

# Words

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## Hello from Dr. Gunning

Hi Writers!

Welcome to Words, a redesign of our WORD! newsletter jumpstarted in PRWR 625 *Design Layout & Production* with Prof. Harrison. PRWR Graduate assistants Elizabeth Eakes and Lydia Hadfield honed their new skills in Adobe InDesign, Photoshop, and Illustrator to design this new format.

### Fall graduates

As we close out 2024, I wanted to wish our Fall '24 graduates well as they embark on new adventures: **Jodie Abruscato, M.S., Nicole Allen, M.S., Elizabeth Epps, M.S., Dustin Jackson, M.S., Margaret Oster, M.S., Barbara Stanton, M.S., and Christina Yao, M.S.** If you see them in class or in the hallways, send them a congratulations!

### Community projects

Fall '24 hosted several community projects: Dr. Stuckey's 611 *Rhetoric* worked with Northeast Towson Improvement Association ([NeTIA](#), a [G.I.V.E.](#) partner) in telling the neighborhood's story, including writing a book proposal, creating ArcGIS story maps, and tracing the lineage of the neighborhood's landmarks and inhabitants. Dr. Gunning's 623 *Technical Writing and Information Design* students designed five sample chapter layouts for NeTIA, and Prof. Harrison's 625 *Design, Layout and Production* created materials to promote the English department's pathways and its graduates.

### Funding for conferences & professional development

One benefit that I want to ensure students are aware of is [conference and professional development funding](#) from the Graduate Student Association. Current students are eligible to apply for up to \$600 in research funding towards thesis projects, \$600 in conference funding, and \$300 in professional development per year. Elizabeth Eakes used conference funding when she presented a piece she wrote in Prof. Harrison's Spring '24 647 *Theory of Creativity* course at *All Write, Columbia Nonfiction Writers Conference* in Spencertown, NY. Alumni are also encouraged to apply for [professional development funding](#) through the TU Alumni Association. Applications are due in early May.

Until Spring!  
Sarah Gunning

# What was it like to be a PRWR grad student *in the 90s*?

*Elizabeth Eakes*

Darcy Herman, M.S. 1996, is a Program Director for a local environmental nonprofit called the Gunpowder Valley Conservancy. She spends her work hours writing grant reports, organizing community greening projects, and communicating professionally within many circles of volunteering and environmentalism.

30 years ago, she was a student in Towson's Professional Writing graduate program. From 1994 - 1996, Darcy was a full time student in the program and had an assistantship as a writer for the original PRWR newsletter. With curiosity about PRWR of the past, I sat down with Darcy to hear about her experience. She provided nothing short of a glowing review.

One strength of the PRWR program is a multi-genre curriculum, and this asset was just as strong in the 90s. Darcy expressed, "Every type of writing that I was able to explore in the program has influenced me in some way, in the various careers that I've had. It was a wonderful experience."

Darcy's favorite PRWR course was *Scientific and Technical Writing* with Dr. Sharon Gibson-Groshon, where she learned to write for a "lay audience." She also loved taking *Creative Nonfiction* and *Rhetoric*. Sound familiar? When reflecting on her *Rhetoric* class, she said "I still think about that, that is something that really influences my work."

She also learned from *Electronic Publishing* with Dr. Paul Miers, which she recalls was "at the very beginning of what the internet was" and "everything was new". Her skills from this course set her ahead of the curve with coding web pages: after she graduated,

Darcy became the "go-to person" at her copyediting job.

The original PRWR newsletter was called *The Word Today*, (as in, "what's the word today?") and was an 8 page, 11x17 document that was released quarterly. Since the publishing world was still in the early stages of being able to create a replicable design, the first editions were pasted up and photocopied.

Darcy worked on the newsletter with two other alumns- Tony Mafale and Vince Brusio. Their newsletters included "dates, happenings, interviews, and interesting articles"- some things never change!

As a grad student, Darcy's favorite genres were science writing and creative nonfiction. Today, writing is still her love, but she doesn't have as many opportunities in her current role at GVC to write within those genres. It was apparent that Darcy loved her time in the program. As our interview came to a close, she told me, "I was always excited to come to class."

