

PANOPLY

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TRANSITIONING AS AN AIR FORCE CADET

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Since March, like a lot of other people, I've been staying home more and working and thinking in new ways. What we thought might be over in a month or two, has now dragged into its seventh month without any clear end in sight. Like a lot of other people, in the spring I made sourdough starters and scoured the internet for bread flour and yeast. I also decided it was a good time to learn to play the guitar, Marie Kondo my closets, and tune up my bike. Some of those hobbies have lasted and some have not. (Hint: my closets are still crammed; the guitar has gathered dust; and the sourdough starters, despite their endearing names, have hit the bin.) Living in a pandemic is no longer novel, though it remains interesting.

Lately, I've been thinking not of how to distract myself but how to apply what I already know to the question of how best to live in the COVID era. What can the critical study of texts, from news reports to Victorian novels to contemporary video games, offer during this latest pandemic in the Anthropocene? Of course, I've spent more time than is healthy on the news and the latest pandemic data on the internet. To get some distance from the now, I've read (and listened while biking) to a broad array of fictional and historical texts, mostly related to our current moment. The critic Caroline Levine reminds us that one function of art is *defamiliarization*, its ability to "show us anew those parts of our lives that we have too easily taken for granted."

My reading tends to confirm this idea. I've re-read Dickens' *Little Dorrit*, which starts with a quarantine and uses contagion as a governing metaphor. I read Dan Hill's *The War of the Roses*, which covers a particularly bloody and chaotic period of English history punctuated by plagues and contagion. I read Emma Donoghue's *The Pull of the Stars*, which takes place in a Dublin hospital during the Great Flu (and War) of 1918; Maggie O'Farrell's *Hamnet*, set during the Black Death of 1580; and C.A. Fletcher's *A Boy and His Dog at the End of the World*, a post-

apocalyptic novel that I had to put down when the dog was kidnapped.

What I gained from all of that is the solace that humans have been through this before and have survived. I know that's not very deep or original. And the truth is probably that the real solace of art is not in the lesson but in the art itself, the sheer pleasure of the prose, the escape into an alternate reality that mirrors our own dimly but with a reassuring arc of problem, crisis, and resolution.

I'm looking forward in the spring to following the course on pandemic literature that will be offered by Dr. Marie Lathers, our Weiner Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Humanities. I've peeked at her reading list for the course and it looks fabulous. For now, though, I'm turning to a project that I've put off for years: reading the six novels

of Anthony Trollope's *Palliser* series. Trollope is a master of balance and calm, who wrote enormously popular novels about believable, flawed, decent people who come through difficulties by doing the right thing. I want to live in that world.

**Kristine Swenson,
Ph.D.**

**Professor and Chair,
English and Technical
Communication**



TRANSITIONING AS AN AIR FORCE CADET

Drew Jones is a senior studying technical communication and a cadet with S&T's Air Force ROTC Detachment 442. In March 2020, in-person classes were moved online due to COVID-19. This transition was easy for some students (and professors), but it was much harder for others. Drew's mid-semester transition was relatively easy; half of his classes were already online or mostly online. Working from home gave him more freedom to create his own schedule. "I was able to focus on my personal growth—eating well, exercising, and scheduling enough time for homework," he said. However, the transition did impact his ROTC experience significantly. They had to cut many activities, and no training could be done in person, which meant that each individual cadet was accountable for his/her own training.

One big difference between the spring and fall semesters is that everyone is now more comfortable being in online synchronous and asynchronous classes. "The nature of technical communication is to be virtual," said Drew, who enjoys the flexibility in schedule that online classes offer him. Although he is not struggling this semester, he feels for students in the harder engineering classes and labs that have 50 or more students.

Drew also works at The S&T Store (i.e., the campus bookstore) where he has noticed some big changes over the summer. He said it has been unusually quiet, and he suspects the biggest reason for this is that there are fewer students on campus to come in and shop in their free time. The UM System's push for instructors to use online textbooks may also be contributing to lower numbers of customers.

"I was able to focus on my personal growth."



"My only concern going forward is that students learn to take this seriously. While our department [ETC] is easily able to handle the online transitions, many other departments on campus are suffering," Drew said. "My AFROTC experience now is so much more complicated than it was last fall, and I fear that we might not be able to produce the high quality officers that are expected of us. As long as we can stay on campus, then we can do our jobs. If students lose focus and choose to compromise the safety of others, we'll have to find compromises in our training as well."

ZOMBIES AND THE PANDEMIC

While most English and technical communication courses migrated to online-only formats during the pandemic, one English professor was determined to safely conduct in-person meetings in spite of the pandemic. In Fall 2020, Dr. Kathryn Dolan taught ENGL 3327 American Gothic: The Zombie Apocalypse as a hybrid course—that is, partly online and partly in person.

On Mondays and Fridays, the meetings were online, but the discussions and presentations on those days—mostly within the text chat feature of Zoom—were still spirited, Dolan said. On Wednesdays, Dolan met with her students in person, on a rotating basis of one third of the class at a time. Many of those meetings took place outside when the weather permitted, and Dolan said that she was diligent in making sure masks stayed on and students stayed over six feet apart.

