Lifewide Writing across the Curriculum: Valuing Students' Multiple Writing Lives Beyond the University

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A lifewide approach to writing and writing across the curriculum (WAC) recognizes education as a holistic endeavor that values the range of environments in which learning occurs (Commission of the European Communities, 2000; Skolverket, 2000). Drawing on student data (surveys, interviews, and maps) collected from students at six institutions across three continents, we document and describe the rich writing lives students experience within their course-based, self-motivated, civic, internship, co-curricular, work-based, and other "spheres" of writing (see O'Sullivan et al., 2022; Yancey et al., 2022). Students' writing lives are located across a diverse set of spheres, often providing for authentic writerly roles, and are characterized by six features: (1) writing regularly/sustained engagement; (2) valuing writing; (3) engaging in personal expression and having an opportunity to be heard; (4) using writing for entry into and continuation of community membership; (5) perceiving writing as providing rich connections; and (6) being aware of and accepting challenges inherent to writing. WAC programs, we believe, would benefit from re-envisioning WAC through a lifewide lens and working to better understand students' lifewide writing lives. Lifewide WAC practices draw from and support student writers in lifewide learning by eliciting students' prior writing experiences, using lifewide writing as a bridge for entry into disciplinary communities, assigning meaningful and diverse genres of writing, and being transparent about the complexities inherent in classroom-based writing and in writing spheres beyond the university. More than inviting students as stakeholders in program design or partnering with various programs on campus, Lifewide WAC provides an opportunity to increase students' agency as they continue to develop lifewide writerly identities.

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Introduction

Writing across the curriculum (WAC) as a movement in higher education is founded on the value of diverse styles and genres of writing for different disciplines, purposes, and audiences (Russell, 2006). While institution-wide WAC initiatives over the years have supported faculty development (Bean & Melzer, 2021), writing-intensive courses (Thaiss & Porter, 2010), re-accreditation (Cox et al., 2018), portfolios (Yancey & Weiser, 1997), and writing-enriched curricula (Anson & Flash, 2021), the locus of WAC has often been within academic units, courses, and departments—in service of curricular-based learning and the advancement of student knowledge in the disciplines, both worthy goals. At the same time, while including the earlier goals, WAC might be re-envisioned through the lens of students' multiple writing lives, those both within and beyond the university, an approach we call Lifewide Writing Across the Curriculum. WAC programs—and university writing administrators in general—would then benefit from better understanding students' multiple and diverse, sophisticated and nuanced writerly roles.

Drawing on student data (surveys, interviews, and maps) collected from students at six institutions across three continents, our research study contributes to conceptualizing a lifewide approach to WAC by documenting and describing the rich writing lives students experience across their multiple spheres of writing. Here, we report first on findings from our study's survey data to document those lives across multiple spheres, in various genres, and for different audiences and purposes. Next, drawing from our follow-up interviews, we identify six features characterizing students' lifewide writing: (1) writing regularly/sustained engagement; (2) valuing writing; (3) engaging in personal expression and having an opportunity to be heard; (4) using writing for entry into and continuation of community membership; (5) perceiving writing as providing rich connections; and (6) being aware of and accepting challenges inherent to writing. We conclude by describing Lifewide WAC practices that can support student writers in lifewide learning, such as eliciting students' prior writing experiences, using lifewide writing as a bridge for entry into disciplinary communities, assigning meaningful and diverse genres of writing, and being transparent about the complexities inherent in classroom-based writing and in writing spheres beyond the university. Researchers in writing studies have already begun looking beyond the curriculum to explore writing outside of traditional classroom contexts, such as internship (Baird & Dilger, 2017), self-sponsored writing (Rosinski, 2016), co-curricular contexts (Bastian, 2020), and other meaningful sites and purposes for writing (Eodice et al., 2017). Moreover, the field continues to expand how we study writers and writing outside of a college course-bound definition of student writers; this line of research includes important studies of alumni writing (Alexander et al.,

2020; Bleakney, Lindenmann et al., 2022), lifespan writing (Dippre & Phillips, 2020), and writing beyond the university (Bleakney, Moore et al., 2022). Importantly, this research tends to study writers and writing over time, i.e., taking a temporal perspective on the study of writing beyond higher education. Lifespan research thus seeks to understand how "writing changes throughout the entire lifespan" (Dippre & Phillips, 2020, p. 3). Similarly, alumni and workplace studies, situated in the temporal beyond, inquire into the impact of university writing instruction on postgraduate writing lives (Lunsford et al., 2022). Our study, while sharing many of the same goals of these approaches, differed in two ways: 1) our interest in lifewide (rather than lifelong) sought to capture the width and breadth of students' writing lives while they are still in college, operationalizing this width through the identification of multiple spheres of writing, and 2) our research sought to better understand, in students' own words and visual representations, the spheres they write in, the kinds of writing they engage in within those spheres, and their perceptions of recursivities across their spheres of writing, e.g., the relationships among students' school-based writerly life with their many other self-identified writerly lives in spheres beyond the university. In these ways, our study takes a spatial, rather than temporal, approach to understanding and describing students' writing.

A lifewide approach to writing and WAC means understanding education as a holistic endeavor that values the range of environments in which learning occurs (Commission of the European Communities, 2000; Skolverket, 2000). Making similar distinctions between the temporal and spatial, the Commission of European Communities (2000) explained that, while "'lifelong' learning draws attention to time, […] 'lifewide' learning enriches the picture by drawing attention to the spread of learning, […] bring[ing] the complementarity of formal, nonformal, and informal learning into sharper focus" (pp. 8–9). A shift in emphasis to the study of lifewide writing, in turn, reminds us that writing can and does happen in the diverse contexts across students' daily lives at home, in community, at work, and in school. Our research team's use of "spheres of writing" sought to capture these lifewide places of student writing that included, but were not limited to, their course-based writing experiences. As our primary lens for the study, spheres of writing are like rhetorical situations with authors, audiences, occasions, and exigences, but they are not bound to a single or recurring set of instances. Spheres of writing, in other words, host a diversity of rhetorical situations and actions (Yancey et al., 2022).

In the following pages, we report findings of students' spheres of writing collected from students in year three or higher of study at one of six research sites: Florida State University, Georgia State University, Allegheny College (PA), and Duquesne University (PA) in the United States; University of Limerick in Ireland; and Sohar University in Oman. To capture and better understand students' lifewide writing in

and beyond the university, we surveyed and then interviewed students about their writing in seven pre-defined spheres: course-based, self-motivated, civic, internship, co-curricular, work-based, and "other." Here, after reviewing our methods of analysis, we analyze survey data and then interview data, identifying writing features with important implications for Lifewide WAC; we conclude by outlining several practices WAC faculty and staff can adopt in support of students' writing lives.