**"Every type of writing that I was able to explore in the program has influenced me... It was a wonderful experience."**

# New Student Profiles

**Sophie Shippe** is both educated and employed by Towson University.

Sophie uses her background in media communication in her role as a web content specialist in TU's Marketing Department.



**Sophie enjoys the many worlds of fiction.**

Her favorite genres to read and write are fantasy or speculative fiction. She's currently taking PRWR 653 *Writing the Novel* and is expanding her horizons by writing realistic fiction.

**Sophie enjoys audiobooks, and uses the Storygraph app to track her reads.**

Her most recent read was a cozy fantasy called *Legends and Lattes*. For those who don't know, a cozy fantasy takes place in a place such as a coffee shop or book store, but in a fantasy world, and features a low stakes plot.

**Coffee shops often call her name.**

Sophie has fun writing in coffee shops, especially if they're a new environment for her. She loves grabbing a drink and letting herself find motivation in the movement of people around her.

— Eakes

**Rob Konger** wants the cold hard facts.

Rob appreciates that PRWR takes technical writing seriously. "I like being able to break things down to the bare essentials," he says.

**His dream job is to write *For Dummies* books.**

Rob enjoys explaining complex information clearly. He wants to write manuals and textbooks. It's that simple.

**Rob reads a lot of manuals.**

Recently, Rob read about whether deadlines impede engineers' ability to write. "Everyone freaks out about deadlines," Rob says. However, he identifies with the engineers in the study, who felt like deadlines helped them prioritize writing.

**He focuses by a window and gets distracted at his desk.**

If Rob needs to power through an assignment on deadline, he says, "I have to be near a window. I have to see the outside world to know I'll get through it." Rob likes writing at his basement desk in lower-stakes scenarios, when his attention is free to wander.

— Hadfield



# New Student Profiles

**Divya Benezette** loves Indian poetry and *Star Wars*. Enrolling in the PRWR creative writing track seemed like the natural next step to Divya, after she earned her English Literature B.A. from Towson.

**She aims to write the middle-grade novel she longed to read as a Desi pre-teen.**

“It’s important to me to write pieces that celebrate my culture,” she says. Divya primarily writes poetry. Her poem “Fungus Gnats” is published in the first issue of *Bardics Anonymous*.



**Lately, Divya is enjoying *Swan* by Mary Oliver.**

She shares Oliver’s interest in ecology. Reconnecting with her childhood love of nature during the early days of Coronavirus influenced Divya’s poetic sensibility and her identity as a writer.

**Divya isn’t picky about where she writes.**

Her bedroom is a cozy, safe spot to compose, but wherever Divya has access to a phone, keyboard or pen is fine by her. “I write so much all the time, it’s the writing that’s important to me rather than where and how,” she says.

— Hadfield

**Welcome back, Josh Mitchell!**

Josh is new to the PRWR program, but he’s not new to TU! During his time as an English major undergrad, Josh met Dr. Harvey Lillywhite. They connected over writing concepts and developed an ongoing working relationship, which led Josh to land in the PRWR program many years later.

**What genre or project gets you excited to write?**

Josh is passionate about personal energy management and productivity, as well as cognitive science and neuro-linguistics. He’s interested in “how we interact with words and text.”

**Josh recently enjoyed reading *Stolen Focus* by Johann Hari.**

This book explores the reality that many of us, regardless of age, are struggling to maintain attention for an extended period of time. Josh recounts that Hari “is a great storyteller.”

**Favorite place to write?**

On an airplane! Josh said it provides “a nice clear space, especially when there’s no internet.” His advice for other writers? “Buy a plane ticket for the sole purpose of getting your book done.”

— Eakes






# Role-playing as an Intern

Lydia Hadfield


**It's unusual for a student to begin an internship and a master's degree program at the same time.** But when first semester PRWR student Amber Housley rolled a serendipitous opportunity, she knew she had to try on an Evil Hat internship for size. So far, it's been a great fit.