“In my mind so far, this hybrid method is really coming pretty close to what my classes have always looked like. There are the little lectures/slide presen-



Margaret Schuey

tations, group presentations and individual presentations, and the delightful chats and discussions over the texts. They’re just happening in slightly different chunks.”

Margaret Schuey, one of Dolan’s students, understood the risks of being in contact with others. To alleviate her anxiety, she had both the official COVID test and the antibody test. She described them as “uncomfortable but not painful.” During her first semester at Missouri S&T, Schuey was thrown headfirst into pandemic pandemonium. She described herself as “not a traditional college student.” She has a house and a job. Although new to Missouri S&T, she had been taking college classes on and off for about ten years.

“I’ve gotten used to online classes. I used to hate them, like hate them, hate them, hate them. I couldn’t keep up. It was awful! But now I’m starting to like them. I like being able to stay home; I get a little more done.”

Schuey didn’t know she was taking a “zombie class” until the first meeting. Originally, the course was advertised only as “American Gothic.” She was pleasantly surprised by the theme and its relevance. The course made her think about the similarities between the zombie literature and films she was studying and the 2020 pandemic.

“The course is designed to give us a place to play around with all of our hidden (and not so hidden) fears,” Dolan said. “And in the case of this offering in particular, it’s so timely. Everyone is thinking about global pandemics, big protests in the streets, trusting/not trusting one’s own government. In some ways, our texts are giving us a chance to discuss some social issues of concern right now.”

Both Schuey and Dolan found ways to keep busy and entertain themselves during the pandemic. For Schuey, it was audiobooks and Netflix. Dolan took up gardening, a worthy hobby for a food studies scholar. However, she had to battle a pesky crop-eating woodchuck in her yard. At least it wasn’t a brain-craving zombie.

Dr. Kathryn Dolan (left)





DR. COTTERILL'S RETIREMENT

Dr. Cotterill (right) with her friend Jóna Siggeirsdóttir (left) in Iceland. Cotterill lived for many years in Iceland.

On September 1, 2020, Dr. Anne Cotterill retired from full-time teaching at Missouri S&T. Her retirement marks the end of a 15-year faculty appointment in our department, and what a pleasure it has been to have her exceptional instruction and dedication to her students. Although she is taking a one-year hiatus from teaching to concentrate on research, she will have the option to continue to teach on a part-time basis beginning in fall 2021.

The focus of Cotterill's teaching is literature, with an emphasis on British and world literature. While it can be challenging to introduce STEM students to poetry, Cotterill does so with gusto. She is adamant about reading poetry aloud to her students and having them read out loud, so they can hear the tones, inflections, and passion inherent in the words. "I often get from students the sense that poetry is like a threatening puzzle or code of black marks on a page, to which they must apply some violent mental effort, comparable to a hammer, to crack open. But instead of a hammer you need your speaking voice and your ear to listen and hear the words' rich music of sound and rhythm as they're spoken. The recitation—the physical involvement of blood and heart and muscles in speaking powerful language—is almost like a drama. You act the drama of sound and hear its meaning—sound and sense continually interact. You physically experience the poem from beginning to end as a physical process of exact feeling becoming exact thought." These performances have certainly impacted her students, and Cotterill has had multiple former students reach out and thank her for opening their minds and hearts to the beauty of poetry.

"I think when you read poetry that speaks to you, you learn to distinguish between language used to the highest power and language that is incomplete, falls short. The best poetry and prose are really brilliant thinking that opens things up to you, opens your mind to see more, think harder, instead of poor language and thinking that open nothing, that shut your mind down. You want to look for voices or language that opens. Always opens." Opening hearts and minds is an integral part of literature, and Cotterill embodies those same ideals in her teaching.

In 2005, one of Cotterill's first tasks was to revive *Southwinds*, the literary and arts magazine of Missouri S&T, which had fallen into "hibernation." Cotterill wanted to enhance the magazine with more textual content as well as with original drawings and photos, plus color, which would make for a stark contrast to the text-heavy, black-and-white

layouts of previous issues. "We started getting photographs and artwork and holding open mic readings and creativity contests to encourage submissions. To find the funds necessary to expand the magazine, we began applying to the Student Activity Finance Board. We also received some generous assistance from the College of Arts, Sciences, and Business. We could then feature color covers—outer and inner, front and back—plus a color centerfold and thicker issues of the magazine, all without charging students for a copy. That was a big breakthrough, and we could start distributing *Southwinds* free all over campus and to alumni. That made [the magazine] more visible. We've discovered amazing artistic talent among S&T students, faculty, staff, and alumni."

Cotterill had some closing advice to give, not just to students but to everyone in our society, particularly lovers of literature. "Don't give up on literature when many in the world say that it's impractical. Besides being intensely pleasurable because of its beauty, its high level of craft, great literature is always new, intelligent, an ongoing, ever fresh experience of powerful insight into human nature, including one's own, and into human society. It has been invaluable to me as a touchstone for distinguishing sense from nonsense, falseness from what is not false.

