persuasive Briefing in Trial and Appellate Courts* (Oxford University Press 2d ed. 2004); and
AN EVOLUTION, NOT A REVOLUTION

At first glance, it might seem that the authors’ proposed changes constitute a marked departure from existing legal writing programs. The reality, however, is that law schools around the country have been tackling this question for quite some time, by increasing the number of legal writing courses and incorporating more practice-based skills into the curriculum. These changes, of course, are long overdue. As one scholar explains:

[A] task force on the ABA Section on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar issued in 1992 a report (the “MacCrate Report”) that identified what it determined to be basic lawyering skills and professional values that a student should have developed by the time she is ready to represent her first client. These basic skills and values include: (1) problem solving; (2) legal analysis and reasoning; (3) legal research; (4) factual investigation; (5) communication; (6) counseling; (7) negotiation; (8) litigation and alternative dispute resolution procedures; (9) organization of legal work; and (10) recognizing and resolving ethical dilemmas.

The proposed curriculum presented here seeks to do just that, is consistent with recent recommendations by both the Carnegie Report and Best Practices in Legal Education, and is the next logical step in training a new generation of practice-ready lawyers. Thus, while improvements have been made in legal writing education, more needs to be done if legal education is to evolve toward a principled—and practice-oriented—institution.

32 Larry O. Natt Gant, II, “Deconstructing Thinking Like a Lawyer: Analyzing the Cognitive Components of the Analytical Mind,” 29 Campbell L. Rev. 413, 421 (2007) (Since the 1970s, legal education has experienced a tremendous growth in the number of courses devoted to teaching law students these practical skills, like legal research, oral advocacy, and negotiations).
33 Id.
34 Washington Post, supra note 10
A. Required Courses are Essential—in Each Semester

The 2013 survey from the Association of Legal Writing Directors and Legal Writing Institute (ALWD Survey\(^{35}\)) assembled data from 190 law schools. The results are troubling. For example, only 5.65 credits of legal courses are required.\(^{36}\) This represents a growth of only .29 credits per school over three years, or the equivalent of just “55 schools adding one credit to their required LRW programs.”\(^{37}\) The authors’ proposed curriculum 15 credits, which is identical to a proposal by the Clinical Legal Education Association asking the American Bar Association to require at least 15 credits in practical skills training.\(^{38}\) Furthermore, as a required, core part of the curriculum, these credits are separate from the limitations governing co-curricular activities, e.g., Moot Court and Law Review, and clinical training, e.g., externships and clinics. Moreover, they more fully vindicate the American Bar Association’s call for “substantial instruction” in “legal analysis and reasoning…writing in a legal context…[and] other professional skills generally regarded as necessary for effective and responsible participation in the legal profession.”\(^{39}\)

Importantly, a substantial number of law schools reported an increase in the variety of assignments, such as client letters, pretrial briefs, and electronic memorandums.\(^{40}\) While law schools should be commended for these changes, two problems remain.


\(^{36}\) Id.

\(^{37}\) Id.


\(^{40}\) Association of Legal Writing Directors Survey, supra note 35.
1. Law Students Are Not Getting Sufficient Practice and Repetition

Increasing the variety of assignments in required courses will not have a substantial benefit if students do not receive sufficient practice. An individual’s writing skills evolve over time, and part of that evolution requires: (1) repetition; (2) feedback; and (3) time (reflection). It is not enough for students to have drafted a client letter, or to know the essential techniques for a client letter. They must be exposed to numerous examples of effective draftsmanship, understand why a particular document is well-written, and be able to independently incorporate those techniques into their writing process. This is not attainable in a program that requires less than six credits in legal writing instruction, or is conducted over the course of just two, three, or four semesters.

2. Legal Writing Curriculums Are Not Including Important Writing Assignments

While the ALWD Survey shows that students are beginning to draft more than just a legal memorandum and appellate brief, there is no indication that required courses included: (1) pleadings; (2) discovery (60 out of 190 schools reported “drafting documents” but did not provide details); (3) a motion to dismiss (in either the civil or criminal context); (4) a motion for summary judgment or a motion in limine (105 out of 190 schools reported “pretrial briefs” but did not provide details); (5) voir dire and jury instructions; and (6) writing and revising.

This, of course, is a function of an average total required legal writing credit load (5.65) that accounts for less than seven percent of the American Bar Association’s minimum 83-credit requirement for graduation. This, in a nutshell, is the problem. Legal writing instructors cannot be expected to train effective writers (and many do despite all this, to their credit) with limited

classroom time and a required course load that tries to do too much—and too little—at the same time.

Offering more electives, or allowing students to take a legal writing “specialization,” while commendable, is not sufficient. Students may simply decide not to take any additional legal writing classes, or concentrate in other areas. The goal, however, should be to give every student comprehensive instruction, thus maximizing their writing skills and, ultimately, marketability.

Of course, some may argue that clinical and co-curricular activities, e.g., Moot Court, Law Review, Amicus or Habeas Projects, adequately fill whatever gaps might exist in writing and advocacy instruction. Again, this argument raises the same problem. Not every student has the opportunity—or chooses—to participate in Moot Court, Law Review, or a clinic. Even if law schools require students to receive clinical training, it is unlikely that it will provide the comprehensive instruction necessary to train effective legal writers. For examples, in Moot Court, some students will draft an appellate brief, and in a clinic, others might draft a habeas petition, or a petition for certiorari. This is an invaluable part of practical skills training, but should complement, not remedy, the gaps left by the legal writing curriculum.

To be sure, in schools that do have an upper-level writing requirement, the overwhelming majority mandate a scholarly writing course, not an advanced legal writing course. In fact, the ALWD Survey revealed that only eleven schools require an advanced legal writing course, only four require a litigation drafting course, and zero require a course in judicial opinion writing.\textsuperscript{42} In other words, it’s not what you offer, it’s what you require.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Id.}
B. Collaboration With Doctrinal Faculty Can Enhance the Legal Writing Experience

The ALWD Survey showed that in only six law schools (3 percent) do legal writing and doctrinal faculty collaborate in creating writing assignments and topics for discussion. Additionally, 47 law schools (25 percent of) law schools reported that topics of assignments are coordinated with doctrinal faculty.

Law schools are missing an important opportunity to create a dynamic and practice-oriented law school environment. Collaboration merges the analytical and practical; it allows students to learn by thinking and doing. In a first year civil procedure course, collaboration can give students the opportunity to draft a complaint in federal court based on diversity jurisdiction. In torts, they can write a memorandum on issues such as negligence, vicarious liability, or assault and battery. This experience helps to transform the law school environment into a place where theory meets practice, and students see how legal knowledge functions in the real world. It’s a classic example of what separates mediocre writing from great writing: Show, Don’t Tell.

CONCLUSION

Legal writing professors should no longer be considered a “marginalized communit[y].” These professors teach, often tirelessly, the most important skill that law students must possess before practicing law in the real-world. They are the innovators of tomorrow; if there is to be change in the academy, the legal writing community must lead the transformation. The consistent criticism—from former law students, judges, and commentators—provides legal writing instructors with an unprecedented opportunity to shape the future of legal education.

Of course, our way is not the only way, or even the right way, necessarily. It is, however, going in the right direction. We hope that this proposal starts a conversation and, ultimately, an

43 Berger, et al., supra note 26, at 539.
evolution that incorporates more required courses into all three years of law school. Legal writing professors are eminently qualified to handle this task, and law students deserve the opportunity to meet that challenge.