Evil Hat Productions is tabletop roleplaying game (RPG) outfit. Amber is an RPG enthusiast and Senior Technical Editor for Peraton at the Department of Defense Cyber Crime Center. When Amber discovered Evil Hat Productions was based in Maryland, she sent a cold email in the direction of her dreams. Evil Hat not only replied—they also offered a paid internship.

**“I was hoping to get into this line of work,” Amber said.** The fact she'd knock out a PRWR requirement by taking the internship? Bonus points.



**“You have to be creative, but have a good grasp of rules.”**



Amber waged a longtime campaign alongside husband Chase Housley (fellow military veteran and PRWR student) to connect their careers to their creative passions. At one point, the couple considered opening a tabletop gaming store. Now they dream of working as freelance RPG editors. Interning with Evil Hat, Amber said, gave her valuable insight into the industry. Amber also drew parallels between RPG gameplay and writing skills.

“You have to be creative, but have a good grasp of rules,” she said.

This semester, Amber created marketing copy, taglines, and social media content for the RPG company. She also wrote the script for a promotional video. Her internship involved collaboration with Evil Hat's six person team, including weekly ideation/feedback sessions with a supervisor.

**Amber encourages PRWR students to consider non-traditional storytelling media companies, when they cast around for internships.** Also, she said, let your hobbies inspire you. Tabletop games are escapist fun, Amber said, but they also create chances to explore your identity and exercise empathy—to play “what it's like to experience another character in another reality.” You get to try out a new role and test the waters of fantasies or potential new realities. In other words, a great role-playing game experience has much in common with telling a good story...and finding a great internship.

—Hadfield

# Alumnus Inspiration: a conversation with Tyler New

Elizabeth Eakes



## Tyler New, M.S. '17, is a PRWR alum... and a writing success story.

Tyler was an English major at Towson as an undergrad and started the accelerated PRWR program during his senior year. Since graduating from PRWR, he's reached multiple writing milestones, both professionally and personally.

A few years after graduating, he landed a job as a technical writer for the Department of Energy (DOE), in the National Nuclear Security Administration, specifically within the Office of Emergency Management. He works remotely as a contractor, and his favorite part of the job is leading a lunch-and-learn series where he talks to members of his department about self-editing their writing.

His daily work for the DOE also includes writing standard operating procedures, leading communications campaigns, editing newsletters, and editing memos that go to Congress. Tyler ranks his current job as the best one he's had since graduating, and reports that the DOE's workplace culture resembles the friendliness of academia.

### A technical writer with a creative edge

Tyler's favorite genre to write is creative nonfiction- memoirs and essays. He took Professor Downs' Freelance Writing Class and his personal essay, "White Lies" was later published in *Baltimore Magazine*. It's a riveting and reflective story about how he was nearly recruited into a white nationalist group. You can read it [here](#) and I recommend that you do.

But Tyler's writing education isn't finished yet; he's currently pursuing a MA in Writing at Johns Hopkins.

His master's thesis will hopefully translate into a book about "two Baltimores": he's writing a series of essays about the affluent vs the struggling, the progress in the city over the past 13 years, and how he has grown with the city over the last decade. The fact that he manages to write creatively in his personal time is a feat that many of us who write for work all day would consider miraculous.

### Reflections on his time in the PRWR program

While taking it, *Rhetorical Grammar* was the class Tyler enjoyed the least, but since graduating, it's proven to be the most helpful. His first job after grad school was leading a grammar series, and he expressed that people really appreciated learning the mechanics of grammar. He assured me, "The skills that you develop at TU in this program are super helpful and valuable."

### Advice for current & graduating students

When I asked him for advice, Tyler imparted the following wisdom- "Earlier in my career, when I was first looking for jobs, I was willing to take anything. I would say to current students, don't forget your worth, you do bring a lot of skills to the table. Some employers will low ball you... I regret not negotiating my salary a bit more." Then he added, "There are employers who will absolutely value your writing. Don't compromise."