"To keep ourselves informed, we have to be able to understand other people. We have to be able to understand ourselves. To be able to think clearly, we must use language with respect—with care and integrity—and demand such care of language from others. The study of literature is essential for absorbing the experience of great language in action. And speaking of action, I promise that your ability to communicate well will give you great versatility on the job market: for example, jobs in fund-raising, law, or public relations that require speaking sensitively and persuasively, jobs requiring writing and editing of all kinds, or teaching, interpreting, or translating. My advice is to keep reading, and keep reading widely."

Despite having retired, Cotterill can still teach literature at Missouri S&T, and she intends to do so. She will also continue reading, writing, and publishing, and she plans to submit her next book for publishing by June 2021. She will miss working with her peers at the English and technical communication department, whom she holds in the highest regards. On behalf of us here at *Panoply*, we thank you Cotterill for your contributions, your passion, and the inspiration that you have awakened within your students for so many semesters.



A NEW WAY OF TESTING

The spring 2020 semester was abruptly interrupted by a deadly new virus. In late March, professors were forced to move classes entirely online. A new pass-fail grading option was implemented for that semester. Missouri S&T had to delay its in-person graduation ceremonies for spring and summer graduates until the end of the year. About 50 percent of the Fall 2020 classes were fully in person, while about 20 percent were blended (partly online and partly in person) and about 30 percent were fully online. In so many ways, COVID-19 affected the lives of each student, staff member, and faculty member of this university.

A senior majoring in technical communication, Celtic Pipkin said that, when S&T's St. Pat's celebrations were cancelled in spring 2020, the gravity of the situation began to set in for him. Like other students and faculty at Missouri S&T, Pipkin learned to adapt to the changes placed on the university as a result of COVID-19. The school did not require students to be tested before returning for the fall semester, but they were expected to quarantine in Rolla for up to 14 days, depending on whether they were arriving from an international destination or a U.S. location. When he was interviewed in early September, Pipkin said, "My roommates and I live in a house on campus in Rolla where we've been

quarantined, and our classes are all online, so we don't travel much."

Even though he had been in quarantine, Pipkin decided to get tested during the first week of school for the safety of others, including his own family. "Before I went home to celebrate my birthday, I figured I'd get tested to make sure I wasn't a threat to anyone," he said. Being tested for the virus was quite an experience. "I actually conducted the test myself." CVS in Rolla was his testing location. He went through the drive-thru where a bag was given to him through a slot at the window. Pipkin was directed to swab each nostril for 15 seconds. After putting the cotton swab in its container, Pipkin placed it into the original bag and handed it back to the person monitoring the test. This test was unlike any other he had taken.

Fortunately, Pipkin received negative results the following week, which allowed him to return safely home to celebrate with his family. Pipkin continued taking every precaution to ensure the safety of himself and those around him by wearing a mask and sanitizing his hands frequently. Although the circumstances were not ideal, Pipkin tried to remain optimistic about the school year and his new life during the pandemic.

An Epic Reading

Sigma Tau Delta sponsored Brandon Broughton's marathon reading of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851). The reading was aired live on Twitch TV. "Drop in and watch my sanity meter progressively deplete as I rattle off 200,000 words of erroneous whale facts!" Broughton wrote on Facebook before the event. He raised \$536 for the nonprofit organization Feeding America.

A WHALE OF A TALE

a 24 hour reading of
Moby Dick for charity by
Brandon Broughton



May 2nd 6pm - May 3rd 6pm

[TWITCH.TV/SIGMAUDELTA](https://www.twitch.tv/sigmataueltamst)MST

All proceeds raised go towards supporting Feeding America



REDESIGNING ENGLISH 1120

English 1120 Exposition and Argumentation is the introductory English course for incoming students at Missouri S&T. This course has been undergoing redesign since 2018, when our department began revisions to the course objectives, structure, and major assignments. Dr. Daniel Reardon, Professor Elizabeth Roberson, and Dr. Jossalyn Larson, with the assistance of MS student Beth Reardon, co-designed the new version of English 1120 to shift the course focus toward preparing students to write in digital environments.

Before the redesign, English 1120 was focused on the “reading, thinking, and writing processes associated with academic discourse.” Course objectives included critical thinking for reading, writing, and speaking; vocabulary development; sentence composition; the writing process; and research skills. After the revision and a course pilot in Spring 2019, the new version of English 1120 focuses on the “rhetorical nature of writing” with course objectives including developing professional ethos, writing and communicating in digital environments, using credible evidence, and writing for specific purposes. While both versions of English 1120 were designed to develop students’ writing skills and critical thinking skills, the newest iteration of the course centers around adapting to the rhetorical demands of an increasingly digital professional world.

This focus has become even more important due to the changes at Missouri S&T in response to COVID-19. Dr. Larson explained that the preparation leading up to the fall 2020 semester was unusual, because “we knew there was a pandemic happening, but at the same time we knew that some students weren’t comfortable with the online classroom environment, and international students had face-to-face visa requirements.” As a result, the English and Technical Communication department adopted a “hyflex” model, which gives students both online and in person learning opportunities. The goal of hyflex courses is to meet students’ needs in an efficient manner that caters to their individ-



Dr. Josalyn Larson’s at-home “studio classroom”

ual learning styles without having to design multiple different courses simultaneously.