Research Process

Our inquiry into students' lifewide writing developed from a review of survey accounts of students' writing (n=239) and draws on twenty follow-up interviews conducted by the five listed co-authors. In the survey, students identified the "spheres" they write in; the recursivities, or relationships, they perceived across them; and the diverse genres in which they were writing. Those results were tallied and are reported below (see Appendices A and B for survey questions). In the semi-structured, discourse-based interviews, students more fully described the writing activities constituting lifewide writing. Interview transcripts were coded deductively and inductively (see O'Sullivan et al., [2022] for interview questions and details about our coding process).

Taken together, these data sets demonstrated that students write in multiple spheres of writing—at least two for all students, and more than three for most, as represented in Figure 1. A clear majority of respondents (eighty-three percent) reported writing in four or more spheres. In other words, students write concurrently (see Yancey et al., 2019), that is, in several spheres at the same time. Such concurrent writing is lifewide—a framework for thinking about students' writing spatially, rather than, as is more often the case, temporally; this characterization, given the reports of spherically-based writing, seemed straightforward. In addition, however, these students' lifewide writing might also be conceptualized as writing lives, in terms of practices, attitudes, and values, as well as through the multiple genres students compose in: what the students we surveyed and interviewed seemed to say was that they have rich writing lives.

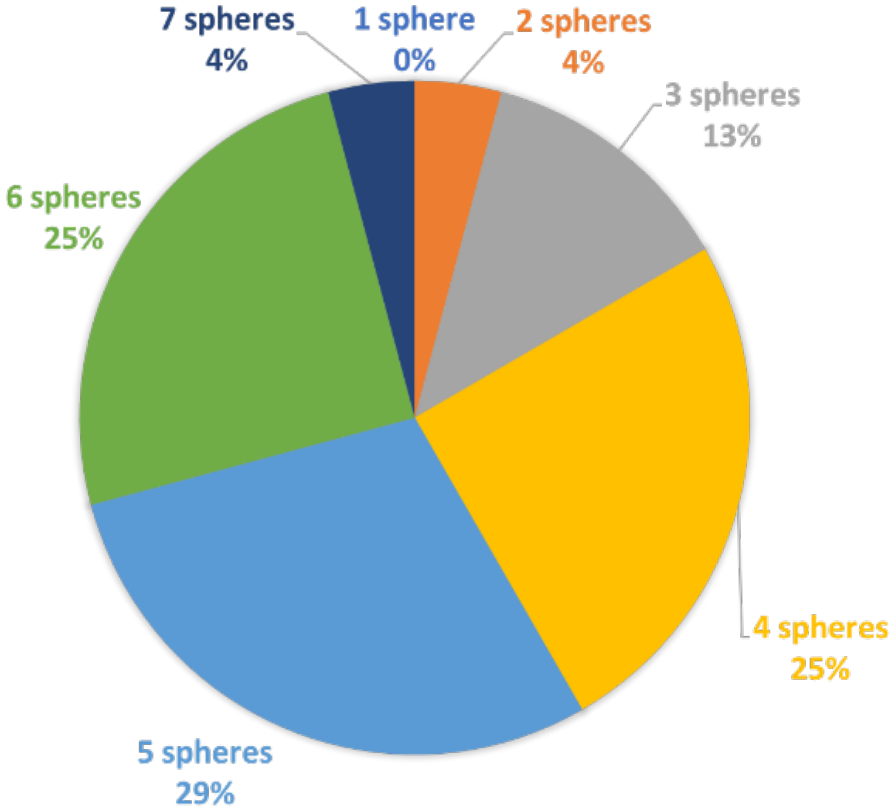


Figure 1: Number of spheres in which students reported writing (n=239)

Testing the viability of writing lives as a descriptive concept entailed a more systematic and progressive review of the interview transcripts, which proceeded in four steps. First, one team member read a small sample, one transcript from each institution, to nominate possible defining features of writing lives, with several caveats: if no defining features were identified, the concept would not be viable; if such features occurred in a limited subset of interviews—e.g., in US institutions only—then it would likewise not be viable. The initial review produced seven features. Second, three team members reviewed the full set of interviews with a goal of identifying all possible instances of each of the seven features. Third, all members of the research team reviewed the set of identified instances for three purposes: (a) to agree with the categorization of each instance, optionally commenting on it; (b) to disagree with the categorization, as either incorrectly categorized or not a feature, with optional comments; and/or (c) to indicate uncertainty and an explanation as to how or why.

Fourth, the team debriefed, attending especially to the number of instances needed for the feature to be definitional. A threshold for this decision was set: each feature of rich writing lives needed to be represented by at least fifty percent of the interviews, and the interviews themselves needed to represent all institutions. To contribute to the definition of writing lives, then, each feature thus needed widespread, frequent mention. Six of the seven features met this threshold: (1) writing regularly/sustained engagement; (2) valuing writing; (3) engaging in personal expression and having an opportunity to be heard; (4) using writing for entry into and continuation of community membership; (5) perceiving writing as providing rich connections; and (6) being aware of and accepting challenges inherent to writing.[1]

Documenting Students' Lifewide Writing

We begin with survey data (n=239), which provide information about spheres students write in, genres they compose in, and, consequently, the writerly agency they develop.

Surveys

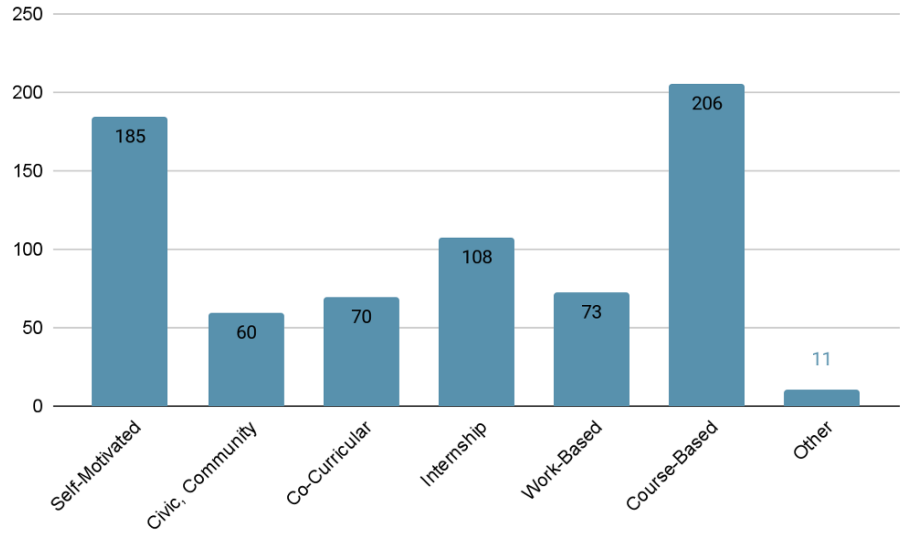
The survey included a series of demographic questions about respondents' age, race, mother tongue, and gender identity, among other questions (See Table 1 in Appendix A). While a majority of respondents were female, white, and aged 18-22, the survey sample also included males, students of color, and multilingual students. The survey results also included diversity in residency status (living on- or off-campus) and first-generation status (whether a parent had completed a four-year degree).