**"There are employers who will absolutely value your writing. Don't compromise."**

# Project Feature: GBCLC

Lydia Hadfield

**Dr. Sherita Roundtree and PRWR graduate assistant Jasmin Thames are exploring collaborative possibilities between writers, Towson University students, and Baltimore artist communities.** The goal of their emerging project, The Greater Baltimore Community Literacies Collective (GBCLC), is to reach audiences in ways that are meaningful for everyone involved. Dr. Roundtree's definition of *literacies* is closer to a synonym for *understandings*.

"We talk about literacies as reading, writing, and composing all the ways knowledge is formed and communicated," she says.

**Thames is gathering information on Baltimore arts communities.** At the heart of this research is, Thames says, "Figuring out what organizations need. Making sure to understand what the community is. Where they fit in Baltimore."

Thames analyzed the website content of various museums, galleries, events, bookstores, and nonprofits that inhabit the Baltimore artworld. The project intends to celebrate what's currently happening, facilitate new collaboration, and identify shared needs.

**Dr. Roundtree imagines ways GBCLC could bridge gaps.** It may be through consultation or through writing on behalf of artists. They could develop workshops to help artists communicate to new audiences, Dr. Roundtree says.

"Generally many arts spaces are not open to marginalized communities," she notes. "Also, many arts are not always accounted for or supported."

Dr. Roundtree scrupulously re-iterates that the Towson University participants in the

Collective will not prescribe the work. Projects will be shaped in a mutual way that respects the artists' agency.

**Next fall, Dr. Roundtree plans to weave Community Literacies Collective projects into the PRWR 627 Cultural Rhetorics and Literacies course.** Eventually, GBCLC will "be able to function by itself, but supported

by courses, not dependent on courses," Dr. Roundtree says.

**Thames is thinking up ways to pitch the Collective to a variety of audiences, including potential grant funders.** Dr. Roundtree wants The Community Literacies Collective to be sustainable and intentional.

**"Figuring out what organizations need. Making sure to understand what the community is. Where they fit in Baltimore."**

— *Jasmin Thames*

"Meaning-making is a pretty significant part of our focus," she says.

For Thames, a writer with a Cognitive Science background, working on the GBCLC project has provided a meaningful way for her to explore practical research, narrative writing, and transdisciplinary communication work. During her assistantship, she's practiced talking about what literacies research means.

**The meanings of arts literacies, Dr. Roundtree intimates, have far-reaching potential and are never static.**

"The research is always taking place," Dr. Roundtree says.

—*Hadfield*

# G.I.V.E. Updates

Grantwriting in Valued Environments (G.I.V.E) advances students' professional writing goals by connecting their coursework to the writing needs of small nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in the Baltimore region.

## Selected Partnership News

### *The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum Inc.*

G.I.V.E. recently submitted a grant for \$100k to contribute towards museum renovation and expansion.

### *North East Towson Improvement Association (NeTIA)*

PRWR students are collaborating with NeTIA president Nancy Goldring to write a book proposal, update Ms. Goldring's C.V., provide information design ideas, create map guidelines, and perform genealogical and historical research related to East Towson, a community founded by manumitted enslaved people.

**Contact Dr. Zosha Stuckey ([zstuckey@towson.edu](mailto:zstuckey@towson.edu)) to learn more about G.I.V.E., nonprofit internship opportunities and possible assistantships.**

# PRWR FAQs

## What is the PRWR Portfolio?

When you've completed 15-18 credits, choose 3 completed course projects you're proud of that demonstrate how you think, write, and/or design. You'll present your portfolio to two faculty members in a 10-15 minute talk. The faculty will offer feedback. They may suggest courses, internships, job titles, and publications that align with your goals. The portfolio meeting should take about 30 minutes total.

## May I create a Master's Thesis?

Yes! If you're ready to commit to a creative project or delve deep into a research project, the PRWR thesis option is there for you. Ask three faculty members to join your thesis committee: One advisor and two committee members. It's recommended that you take two semesters (6 class credits) to complete your thesis.