The newest version of English 1120 is a hyflex course, offering all course content online while also giving students the opportunity to attend in person workshops that take place during their scheduled class time. Due to capacity restrictions, workshops are limited to small numbers of students and provide enrichment content to the material being taught online.

According to Dr. Larson, the biggest challenge with hyflex courses, especially when teaching freshmen, is the feeling of disconnect that can occur without regular in-person interaction: “When they’re in the classroom with us, as instructors we can see if they’re struggling. We can read non-verbal cues and address them. In a digital environment, it’s harder to chase those students down and it takes extra effort on our part to make the students feel seen.” The workshops being offered by each professor are an attempt to remedy this issue, giving students the option to have in-person interaction in a safe environment.



Dr. Daniel Reardon (center), ETC director of writing programs, led a cohort of instructors including Dr. Jossalyn Larson (left) and Professor Elizabeth Roberson (right) in redesigning English 1120 Exposition and Argumentation, a general studies course at S&T.

TAKING SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AT MISSOURI S&T

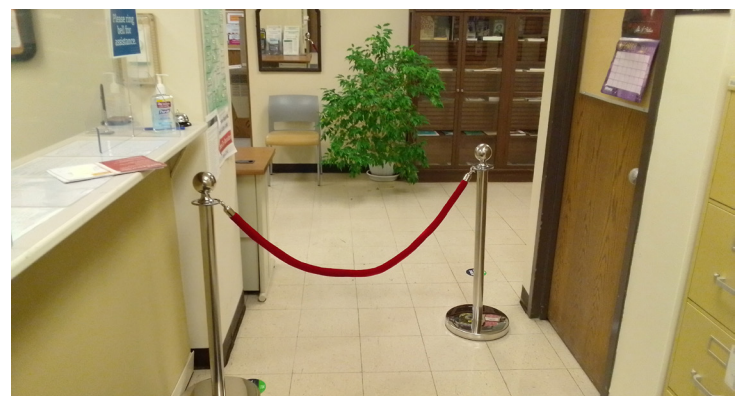


To prevent the spread of COVID-19 during the pandemic, the university and our department implemented security measures on the top floor of the Humanities-Social Sciences (H-SS) building.

Signs were posted to remind students, faculty, and staff to wear masks, wash their hands frequently, and practice social distancing. A hand sanitizer station was placed in the hallway near the door to the ETC suite, and a bottle of hand sanitizer was left on the receptionist's counter for visitors to use.

The entrance near the receptionist's desk was blocked by a red velvet rope between two stanchions. All visitors were expected to wait in line behind the rope until they were called. In keeping with social-distancing guidelines, "stand apart" stickers were placed on the floor at six-foot intervals. A plexiglass shield was installed on top of the receptionist's counter.

Many desks were removed from H-SS classrooms to maintain a six-foot distance around the desks. Stickers on the floor marked where each desk should be. The capacity of H-SS 201, for example, was reduced from 40 to 12 students during the pandemic. Many classrooms in H-SS were empty throughout much of the day.



Fostering Linguistic Equality

The SISE Approach to the Introductory Linguistics Course

Sarah E. Hercula

palgrave
macmillan

FOSTERING LINGUISTIC EQUALITY

What language do you speak? For most reading, the answer is an easy one: English. But for linguists the intricacies, prestige, and stigmas associated with the way you are taught to speak offer insight into the issues facing America and the world today. For Dr. Sarah Hercula, one such linguist at Missouri S&T, the inequality of English dialects such as African American English (AAE) is an issue she is trying to help solve.

“I actually came to linguistics because I encountered a problem with my teaching. My undergraduate degree is in English education and right when I graduated, I got a job teaching English in Michigan and I was primarily a teacher of students who spoke African American English: AAE. Those students were really struggling in my class and I was struggling on how best to teach them, given that they were speakers of a dialect I was unfamiliar with,” Hercula explains.

Hercula ended up leaving this teaching position after one year. However, the challenges she faced in the classroom sparked a fire that would lead to her attending graduate school at Illinois State University and earning a PhD in English with a specialization in linguistics. Hercula extended what she learned and studied through years of analysis in her new book, *Fostering Linguistic Equality: The SISE Approach to the Introductory Linguistics Course*.

SISE stands for Structural Inquiry of Stigmatized English. Hercula said that, when the SISE approach is applied to the classroom, “the idea is that students learn some of the features of stigmatized dialects and that forms a scientific basis for them, a structural basis, upon which we can build when we go later on to talk about more social issues and to talk about linguistic inequality and its effects.”

“Students, I think, benefit from the kind of deep dive into the facts, the truth of language variation, before they then build on an understanding of how people’s misguided understandings about language diversity can impact people negatively. It avoids the ‘cheerleader effect,’ where you learn about something and think, ‘Hey, yay, I’m not going to do this anymore,’ and that’s the end. Instead, my approach grounds that understanding and offers a true investigation

into the dialects themselves, which the students can use as evidence to support their ongoing interactions with language variation.”