Student-Reported Spheres of Writing

Students were asked on the survey to identify the specific spheres they were writing in. The two most commonly-identified spheres were the course-based sphere (n=206) and the self-motivated sphere (n=185), but students reported writing in all five of the other spheres we asked them about: internship (n=108), work-based (n=73), co-curricular (n=70), civic/community (n=60), and "other" spheres (n=11) identified by respondents (see Table 2).

1. While it is possible that there are other defining features for students' writing lives more generally, this set of six features defines the writing lives that the students in our study shared in their interviews.

Table 2: Spheres of student writing



The survey findings further indicate that not only are students writing in multiple spheres, but they are also writing in a range of genres and styles, and they have a well-developed sense of audience, purpose, and personal agency as writers.

The Role of Genre Across Spheres of Student Writing

Importantly, the review of both survey and interview data demonstrates that one of the most prominent ways students understand relationships across spheres, what we call recursivities, is through the lens of genre. Students use genre as a valuable rhetorical tool for talking about their writing within and beyond the university. A sampling of the most commonly-mentioned types of writing in each of the spheres highlights the wide range of genres students compose in, from fan fiction and social media posts to executive summaries and inventories. Below, we frame some of our survey findings about students' lifewide writing through their reporting of the spheres in which they write, the kinds of writing they do in those spheres, and the similarities and differences they perceive among their writing across these spheres.

Survey Responses to Writing in the Self-Motivated Sphere

Students who reported writing in the self-motivated sphere (seventy-seven percent of respondents) identified genres of writing that commonly fell into the following coded sub-categories: creative writing (e.g., stories, poetry, fiction), nonfiction (e.g., autobiography, memoir), personal writing (e.g., journaling), digital writing (e.g.,

social media, text messages), motivational writing (e.g., quotations, motivation for oneself or others), and goal-setting (e.g., to-do lists, statements of goal planning and achievement). Survey comments about student writing in their self-motivated sphere were echoed in the interview data, particularly in the following features: (1) writing regularly—using daily journaling or to-do lists as significant to navigating self-motivated goals; and (2) valuing writing as a way to express oneself creatively and/or personally through journal entries, creative writing, nonfiction, and social media posts.

Survey Responses to Writing in Civic and Co-Curricular Spheres

The two spheres with the fewest number of respondents included the civic, community, and political sphere (twenty-five percent of respondents) and the co-curricular sphere (twenty-nine percent), i.e., student clubs or organizations. Within both of these spheres, students reported writing in a number of professional genres (e.g., posters, reports, letters, memos, meeting minutes). While civic sphere comments included a smaller range of genres, several student comments included purpose-driven statements about their commitments toward civic writing to "[work] toward giving people justice" (S4)[2] or to "raise awareness" (S4) for a cause. One student on the survey identified "regularly sign[ing] petitions across various websites" as part of their civic writing, emphasizing that they sign when they "feel passionately about the issue [the organization] is looking to change" (S2). In the co-curricular sphere, students reported writing in a significant number of digital genres, including social media writing. One student reported that they "write articles about travel, some about being an Asian American millennial and the experience of coming back after living outside of the country for an extended period of time" (S3). Survey comments about writing in the civic and co-curricular spheres often connected to personal passions, interests, and identity groups, with the opportunity for students to be agents of change in society; these writing purposes bear similarity to features we explore in our interviews, particularly (1) engaging in personal expression and having an opportunity to be heard, and (2) using writing for entry into and continuation of community membership.

Survey Responses to Writing in Work-Based and Internship Spheres

We identified overlaps in how students described their writing in work-based (thirty-one percent of respondents) and internship (forty-five percent of respondents) spheres with common professional genres identified, such as emails, presentations,

2. We refer to each site in our study as S1-6, referencing the school as a number (i.e., "S4" for School 4). Because of the high number of survey respondents, we attribute student quotes from the survey by school number alone. In later sections, we use school number and student number to reference specific interview participants, as in (S3, S2) (i.e., School 3, Interview Student 2).

briefs, letters, executive reports, and social media or blog posts. A few distinctions we saw in student reporting about writing in these two spheres were that internship writing shared some similarities with the self-motivated sphere in the personal, reflective, and goal-oriented writing, as well as with the course-based sphere because students were submitting reflections or papers related to their internship experiences as assignments for course credit. Students reported personal value and enjoyment in internship writing that related to their career goals: "My internship sphere consists of work-related experience, especially because it was heavily related to my career goals. I enjoyed everything about my internship" (S4). Reports of work-based writing on the survey identified genres that included client reports, spreadsheets, instant messaging, and inventories. We also noticed a series of logistics genres of writing related to checklists, "to-do" lists, and scheduling within the work-based sphere; these genres reminded us of some of the goal-setting and list-making genres in the self-motivated sphere, but they were for different audiences and purposes within the work-based sphere.

Survey Responses to Writing in the Course-Based Sphere

In our analysis of the survey data, we noticed a significant departure in the course-based or academic sphere of writing in which eighty-six percent of our respondents reported writing: the rich diversity in genres, purposes, and audiences reported in all other spheres of writing were reduced primarily to the "essay"—by far the most commonly mentioned genre of all in our survey data (mentioned in seventy-eight percent of student comments about the course-based sphere of writing). Indeed, while the comments about other spheres usually included a diverse list of types of writing, student reports of course-based writing were much more homogenized: "essays"; "research essay"; "research papers"; or "researches"[3]. Beyond this most prevalent response, course-based writing reported on the survey also included a few mentions of professional writing genres (n=19) like letters and resumes, as well as typical classroom genres such as discussion board posts (n=10) and class notes (n=11). In contrast to some of the features we identify in students' lifewide writing, focusing solely on students' survey comments about their academic writing suggested a limited sense of personal expression, purpose, and agency, as well as a narrow view of audience beyond the professor: "thesis-driven essay for a professor" (S1); "I write papers my teachers assign to me" (S4); "prompt based, has to follow a certain format" (S4); "The texts were related to each courses [*sic*] requirement" (S5); "I have to write essays, presntations [*sic*] and reports for various classes" (S6). The survey findings related to the course-based sphere of writing suggest that an over-reliance on essayist writing

3. A term used by several participants studying in Oman to refer to a "research essay" or "research paper."

genres limits students' opportunities to showcase the diverse kinds of writing and languaging they are composing outside of the classroom. By inviting these students to draw on their genre knowledge from writing in spheres beyond the academic, we have an opportunity to honor students as "decision-makers over their own lives and futures" (Perryman-Clark, 2022) and engage them as the lifewide writers our study highlights they already are.