## How do I fulfill the internship requirement?

To fulfill the internship requirement you need to complete 120 hours (8 hours per week for 15 weeks) in a professional writing role.

You will submit a time log, a written reflection, and three deliverables you've written.

Tips: Search for internships when you've completed 15-18 PRWR credits. Make sure the internship structure includes a supervisor. Also, if you can help it— don't work for free!

***You will need to complete an internship OR a thesis.***

***Which option best supports your personal and professional goals?***



# PRWR Event Survey Results

Elizabeth Eakes and Lydia Hadfield designed a survey and emailed all PRWR students to gauge interest in program events. Thank you to everyone who responded!

After reviewing the 23 respondents, we learned that most respondents would like to see more community, creative, or supportive PRWR events.



Suggestions included a creative work open mic night, chats to learn about professors' research interests, and mentoring from program alumni.

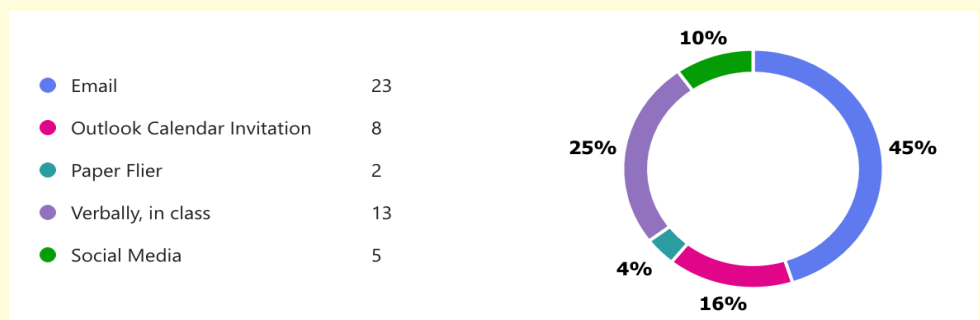
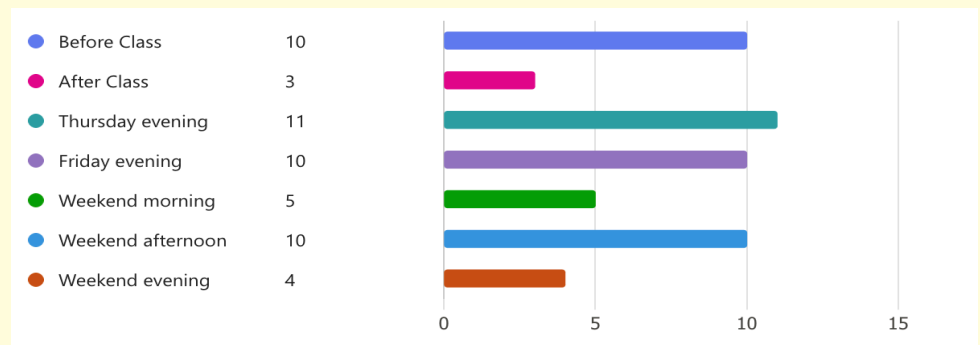
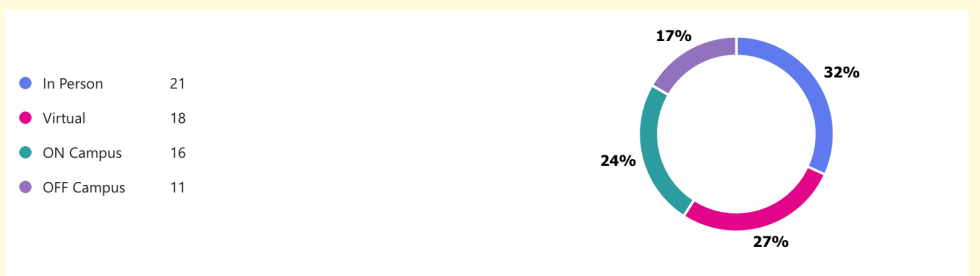
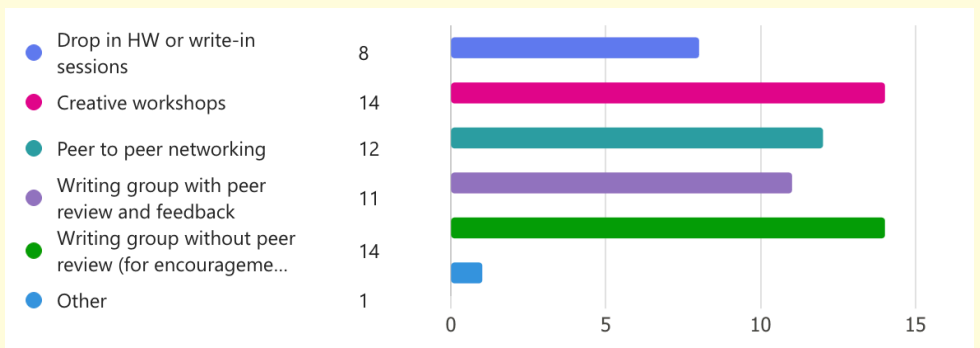
Students were most interested in **creative workshops** and **writing groups without peer feedback**.