In her book, Hercula talks about important moments in history and real-world examples where use of stigmatized language was to the detriment of individuals of entire races, genders, or sexual orientations. Hercula also covers how some dialects, or dialectal features, are coveted while others are seen as erring. Hercula notes, however, that in language there are no prestigious or stigmatized features:

“I have a little saying: ‘The language is innocent.’ What that really comes down to is that, when we as language scientists look at particular dialects and look at the linguistic features, we learn that all languages and dialects are linguistically equal. They are all systematic and rule governed, those rules just vary from dialect to dialect. But while those dialects are linguistically equal, they are not socially equal. What that means is, when people attach certain levels of prestige or value to certain dialects, it has much more to do with the social factors of the people who speak those dialects than it does with the language itself. Many people like to think that there is some deficit to the language, and they like to point to some issue with the language, that there’s certain features that aren’t linguistically as good, for one reason or another, as ‘mainstream English.’ But the truth, and this is a hard truth, is that certain dialects are stigmatized because the folks who speak them tend to be stigmatized as well. It has to do with their associations racially or culturally or even geographically.”

Hercula mentions in her book instances where stigmatized perceptions of certain dialects were used to the detriment of others. One example she brings up is in the trial of George Zimmerman where Rachel Jeantel, a close friend of the late Trayvon Martin, was discredited and ridiculed because of her dialectic features. (In 2012, Zimmerman shot and killed Martin, but was later acquitted of all charges in the case.)

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FOSTERING LINGUISTIC EQUALITY (continued)

“I feel like in the midst of our cultural moment that we are in right now, with Black Lives Matter, #metoo, etc., regular people are fed up and are ready to do something about inequality. This is an even more important moment to something that has always been important, and we need to bring language into that conversation. There’s no way to fix racism without fixing linguistic bias. There’s no way to fix sexism without addressing that women’s language is denigrated more than men’s language. There’s no way to fix homophobia before we talk about stigmas about, for example, Gay Man’s English. All the systematic inequality that we are seeing, language is an integral part of it. What we also find is that people progressive in their views on things like race, gender, and sexuality, still hold very prescriptive views on language. They see language as something different, ‘you can’t change your race, but you can learn a new language.’ But truthfully, it is not that simple, you cannot ask someone to quick-change their language.”

The strain that language inequality places on the education system cannot be overstated. Many children across the country are in the same position that Hercula and her students were in when she was teaching high school: prejudice against the way they use language. Furthermore, college is the first area for many where the ability to learn about linguistic inequality becomes available.

“We have a term in education called the ‘achievement gap’ and what that describes is the fact that students who come from stigmatized backgrounds, whether that’s racial, cultural, or linguistic, tend to score lower on these tests and are given fewer opportunities in school than students who are born into socially privileged backgrounds. I talk in my book about how these students are sometimes placed into remedial courses or special learning courses. That means by the time they’re in high school they aren’t the ones taking AP courses or getting college preparation. Instead they fall further and further behind. That gap is something we see between white students and nonwhite students, or linguistically privileged students and linguistically stigmatized students... If you want to fix the achievement gap the first thing you have to do is focus on the language difference and how you’re educating about it,” Hercula explains.

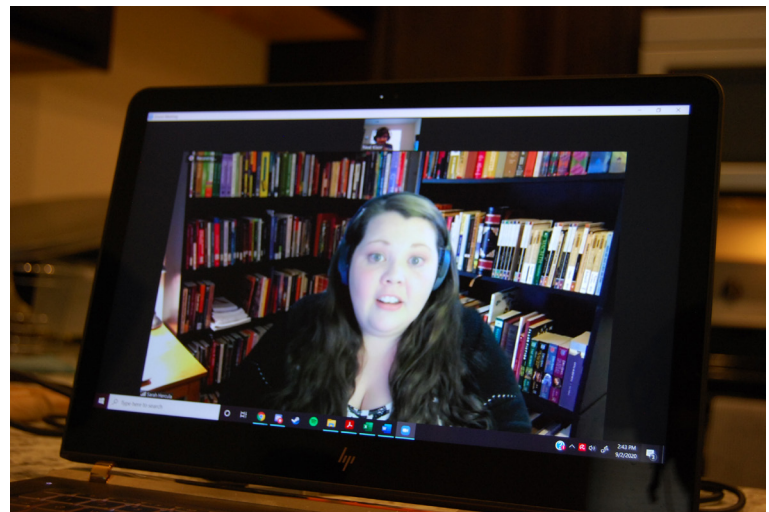
Sadly, the achievement gap and its effects have been felt for decades, especially when racism was a lot less subtle within the education system. Students in elementary school are taught the features of a mythical language known as “standard English” while outside the classroom there is a menagerie of dialects being spoken and blended.

“I can imagine a world in which all of us are trained throughout our K-12 about language diversity as a positive and are trained on intercultural communications instead of standard English with learning how to successfully talk with other people who sound different from us, with becoming better listeners in conversations where people come from different linguistic backgrounds and in gaining an understanding of the facts of linguistic variation,” Hercula remarks.