Similarities and Differences Across Writing Spheres

Some responses to the open-ended survey question "What similarities/differences do you see between and across the writing you have done in different spheres?" also reflected a somewhat simplistic understanding of writing focused on the school-based essay genre. In Bazerman's terms, genres are "environments for learning. They are locations within which meaning is constructed" (qtd. in Spigelman & Grobman, 2005, p. 2). Since our respondents were still undergraduate students, it is not surprising that many of their responses included terms reflecting their primary environment for learning–the classroom. Several focused on lower-order writing concerns such as attending to "correct writing, grammar, and spelling" (S1), producing "coherent and smooth sentences" (S5), remembering "how to use MLA format or APA" (S4), or applying "tactics [including] spine identification, research resource skills, attention to temporality, and conciseness" (S3). Others emphasized another common writing classroom focus: composing processes. These respondents noted similarities in "the organization/planning and drafting and revision process" (S1); that "becoming a good writer takes lots of practice" (S1); "It's an iterative process that generally needs a deadline or it can continue forever" (S6); and "even if you're a 'good' writer, there is always room for improvement, which is why it is a good idea to have someone read over your writings before you submit them" (S1). Though limited by their focus on school-based genres, these responses demonstrate an awareness of writing regularly and some of the challenges inherent in writing.

Rhetorical Choices and Constraints in Writing

Furthermore, when reflecting on their writing beyond the university, respondents conveyed more nuanced understandings of the choices and constraints they have as writers, depending on the rhetorical situations in which they are writing, thereby supporting Bawarshi's claim that "genres do not just help us define and organize texts; they also help us define and organize kinds of situations and social actions, situations and actions that the genres, through their use, rhetorically make possible" (qtd. in Spigelman & Grobman, 2005, p. 2). As one respondent explained, "the formality of my language also varies across spheres. If I am writing for work, email, or school, I use complete sentences and avoid slang. However, when using text messages, journal

entries, and other social media, I do not feel the need to proofread for proper punctuation and grammar" (S1), a sentiment echoed by another respondent who noted "people are very quick to drop proper grammar and sentence in informal chats" (S6). The survey responses also reinforced earlier research about lifewide learning that "demonstrates that the formal education system is just one of many environments in which learning occurs" (Chen, 2009, p. 32). As one respondent wrote, "I think the way I write was most aided in my personal writing in my blog. I was able to find my voice without constraint, which now carries over into my academic and other writing" (S1); another noted, "Most of my learning of writing came from reading other peoples [*sic*] work in the fields I had to write for and somewhat copying the style/format of those" (S6). These contrasts between professionalism/formality and personal connection/informality were echoed in a number of responses, as were comments about style and tone, revealing the students' attentiveness to the role of audience in the choices they make as writers. In fact, some respondents specifically emphasized this aspect of the rhetorical situation, claiming "there are many different ways to write depending on your content and the audience" (S3) and "tayloring [*sic*] your work to the works [*sic*] intended audience is the most important aspect to consider when writing" (S6). The importance of audience reflected in these comments points to an awareness of how the writers are using writing for entry into and continuation of community membership, whether those communities are professional or personal.

Though brief in length of response, the survey data demonstrated that students recognize themselves as writers who write in response to a variety of rhetorical situations. They revealed both challenges and pleasures of writing, with some students lamenting "I'm not good at it" (S1) or "it is quite hard for me to do at times" (S4), while others celebrated writing as "therapeutic" (S3) and as a "great tool to help organize thoughts and persuade audiences" (S1). The students also recognized the value of writing—especially writing in a wide range of spheres: "I have learned by writing in many spheres that writing is extremely versatile. [...] As I've learned to navigate the nuances of writing across disciplines, and writing for many different reasons, I have focused less on proving my prowess as a writer and focused more on conveying a message. I have also learned that producing high-quality writing (whatever that looks like in a sphere) is advantageous almost anywhere!" (S1).

Interviews

The surveys reveal much about the richness of students' writing lives, demonstrating both a multiplicity of writing spheres and a breadth of genres. We now turn to the interview data to learn more specifically about students' writing lives as they have developed across these spheres and genres (see O'Sullivan et al. [2022] for interview

questions). As students described them in the discourse-based interview, and as indicated above, their writing lives were characterized by six features[4]:

1. writing regularly/sustained engagement,
2. valuing writing,
3. engaging in personal expression and having an opportunity to be heard,
4. using writing for entry into and continuation of community membership,
5. perceiving writing as providing rich connections, and
6. being aware of and accepting challenges inherent to writing.

Below, we define each characteristic and draw on students' accounts in the interviews to illustrate it.

Writing Regularly/Sustained Engagement

The first feature, writing regularly/sustained engagement, tended to take one of two forms. In the first form, students' writing enacted a sustained engagement, one that was often self-motivated and involved daily writing in a journal, as one student explained: "I make a point to journal my thoughts, my feelings about every passing day in a bedside journal. I also do poems" (S3, S1). Another student, also writing in a journal, talked about the value of reading what she had written and about how such writing, entailing "less pressure," is "probably the most relaxed" of her composing:

> With personal journals I feel like–'cause I journal–it's honestly only for myself, so honestly, that one probably there's less pressure with it. Sometimes I'll reread things that I've written, but usually it's mostly just kind of for myself … that's probably the most relaxed of all of them 'cause, like, only I'm reading it […]. (S1, S4)

Yet another student reported writing short stories for herself as routine composing, explaining that she wrote a short story "last summer just after having a cup of coffee in the morning. I felt inspired, and I just wrote it in one sitting" (S3, S2). Asked if she did "much of that kind of writing," she replied, "Yeah, all the time," noting that she has done this kind and this much writing "ever since I could write." Then, when asked, "So you definitely identify as a writer?" she responded, "I do" (S3, S2). For this writer, sustained engagement in writing short stories helped set the stage for her to develop a writerly identity.