**Students said they'd prefer in-person PRWR events, on campus.**

However, a significant number are interested in virtual events and off-campus events.

**Thursday evening was the best time for students to attend events.** Before class, Friday evening and weekend afternoons all tied for second place.

Decisively, students want to learn about events via email. About **40% of PRWR students completed the survey.**

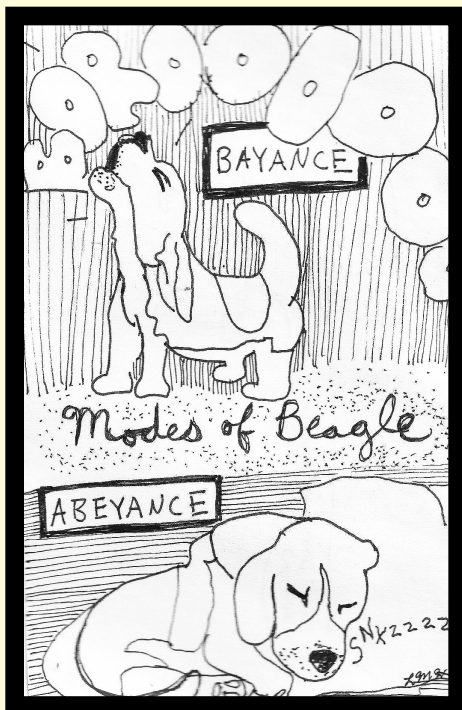


# PRWR Events: Works in Progress

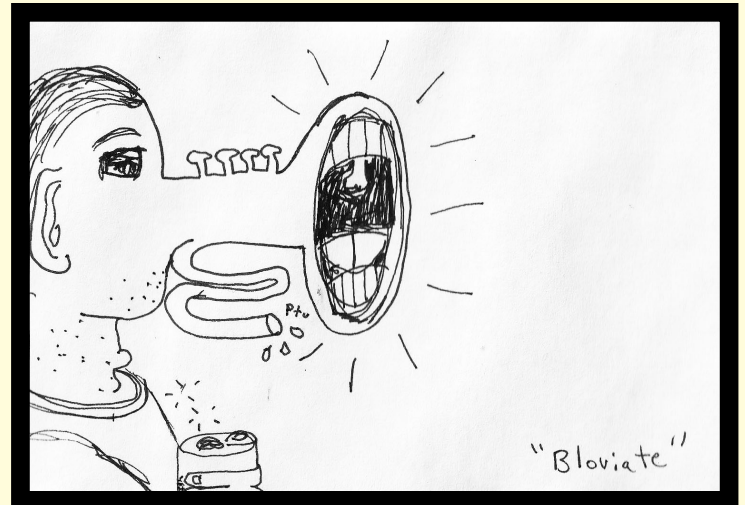
Based on the survey results, we created two in-person writing groups (one with peer feedback, one without) and started hosting Thursday Write Nights on Zoom. Thanks to those who showed up for these events!