But implementing change into a beast such as the U.S. education system has historically proven to be challenging, to say the least. Hercula believes that students who learn about linguistic inequality now can be the ones to foster and implement a better system. Hercula knows that her book will not solve the problem, but she hopes it can give instructors and students the tools to become better communicators and linguistically empathic. When asked about why students should develop an interest in linguistics and apply the lessons SISE can teach, she states:

“The more you know, the better you can act. None of us are bad people for living in linguistic bias; we are socialized into believing them. But the more you learn about it, the more responsibility you have to fight against that bias and to work towards bettering your responses to other people when you encounter linguistic diversity. If you’re someone who maybe is remaining unconvinced about the impact of linguistic bias and linguistic discrimination and how tough some folks have it, another argument for developing linguistic empathy is that our world is becoming smaller and smaller. The more globalized our world becomes, the more we are going to have interactions with people who speak differently than us.... This is the time, the place, the moment, the opportunity.”

Dr. Hercula teaches ENGL 3001 A Linguistic Study of Modern English. Her new book will be used to teach this class, and she hopes other courses around the country will do the same in their introductory courses. To learn about all the courses she teaches, visit her faculty page at <https://english.mst.edu/facultyandstaff/hercula/>



ROLLA DURING THE PANDEMIC

By March 2020, people in the United States realized that the coronavirus outbreak in China had become a worldwide pandemic. The number of COVID-19 cases began to rise in New York and several other states, and the fear of this deadly new virus spread faster than the virus itself. Even in states with few cases, such as Missouri, schools cancelled classes or moved them online, and cities and towns issued stay-at-home orders.

To curb the spread of the virus among students, Missouri S&T cancelled its annual St. Patrick's Day celebrations in mid-March. Many students were upset by this decision. "I was personally disappointed because it was going to be my first ever St. Patrick's Day at S&T," said Joy Amponsah, a graduate student in technical communication from



Mary Russell



Agaba Ame-Oko

Ghana. A few weeks later, though, the gravity of the situation sank in when S&T moved all its classes online and sent most students home.

The public schools in Rolla moved their classes online as well, and the Rolla City Council issued a stay-at-home order. Residents were supposed to stay at home from April 6 to May 11, except when they were engaged in "essential activities."

Most stores in Rolla implemented health-safety measures, such as mask requirements, and reduced their hours of operation. Some had to close temporarily because they relied on Missouri S&T students for their business. Many people worked from home; some were furloughed or laid off.

During the lockdown, there were fewer cars on the streets and highways in Rolla. When people did go out, they usually wore masks, and they stopped shaking hands with friends. Commodities such as toilet paper, cleaning supplies, and hand sanitizer were in short supply.

Mary Russell, a graduate student in technical communication from Columbia, MO, stayed in Rolla during the lockdown. "The major change in my routine was not going to campus on a daily basis to attend classes and use the library."

Agaba Ame-Oko, another graduate student in technical communication, had moved from Nigeria to Rolla in December 2019, so he was just getting used to Rolla before the pandemic. During the lockdown, he began wearing a mask and practicing social distancing. Stores such as Walmart and Kroger had fewer hours of operation, but he was still able to buy what he needed.

Before the pandemic, Dr. Ed Malone used to go to Panera every day for two or three hours to drink coffee and grade assignments. The coronavirus put an end to this daily ritual, and from late March until early August, he seldom left his house. He turned his dining room into an office and taught his classes from there.

TEACHING DURING THE PANDEMIC



COVID-19, a global pandemic, spread to over 200 countries, creating strange and unprecedented circumstances. These uncertain times were made more uncertain by the shift to teaching and learning in online environments, but at least one instructor approached the challenges with great flexibility and positivity: **Dr. Carleigh Davis**, assistant professor of technical communication.

What are your thoughts about the effects of COVID-19 on education?

“It’s been a challenge; there are a lot of issues to think through, especially accessibility for students; students should be our priority. I believe that COVID-19 has exacerbated some problems and highlighted some things we weren’t as aware of as we should have been in the past. One of the problems has been internet access. Once everything moved online, there was some kind of assumption that all students had internet access and would be able to just shift easily. That was not the case. We found out which students in our classes were going to the library until 2:00 in the morning because they didn’t have reliable home internet access, or students who were sitting in a car in public parking lots working on class assignments because that was the only way they could do that.

“One of the things to keep in mind is that we can’t just assume that students have the same resources and the same homework

environment. In the long-term, COVID-19 is going to force us to be a little more critical of our teaching practices and a little more aware of the lived realities of students. The silver lining in all the chaos is being brought to bear and being accountable for these kinds of choices.”

How would you generally describe teaching during the pandemic?

“Teaching during the pandemic has brought about managing a lot of different expectations at once. It takes a lot of innovation and creativity to make it work well. Overall, teaching during the pandemic has been exhilarating, a lot of work, and very rewarding, especially getting to watch students adapt along with you. You get to see that students are really invested in the course work. The experience of moving online taught me to see that students really see the value of the course and want to be there. Students stayed on top of their course work, and their commitment was evident. Even when problems like the big storm that came up towards the end of the spring semester, students were not using their perfectly valid excuses; instead, they were finding ways to stay in touch and on top of their course work, which I found to be amazing.”