In the second form of sustained engagement/writing regularly, students reported the regularity of their writing occurring not so much through writing in one sphere,

4. Some characteristics appeared in clusters; students who wrote regularly, for example, typically valued writing as well.

but rather in multiple spheres, through multiple kinds of tasks for multiple purposes and audiences. One student, for example, outlined her regular writing, which included composing "summer research in the Biology lab, like that was a lot of academic writing" at the same time that she wrote for her "dance job and in my speaking consultant job and in my choir job." She also wrote for her "co-curriculars–that would be like all my clubs, and I think the main thing I do there in forms of like long emails and stuff like […] having, like, different leadership positions. I've been, like, responsible for making sure over, like, 150 people know where to go and what to be doing at a certain time." Not least, although earlier she had let her journaling practice lapse, she "started a journal" as the pandemic began "because quarantine" (S1, S2). For this student, writing regularly was a complex distributed activity. Another student theorized her regular writing in two ways. On the one hand, she took a somewhat expressivist approach, looking for ways to include her own perspective in all her writing, which allowed her to make various kinds of connections; she identifies connections as "the DNA of writing." On the other hand, she also understood writing as rhetorically outward facing in its power to make social change, a goal important to her that writing regularly allows her to achieve: "I like to kind of write things with, like, a social purpose. So, like, when I write about something, like, I want to write about something that, you know, it matters or something that needs attention, like, it's just kind of like my whole like overall thing" (S4, S5). Writing regularly for this writer is a composing trifecta: she expresses herself, connects with an audience, and helps create social change.

Valuing Writing

A majority of the students we interviewed valued writing for the role it plays in their personal lives and for the way it helps them navigate the world.

Not surprisingly, given the reports they provided about the foci of their regular writing, students often turn to writing when they need to work something out, be it emotional, intellectual, or both intertwined. As one student explained, the act itself had a healing effect: "My purpose at first was to write about my experience but in the end, it helped me heal" (S3, S5). Students describe such writing as "a form of therapy" (S1, S3); writing also helps them "get more clarity on things" (S1, S3). According to another student, the process of writing helped her move from sadness to feeling "better, more confident" (S5, S1). Another student noted that she achieved a kind of catharsis through seeing writing's ability to showcase patterns:

> I think when I started writing [the narrative], I felt really confused about where I was in my life and why I was making the choices that I was making. So writing through this, I don't know, lens of childhood reflection helped

> me understand my patterns at a time when I needed to, which was really cathartic. (S3, S2)

When writing for such reasons, students don't always retain their texts: as one student observes, "If I was going through something I would just write random stuff and then throw it away" (S3, S4). For her, the act of writing itself is what is both helpful and valued.

Students also value writing for its ability to help them navigate the world; this valuing takes several forms. For one student, correct writing assured a kind of timeless propriety: as a result of school writing, she claimed to "talk more properly or like, when I write emails how like you know to be proper" (S4, S2). Writing helped another student develop "an analytical type of frame of mind" (S4, S1), supported by school but also used outside and beyond it:

> And I feel like, it gives you, like, an analytical type of frame of mind when you're doing research papers because it makes you question–and, you know, whenever there's something new on the news or some new research you don't automatically believe it. You wanna question it just the way you would do like, the research paper. Like, what's going on behind it? What are the findings and how did they, you know, put together the findings? Is it, like, the scientific way or are they just trying to say like whatever they found is right just because they found it? (S4, S1)

Yet another student valued writing for more immediate and human reasons: after submitting a successful text, she found her colleagues newly "respect[ing]" her.

> I finished it and I sent it in and they read it over, and you know, my bosses who had barely spoken to me before came in to, like, tell me I'd done a really good job. And the way I kind of got treated in the office changed after that–after I sent in my first thing. So that was really cool, you know, to know that you'd kind of earned someone's respect from writing. (S1, S3)

Two other students also spoke to the social power and benefits of writing. In posting on social media, one student says, she tries "to add value to people's newsfeed" (S4, S4), often by giving "them a book recommendation or a video recommendation or, like, talk about something that maybe I went to," her hope that they will be "more likely to remember you and they might more likely to connect with you" (S4, S4). A second student extends this understanding to include both writer and reader: as a writer "help[ing] someone," and the reader, "the person, whoever I'm interacting with" (S4, S5).

Students value the act of writing for many reasons, in large part because it helps them navigate the many spheres of life itself.

Engaging in Personal Expression and Having an Opportunity to be Heard

This next feature, while it is closely related to the feature of valuing writing, focuses on the enjoyment or pleasure which students associate with engaging in personal expression and having an opportunity to be heard.[5] All but one respondent in the interviews analyzed (n=19) made reference to this opportunity to express an opinion and to be heard. First, the opportunity to express their voice or opinion is important to the students and is a source of joy. Second, the opportunity to have this voice heard adds purpose and pleasure for students.

This feature manifested in different ways. First, students appreciate the opportunity to voice an opinion in writing and associate joy with this expression: "I actually enjoyed getting to do that, to voice an opinion that I would hope eventually would be heard" (S3, S1). Similarly, another student states: "I guess it's nice cause [...] it's a way to get, you know, my thoughts out and express my emotions and my feelings and my opinions on a certain subject" (S1, S4). There appears to be much pleasure associated with this expression as well as the joy associated with filling pages and being creative: "I really like when they have a large, either page count or word count, because I like being able to, like, slowly fill in those page numbers" (S4, S4).

Furthermore, the opportunity to be creative within this expression is important to some students. Referring to a representative text from the self-motivated sphere, which this student shared with the interviewer in advance of the conversation, one student identified creativity as an important component of self-expression: "This text has taught me to have fun with writing and to not take it so seriously all the time. […] It helped me realize why I like writing so much because I get to be creative" (S3, S5). Affect is an important part of this feature, particularly at the intersection of academic writing and personal expression: "It was satisfying seeing how I could put pen to paper (metaphorically) and write something that had academic value but still came from personal experience" (S3, S5).

Knowing that their voice would be heard by others is an important feature beyond the opportunity to express one's opinion, as described by the following student: "I think knowing that [...] it's not gonna sit on my desktop or, you know, get graded and never looked at again. Like I'm putting it out into the ether for a purpose, and I really—I like that aspect of it. It's very pragmatic and it has the possibility to maybe improve someone's life or make some kind of change" (S1, S3). The importance of a real audience, irrespective of whether the student is writing within or beyond the

5. Indeed, this could be attributed as another value of writing.

university, adds a sense of purpose and meaning to the writing: "I guess because I had a platform to see audience response because it's published digitally. My editor told me I had the most views on the page that week, so I knew that there was an audience for it and people wanted to hear what I was talking about. And that probably gave me more motivation to continue writing" (S3, S2). This serves to act as a motivating factor for some students, while adding an aspect of joy to the process: "I was kind of more motivated to actually go that step further and actually write about it and actually, kind of, almost enjoy telling the story of my experience in the six months that I was there" (S6, S2).

The enjoyment and pleasure associated with engaging in personal expression and having an opportunity to be heard serve as motivating factors for students and, consequently, are features that have important implications for WAC.

Using Writing for Entry Into and Continuation of Community Membership

Using writing for entry into, and continuation of, community membership is another important feature in many of the student interviews; its presence in fourteen of twenty interviews is notable. For this feature, students speak of the power of writing to establish, maintain, and assist communities. Equally, students speak of the ability to contribute to the community through writing.

