I transitioned into a full-time Academic Support position last year, after teaching as an adjunct in the Legal Research and Writing (LRW) program for several years. For me—as I imagine it is for many of the scholars who contributed to this edition of the Duquesne Law Review—legal writing and academic support are inextricably intertwined. Some of the articles focus on the personality characteristics and skills of this “new generation” of law students, while others offer solutions about how to best support the academically underprepared. All of the articles, however, celebrate the relationship between academic support and legal writing. The synergy between LRW and academic support is nothing new, however. Here is my story.

During my first semester of law school, I struggled – a lot. I was, at least initially, overconfident, yet underprepared\(^1\) for the rigors of law school. My undergraduate degrees\(^2\) in psychology and Latin American studies had not prepared me for the Socratic Method. I quickly found myself nervous to speak in class,\(^3\) worried that my confusion would become apparent to my classmates.\(^4\) To complicate matters further, I began to resent the other classmates whose parents were already leaders and lawyers, irrationally blaming them for my struggles.\(^5\) Needless to say, my first-semester grades were dismal.

I returned in January determined to do better, but not quite sure how. We did not have an academic support program at the time, and all of my classes had 80+ students – well, all except for one: Legal Research & Writing. I decided to put all my eggs into that small LRW basket.

I fully immersed myself in the spring appellate brief. I read all the cases; I tried to figure out how they all fit together. I questioned everything. “Where were the gaps in the law?” “How can I win?” “What will make my argument stronger?” All the hard work paid off. I wrote a solid brief and received a lot of positive feedback from my LRW professor and my LRW classmates. I thought to myself

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\(^1\) See Vance, Stuart article  
\(^2\) See Rebecca Flanagan article  
\(^3\) See Heidi Brown article  
\(^4\) See Christopher article  
\(^5\) See Pettinato article
“so that’s what law professors want.” It was my light bulb moment. I still remember standing on the third floor of this building, just outside the Courtroom. It came to me in an instant – if I analyzed the law on my exams like I did in my appellate brief, then there was a chance I could improve my other grades. I took my spring exams with a new plan and a sense of purpose. It worked. I earned the CALI award in LRW and improved all of my other grades. I never looked back.

As a person born in October 1980, I’m just a few months shy of qualifying for the “millennial” moniker we’ve all heard so much about. But my own personal experience tells me that “millennial,” “net gen,” or whatever snappy new label the future holds, there is hope. We—as legal writing professors and academic support professionals—have the power to turn even the most academically underprepared students into lawyers, judges, scholars, and even professors.