What was the switch from an in-person classroom to an online classroom like? Did you anticipate any challenges?

“The biggest challenge with the switch was timing and adjusting the course format for a course that was planned in person. You do not design an online course the same way you would design an in-person course. You plan different kinds of activities and structure the lessons a little bit differently because students should be allowed time to switch between online activities, to contact you and to give feedback if they fall behind. The biggest challenge was having established an in-person pattern with the students and then all of a sudden having to make the whole course shift and then, in the online format, trying to finish the things that should have been done in person. Most of my classes are workshop and discussion heavy. When I teach an in-person class, it is easy to give information, have students work, walk around to give feedback, and step in to manage the discussion, but in an online environment, I have to set things up in little chunks. For example, in my tech writing course, we were working on usability testing and recommendation reports when all the switch was happening.

“When taking students through the sections of a recommendation report in an in-person classroom format, I would usually introduce the section and ask them what that section is supposed to do, based on their experience, and reading on the resource they have already done. I will give them some time to work and then we come back together. It’s kind of very minimal content, but a lot of heavy interaction. When I move online, I have to get all the content into little videos that students can interact with and put into practice. That is so much more time consuming than just walking into the classroom and leading the discussion. In the classroom you can see what is happening, and then you react to it in a moment, but when I am preparing videos for an online class, I have to anticipate what the students might struggle with and prepare for a few different eventualities that may be true for some students and not true for others.”

PLEDGING PROTECTION

I Pledge to:

Protect myself:

- Monitor myself daily for symptoms of COVID-19 before coming to campus
- Take my temperature daily before coming to campus
- Notify covid@mst.edu if I have symptoms of illness or a fever
- Wash my hands often with soap and water or use hand sanitizer

Protect my campus:

- Wear a face covering in classrooms and inside buildings when social distancing is not possible
- Maintain social distancing in my daily activities
- Stay home when sick and follow advice from covid@mst.edu
- Respect the space of others and encourage healthy practices
- Participate in health screenings and testing, if advised

Protect my community:

- Represent S&T in the community and lead by example
- Support and encourage my peers in healthy behavior
- Limit group sizes to minimize my number of contacts
- Consider the health and safety of each participant
- Limit my travel outside the area to essential activities



Dr. Dan Reardon, associate professor of English and associate department chair, took the Miner Pledge in August 2020. In his role as an official Miner Pledge Ambassador, he urged other faculty and students to do the same. As the Fall semester began, the Miner Pledge was a way for each of us to demonstrate that we wanted to protect Missouri S&T and the Rolla community from the ravages of COVID-19.



STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS IN THE ETC DEPARTMENT

Spring 2021 • Issue 30



A Sigma Tau Delta chapter meeting on September 8, 2020

Our department has three student organizations: the Missouri S&T chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the Missouri S&T chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, and the campus literary magazine *Southwinds*. Because they are all located in our department, these organizations have similarities, but they are all worth joining for different reasons.

Sigma Tau Delta is an international English honor society. Missouri S&T's Alpha Gamma Mu chapter was formed in 1993. Literature is a strong focus in this student organization. Each semester, the members choose a book and its movie adaptation. Members read the novel on their own; then they get together to watch the movie adaptation. Each week, the members choose a shorter piece of literature, such as short stories or poetry, to read and then discuss during the following meeting.

The Brown Bag Series has become very popular since its start in 2018. Each month, the organization holds a Brown Bag event that features the research of one faculty member in the department. On April 29, 2020, for example, Dr. Dan Reardon talked about his collaboration with Dr. Malone and Dr. Wright on a study of the digital game *Mass Effect 3*. This series gives students a chance to better understand their professors and their passions and interact with them in a new way.

Humanitarianism is yet another focus of the Alpha Gamma Mu chapter, which holds several events each year to raise money for local charities. The chapter often participates in Banned Book Week

on campus. Dr. Dolan has been the chapter's faculty advisor for many years, and the current president is BA student Keilyn Johnson.

The Missouri S&T chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) was formed in 2011. A major focus of this organization is building its members professionally. STC releases webinars on a variety of subjects relating to technical communication and even has its own job bank for members. The university's chapter watches the webinars together and occasionally hosts guest speakers.

For example, on Feb. 24, 2020, Michael Buechter gave an in-person presentation titled "The Pen Is Mightier than the Calculator: Writing in Civil Engineering." Mr. Buechter is a program manager with the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District and the president of the St. Louis Chapter of the Society of Professional Engineers.

Since 2011, members of the local STC chapter have attended the Region 6 STC Student Conference, held annually in Springfield, MO. Some members have presented research posters at the conference and participated in panel discussions. They have also had the opportunity to meet major technical communication scholars, such as Mike Markel, Carolyn Rude, Sam Dragga, and Kirk St. Amant.

The STC chapter officers for AY 2020-2021 are Mariter White, president; Acheme "Chris" Acheme, vice president; Martha Bentil, treasurer; and Taylor Schubert, secretary. The organization's faculty advisor is Dr. Ed Malone.