Turning first to the power of writing to establish, maintain, and assist communities, students speak of the possibilities presented by writing to establish community engagement and reach beyond the existing membership of that community:

> Yeah. I mean I guess it's nice because obviously with this [text]—I guess, like, it's motivated to attempt, for like, community engagement that would be outside of, like, who's already a part of that community. So, I think for this recruiting for new members. I've done various, like, posters before for student government, so we're trying to, you know, recruit or I guess just kind of invite constituents to come to our meetings or come to our events, that kind of thing. So, I think it's, I guess, satisfying because we're doing it, like, not just for ourselves, we're doing it for others as well. So, I guess that's kind of something that's beneficial. (S1, S4)

Equally, some speak of the potential of writing to facilitate existing communities through world building in role-playing games. One student, for example, identifies the complexity of this story building, but appreciates that the task allows for different roles within the community to be identified and understood:

> So that one we were focusing on communities. And we focused on D and D [Dungeons and Dragons] communities because of the different language

> and I guess the different fears that come with D and D, because there's so many different aspects that come with it. You can't just have a single type of player. Just like any other video game in my opinion. There's the strategist; there's the person who has the wordplay. There's [...] the dungeon master. That takes talent. [...] It's knowing where your story has to go by the end point. It's knowing your players; it's interacting with various different pieces. And I liked how complicated it was, and because of that I really wanted to work on that. (S3, S3)

Students also speak of how writing can be used to help a community. As one student observed, one role that writing can play is appealing to an audience to assist the community:

> So, there was some tension there, and we wanted to reframe it, so it was less of a scientific study and more of, like, a community-based initiative. Like how can we help the community? And we again wanted to make sure that none of the writing was a deterrent, you know, it wasn't something you read and it was heavy and then you thought "Well, I don't have any interest in this." And we wanted to make it aesthetically pleasing, so there were kinda a lot of things that we had to include in a small space while keeping it very simple. (S1, S3)

Students express satisfaction at contributing to the community or being part of the community: "What was pretty exciting was the fact that after I had wrote [*sic*] this paper, I actually had it graded, and then once I got it back, I sent it to a few people and they were shocked. So, I think that was the biggest—I don't know, overarching achievement—like the exciting part of this, the grand finale of this paper was the fact that it was a good paper, got a good grade, and I was able to send it to other people within the community and, like, let them know: 'Hey, this is out there right now where you're at'" (S1, S1).

Interestingly, students do not always undertake community-connection intentionally, though it may be a tacit part of their writing process, as one student suggested during the interview: "It only sort of dawned on me there [...], it's a fan page for all the world, for the Waterford Hurling team, and I've been doing it for a few years, so I never really consider it as something I do because it's so natural. But that would kind of be community and self-motivated at the same time wouldn't it?" (S6, S2).

Perceiving Writing as Providing Rich Connections

In the interviews, students also speak to the rich connections which they perceive writing to provide, not only from the connections across spheres (i.e., recursivities), but also from connections between people which writing affords. In sixteen of the interviews, students speak to this richness in different ways: contextual, relational, and potential connectedness.

In the first instance, students highlight the recursivities across spheres and give examples of how the writing in one sphere can influence the writing in another sphere. For example, the student in the following example explains how the academic sphere has influenced her perception of the world: "Really the concepts that I've learned in the classroom have just changed the way that I see the world and have given me kind of fodder to make creative pieces. So, yeah, I really appreciate that" (S1, S3). Sphere-based connectedness is not unidirectional, but rather multidirectional with the other spheres having the potential to inform the academic sphere in similar ways[6]:

> So, my personal opinion is that course and classroom kind of informs your interest in all other spheres, but, you know, I think also other spheres like work or political might inform how you view something in the classroom. So, in terms of content, I think that those things kind of do inform each other. Yeah, and I think, too, there's some shared aspects of writing and learning how to write and being critiqued on your writing in the classroom setting that do translate into other spheres, and they make you a better political writer, they make you better at writing in your internships, and they make you better at personal writing. So, getting that feedback about my writing has been really helpful. (S1, S3)

A second kind of writing-sponsored connection students identified was relational: connections between people and the satisfaction which this brings. As one student explained, "It's satisfying because it feels like I have a partner when I am [...] I guess I always bond with my teachers in a sense that I ask for a lot of advice. So it feels like I have support in writing it and somebody's cheering me on and helping me" (S3, S2). Equally, students frame the role of writing as creating connections across people as a routine part of writing, as one student explained: "I feel like when you write from personal experience, it helps not only you connect with the writing, but it also helps, like, people—the audience, you know, connect with your writing. Especially sometimes when there's something that they can relate to or it's something that

6. See Yancey et al. (2022) for a more detailed discussion of the perceived recursivities across spheres of writing.

they've never related to, but it's like—they can feel the connection. Like they can feel your connection to the writing, and they can understand it from your perspective" (S4, S5).

Not least, there is also recognition that writing always includes the potential to connect even if students are not always aware of this potential or do not always engage with this potential, as another student observes:

> [...] no matter who you're writing for, no matter it's about, who it's to or for, or where it's going or how it's formatted, all that matters is that it's written and that it's being cataloged and spread. And even if it is just for you, that knowledge is being pertained in you, and if you want to keep that to yourself, that's perfect, that's fine. You should be aware that that information could very well be something that somebody else needs to hear. It's not something that should always be locked up. It should be because opinions are important. (S3, S3)

Realization of the contextual, relational and potential connectedness afforded by writing is a powerful feature important to many students; nurturing awareness of this richness can be important in our WAC practices.

Being Aware of and Accepting Challenges Inherent to Writing

Our interview questions asked students specifically about challenges they faced in writing, so it's not surprising that we have data speaking to this defining feature of their writing lives. Students articulated both an awareness of writing challenges and an acceptance of them; and, in the process of their articulations, students frequently volunteered very sophisticated conceptions of writing.[7] Moreover, these conceptions emerged from lifewide writing experiences taking place in several spheres, with students referring variously to specific texts, particular genres, and generalized understandings of writing.