The turnout was not as high as expected based on the survey. We're open to ideas on how to host well-attended events this coming spring. If you'd like to initiate or co-facilitate an event, contact us ([eeakes1@students.towson.edu](mailto:eeakes1@students.towson.edu) / [lhadfie1@students.towson.edu](mailto:lhadfie1@students.towson.edu)) and Dr. Gunning ([sgunning@towson.edu](mailto:sgunning@towson.edu))

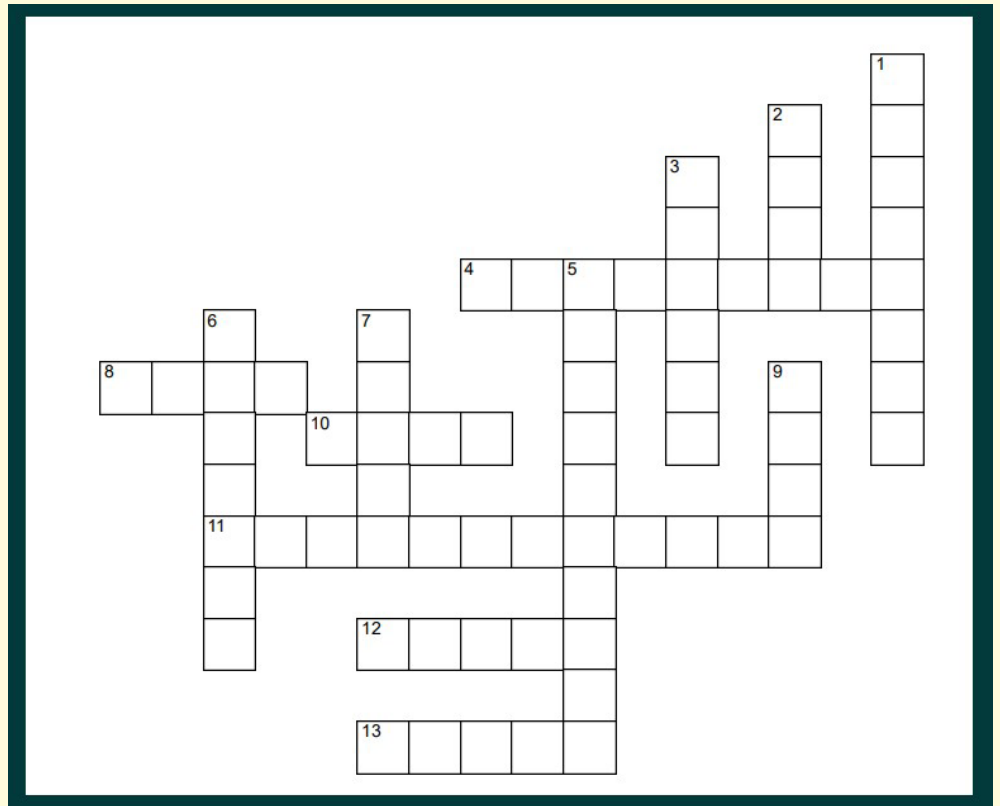
- Elizabeth & Lydia



## Vocab Comix by Lydia Hadfield



# PcRossWoRd



## Clues

### ACROSS

- 4 Ticked off
- 8 Prof. Harrison's most recent book
- 10 Useless without a charger
- 11 Fall's finest flavor, according to many
- 12 Snack, or tech
- 13 Dr. Lillywhite's favorite type of language

### DOWN

- 1 Reasons for PTO use in December
- 2 Think Charli XCX, neon green, summer 2024 trend
- 3 Researchers best friend (software)
- 5 Orioles owner
- 6 Thrifty, or feisty
- 7 Something every grad student needs more of
- 9 Grantwriting in valued environments

— Crossword by Elizabeth Eakes

# Words

Towson University's Professional Writing (PRWR) newsletter

Written and Designed by PRWR graduate assistants  
Lydia Hadfield and Elizabeth Eakes  
Edited by Dr. Sarah Gunning, PRWR director  
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