One key set of student observations spoke to recognizing and accepting the vulnerability that successful writing can require. One student, for instance, talked about the challenge of achieving balance—"not coming across as too serious, but also dealing with heavy topics"—in "a personal, self-motivated piece of writing" (S6, S1). Another student, referring to a particular text, said quite simply, "it was difficult because I had to be emotionally vulnerable" (S3, S5). One student felt the same

7. Other writers with such sophisticated understanding have been reported in the literature; see, for instance, the stronger writers in Yancey and Morgan (1999); the successful writers in Yancey et al. (2018); and the stronger writer in Baird and Dilger (2017). What's especially interesting in this sphere-based, lifewide study is the diversity of challenges students identify and the explanations they volunteer as to what they learn from taking them on.

vulnerability when writing for others given her perception about the unpredictability of audience response and its potential impact:

> It's challenging because there is an audience who is seeing it, so there's always a little bit of that, "What if people don't like it?" feeling. But I'm never afraid to post it, it's just, "Will this be successful, or will my editor think that I'm a bad writer on the team and I should be reconsidered?" (S3, S2)

Completing school assignments successfully, according to these students, also required meeting challenges. One student explained that this was especially difficult in the beginning of a term with "the first essay in the class" (S1, S4), since students did know how the professor would grade it. This student also identified time as a factor in deciding how challenging an assignment is: "So this one I really did spend a good amount of time on and so I would say that was why it was the most challenging" (S1, S4). Another student observed that within an assignment's rhetorical situation, the professor often plays a critical role, acting as the ultimate audience, but also as a source of invention[8]:

> I think we always look at things from a certain way and we don't—sometimes it's hard to, like, open your eyes up and, like, see things from other people's perspective, but when you're writing a paper you have to see things and approach things from different perspectives. Like, I might write a paper one way; my professor might take it another way. And then I'll get feedback on how he took it versus how I was trying to convey it. And then you have to go back and edit your paper and be like "Oh, wow. OK, I understand what you're trying to say now." And then maybe it might even help you understand the prompt more. (S1, S5)

Two of the students we interviewed explained eloquently both the process of meeting a writing challenge and the subsequent change in the way they understood writing.[9] The first began her account with a narrative about the difficulty of "finding sources to go into my introduction to help explain what was going on in the process" (S1, S2). After learning about how sourcing within the scientific community links members of the community and its shared practices, however, she saw its logic and its benefits.

8. In this depiction of audience as source of invention, the writer sounds very much like the experienced writer described by Flower and Hayes (1980).

9. A sequence of process leading to conceptualization may be a critical transition in writing development: see Yancey et al. (2023).

> But then I learned about how whenever like in the scientific community like whenever you do that, whenever you cite other people's papers, like, it helps connect everyone and like bring knowledge more together instead of it just all being out there but nobody really knows what it is. Like, it helps connect things. So they—I don't know—I guess like so you don't do the same research twice, or like so you like realize you have answers to questions that you don't actually have or like so you help get other people's research out. It's like a more collaborative effort, but that was something that I like had a really hard time with. So, maybe like that was something I really needed to learn. I don't think that I was like taught poorly or anything; I just think that that took a long time for that to kick in. (S1, S2)

For this student, what seemed to be a teacher-mandated procedure became meaningful[10] when she understood its epistemological value: she shouldn't cite sources because the assignment called for it, but rather because the sourcing provided information and connections to members of a collaborative community.

The second student's challenge had to do with the nature of language itself in a contingent world where language constructs who we are and how we value. How, the student implicitly asks, can we be both accurate and respectful? To take up this question, she turns to an un-homed population as exemplar.

> I think when you're speaking about a specific demographic, you want to be able to represent them as accurately as possible and you wanna be able to talk about their experience in the most respectful way. For example, just the certain terminology that you use. What I learned is that it's best to say "people experiencing homelessness" rather than "homeless people." Because not everyone—not all those people that you may think to be homeless actually do not have a home if that makes sense. Everyone, especially with topics like this it's sometimes—it can be super sensitive and it's just a spectrum. You know what I mean? Like, are you homeless as in, like, you're literally living on the streets? Or are you homeless in the sense that you're jumping from couch to couch? Or are you homeless in the sense that you are a Georgia State student that is being funded by Georgia State University to

10. Meaningfulness here departs considerably from the accounts provided in the *Meaningful Writing Project* (Eodice et al., 2017). In that study, students reported on a single in-school text or project they identified as meaningful, whereas here students report on taking up and meeting a challenge in the context of lifewide writing. In the case of this specific student, meeting the challenge of appropriate sourcing—a rhetorical challenge—opened up a new understanding of a given community and a role in it made possible by writing.

> live in the dorms? You know, so with topics like this, […] you just want to know everything, but it's really hard 'cause you just don't. (S4, S3)

As she explains, this student understands that her language creates a lifeworld, and that given the limits of our knowledge—"you just want to know everything, but it's really hard 'cause you just don't"—doing so well is an important challenge. More generally, the students here understand challenge as an inherent characteristic of writing, one worth trying to meet.

Implications for WAC Programs and Writing-Intensive Course Pedagogies

As this analysis of survey and interview data demonstrates, students report rich writing lives in a variety of spheres: student writing is indeed lifewide during their college years. How can our understanding of the diversity and complexity in students' writing lives within and beyond the classroom inform our approach to writing-based initiatives across higher education? As a first step, we advocate for a lifewide approach to WAC that a) validates students as already writers when they enter our classrooms, majors, and disciplinary communities, in line with advice provided by Baxter Magolda and King (2004); b) inquires into the spheres students inhabit, such as course-based, self-motived, civic, work-based, internship, co-curricular, or other spheres; and c) sees students' writing knowledges, linguistic practices, and prior experiences as assets to inform writing-intensive pedagogies. In engaging students in these ways, moreover, we will co-invent the university with them—a shifting of the onus from students having to invent and mimic the language and conventions of a discipline (Bartholomae, 1986) to an invitation to partner with students in ways that honor—and build upon—their expansive, lifewide writing experiences.

Building on these central premises of Lifewide WAC, we offer the following pedagogical and programmatic practices that can support students, faculty, and administrators in the work of co-inventing the university.[11] While many of these recommendations build upon prior best practices in WAC and writing studies research, we believe they open up new possibilities when considered through the lens of Lifewide WAC.

- Support faculty across the curriculum in purposefully creating opportunities for eliciting students' lifewide writing knowledge and experiences. We

11. Our primary purposes in this article were to describe and document students' lifewide writing as revealed in their diverse spheres of writing, using students' own voices in our survey and interview data. We see our analysis here as an important first step in understanding the implications of Lifewide WAC. We thus invite readers to continue this line of inquiry by studying the impact of a more substantial integration of Lifewide WAC within WAC programs—which we view as a next step in this area of research.

see particular potential in the use of reflective writing (Yancey, 1998; 2016; "Using Reflective Writing"), visual mapping (O'Sullivan et al., 2022), portfolios (Peters & Robertson, 2007; Yancey & Weiser, 1997), in-class writing and discussions, as well as assignment designs that allow students to build upon and/or capture their writing in academic spheres and other spheres beyond the classroom. Moreover, assigning in-class writing to explore students' writing rituals and diverse experiences as a writer can support transfer of learning (Anson & Moore, 2016) and provide classroom-based contexts for sustained writing. In eliciting prior and concurrent student writing experiences, instructors across the curriculum support students in their efforts to (1) write regularly, (2) value writing, and (3) understand rich connections across their multiple writing lives.

- Use students' lifewide writing as a bridge for entry into and continuation of community membership, including disciplinary communities. WAC, WID, and WEC programs already have strong models for locating writing instruction within disciplinary conventions and conversations (Anson & Flash, 2021; Bean & Melzer, 2021). In some cases, faculty position students as writing novices, needing disciplinary experts to help them gain entry into language and literacy practices of these scholarly communities. However, in agreement with research by Brian Hendrickson and Genevieve García de Müeller (2016), our study supports the claim that students need to be empowered to take agency in "determin[ing] for themselves what it means to write across the disciplines" (p.74). Hendrickson and García de Müeller provide one model for doing so in their sequencing of assignments that "allowed students a wide berth to explore what literacy means to them and their own communities" (p. 79) and inviting them into the process of collective rubric development (p. 80). In a similar vein, our research found that students already use writing as a way to enter and become a part of a community—though students may not see this prior experience as a model for their entry into disciplinary communities without deliberate encouragement and assignment opportunities prompting connections between personal or professional communities and academic communities. Lifewide WAC can support students in (1) using writing for entry into and continuation of community membership—in this case disciplinary membership as one (but not the only) community of value, and (2) perceiving writing as providing rich connections—between their academic, course-based, and disciplinary writing and the other valuable writing they are doing in spheres beyond the university.

- Assign meaningful writing in diverse genres and for a range of purposes and audiences. The predominance of the "essay" genre in the course-based sphere, especially in contrast to the multiple genres students reported writing in, suggests that students are not being given opportunities to compose in the same rhetorically complex ways within their school writing as they are experiencing with their writing in other spheres. We recommend that WAC programs support faculty in sharing broader conceptions of writing and literate practices within academic, disciplinary-based writing, as well as to include non-school genres that may be considered personal, professional, and/or community-based (e.g., science blogs). This is not to discount the significance of research papers and thesis-driven essays; indeed, one student interviewee (S1, S5) highlighted the significant role their professor played as audience and as a source of invention. However, placing disciplinary-based genres and academic audiences alongside a range of other genres, audiences, and rhetorical contexts communicates to students a value in lifewide writing that moves beyond the academy's privileging of essayist styles and conventions. Assigning more diverse genres, purposes, and audiences for writing reinforces Lifewide WAC features, including (1) valuing writing, in its diverse contexts; (2) engaging in personal expression and having an opportunity to be heard by peers, professors, and readers outside of the academy; (3) using writing for entry into and continuation of community membership—within academic, disciplinary communities, as well as non-academic communities; and (4) perceiving writing as providing rich connections across and outside the disciplines.
- Be transparent about the complexities and challenges inherent in writing and support learners through the process of meeting them. With shared goals of the transparency in learning and teaching (TILT) project, we believe that transparency about challenges in writing helps promote "students' conscious understanding of how they learn" and can "reduce systemic inequities" that may lead some students to believe, erroneously, that they simply weren't born with the gift to write (TILT Higher Ed, 2023). In fact, our interview data highlight that students are aware of and ready to take on the challenges of writing. Glossing over the complexities, difficulties, and rhetorical nuances of writing does a disservice to students. It's a missed opportunity for writing instructors across campus to embrace an important threshold concept in writing studies: "learning to write effectively requires different kinds of practice, time, and effort" (Yancey, 2015, p. 64). Instructors across the curriculum can design assignments providing practice for the time, effort, and challenge involved in writing. Moreover,

students reported in our interviews that they are ready to accept these challenges, as they acknowledged the vulnerability they may experience as writers, the difficulty they may have in finding sources, or even the nuances they must face with word choice.

We see Lifewide WAC as an invitational model, rather than a directive, and we invite WAC program administrators and faculty across the curriculum to engage students as writers in their lifewide writing.

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Appendix A

Table 1 reports demographic questions asked and the tallied responses from the survey.

Demographic Survey Question	Number of Respondents	Responses	
Altogether, given the college-level courses with direct instruction in writing (e.g., composition courses, writing-intensive courses) you have already completed and the ones you are currently enrolled in, how many college-level courses with direct instruction in writing have you taken?	n=239	1-3 writing classes	98
		4-6 writing classes	74
		7+ writing classes	29
		None	38
What is your gender identity?	n=176	Female	145
		Male	24
		Nonbinary	3
		Prefer not to say	3
		Other	1
What is your race? (Check all that apply.)	n=178	White	88
		Black or African American	28
		Asian	15
		Multiple races selected	10
		Hispanic or Latino/a	10
		Prefer not to say	9
		Other	8
		Middle Eastern	5
		Bi- or Multi-racial	4
		South Asian	1
		American Indian or Native Alaskan	1
What is your age?	n=141	18-22	141
		23-30	32
		31-40	1
		51+	1
		Prefer not to say	1
While you are taking classes, where do you reside?	n=178	Live on-campus / resident	114
		Commuter / day scholar	64
Have either of your parents completed a 4-year university/college degree?	n=178	Yes	89
		No	85
		Prefer not to say	4
What is your year of undergraduate study?	n=177	Year 3	80
		Year 4	77
		Year 5+	14
		Other	6
Have you attended any other post-secondary institutions prior to enrolling/registering at your current school?	n=178	No	140
		Yes	38
What is your attendance status?	n=177	Full-Time	170
		Part-Time	7
Are you studying in your home country?	n=178	Yes	168
		No	10
What is your first language/mother tongue?	n=177	English	136
		Arabic	26
		Spanish	6
		Korean	2
		German; Gaelic-Irish; Somali; Dutch; Vietnamese; Urdu; Tagalog	1 of each

Appendix B

In addition to the demographic questions listed in Appendix A, the survey asked respondents the following questions:

7. In which of the following spheres have you produced written texts in the past year (including digital and/or visual texts)? (Check all that apply.)
    - Self-motivated spheres, e.g., texting (WhatsApp, SMS), email, social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram), scrapbooks, personal journals, diaries, songwriting, creative writing
    - Civic, community, and/or political spheres, e.g., posters, flyers, petitions, surveys, by-laws
    - Co-curricular spheres, e.g., reports for student organizations, student government/council policy briefs, proposals, memos, and by-laws, student newspaper articles and opinion pieces
    - Internship spheres, e.g., memos, blog posts, reports, executive summaries, emails, reports to supervisor
    - Work-based spheres related to your job(s), e.g., prep and closing lists, inter-office memos, communications to clients, budgets, customer orders, inventory lists
    - Course/classroom-based spheres, e.g., essays, literature reviews, research assignments/ papers, lab reports, case studies
    - Other spheres (please describe briefly)

[Based on the selections to the question above, students were asked the following question for each sphere identified.]

8. Please describe the kinds of texts you typically write in your [selected] spheres.
9. What similarities do you see between and across the writing you have done in different spheres?
10. What differences do you see between and across the writing you have done in different spheres?
11. Based on your experiences in each of these spheres, what have you learned about writing?