Southwinds is the creative arts magazine for Missouri S&T. For the past several years, Dr. Cotterill has been the organization's faculty advisor. Due to her retirement, Professor Mathew Goldberg is assuming the role of advisor. Glad Labrague is both the president of the group and the lead editor of the magazine.

All students and faculty members at Missouri S&T are encouraged to submit their creative pieces to the magazine. The magazine accepts poems, stories, photographs, and drawings. Typically, there is a fall contest in which the members of the organization judge the submissions and choose winners for each creative category. Students do not need to be English and technical communication majors to join the staff of *Southwinds*, so students should embrace their creativity and take part in this organization.

ETC majors should take advantage of these student organizations to acquaint themselves with other people in the department and to keep up with the new happenings in their fields of study. These organizations give students experience with volunteering, networking, editing, and much more. Reach out to the faculty advisors or presidents to learn about how to join Sigma Tau Delta, STC, and *Southwinds*.



ETC majors at the STC Region 6 Conference in Springfield, MO. From left to right: Celtic Pipkin (guest), Priya Ganguly (vice president), Tristan Dauer (secretary), William Reardon (guest), and Stephen Buechter (president).

TRANSITIONING AS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT



Vivian Barnes preparing for a socially-distanced in-person workshop on campus

Joy Amponsah and Vivian Barnes arrived in Rolla, Missouri, in late December 2019, three months before COVID-19 caused a closure of the S&T campus. Amponsah and Barnes have had the unique experience of beginning a master's degree program as international students during a pandemic, but their perspectives on the technical communication program and Missouri S&T as an institution illuminate the strengths of both.

For Barnes, who has almost a decade of experience in the oil and gas industry, Missouri S&T was appealing because it has a vibrant international program and welcomes foreign students into the campus community. After researching the career paths of alumni who completed master's degrees in technical communication, Barnes discovered that graduates of Missouri S&T's technical communication program possess the necessary skills to be successful in a wide variety of industries and have high job placement rates. She realizes, however, that an international student often has difficulty finding employment in the U.S. because an employer must be willing to sponsor them on a work visa, and technical communication is not regarded as a privileged STEM field.

After just a few months at Missouri S&T, Barnes and Amponsah had to transition their learning online after physical classes were suspended. Except for a trip to the St. Louis Zoo prior to starting the semester, Amponsah stayed close to home in Rolla when COVID cases began rising in the United States. She said that the biggest issue for her was "knowing there was a pandemic and worrying that even if you stepped out to get groceries you were at risk."

One support system that has remained consistent for both Amponsah and Barnes throughout the COVID-19 pandemic is the Missouri S&T Office of International Affairs. According to Amponsah, "the international office did a very good job of checking up on international students... [and] it's comforting to know that

people are thinking about international students, so we have assurance that we don't need to be scared." This support was mirrored by the efforts of technical communication faculty to be available and support their students as classes were transitioned online.

There was a scare in July 2020 when U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) issued a memo stating that international students could not take all online classes in the fall semester as they had done in the spring semester. After several lawsuits were filed by major universities around the country, ICE retracted the policy changes in the memo. Students in our technical communication program took all online courses in the fall. Our students have long been accustomed to taking some of their courses online. One or two technical communication courses have been offered completely online each semester since 2011 because the faculty believe that technical communication majors need to learn how to function effectively in online work environments. The pandemic has underscored the wisdom of this programmatic decision.

During the Fall 2020 semester, Amponsah and Barnes took TCH COM 6420 Project Management and TCH COM 5540 Advanced Layout and Design—two courses offered for the first time. Amponsah said that gaining more exposure to the technical communication field through classes like these builds skills "you can work with anywhere" and states that being able to competently write and design documents and manage projects will help her as a brand strategist in the future. Barnes is open to future opportunities in multiple fields and believes that the positive reputation of Missouri S&T and the technical communication program will support her career aspirations.



Joy Amponsah in her campus office

MOVING CLASSES ONLINE

By early April 2020, all Missouri S&T courses had been moved online in response to the pandemic. ETC faculty members offered the following comments about the experience.

Professor Goldberg: “I didn’t change assignments, but I extended due dates and reached out to students who weren’t submitting assignments. Since we couldn’t discuss material in-class, I created weekly notes and shared these on Canvas. We also had to accomplish more with our online discussions.”

Dr. Bryan: “I had to rewrite both courses entirely. Going online isn’t just about giving lectures via Zoom. You have to re-envision how people learn, how their brains work.”

Dr. Reardon: “I had to convert the Monday-Wednesday lectures to video format. But I decided that provided me with an opportunity. How could I make a video lecture even more engaging by using multimedia and multimodal approaches? In other words, now I have all of the video editing tools at my disposal to create a video lecture—something far more than just me talking with a set of PowerPoint slides. I’ve created multimedia video lectures that my students told me are more like watching YouTube videos.”

Dr. Wright: “It can be harder to stay on top of things when you aren’t seeing people. It’s easier for things to get lost in the shuffle if you are not being mindful. Email becomes more important, and you have to keep an eye out for people who may be getting behind. The change in the spring was definitely stressful for everyone, but I feel it worked out fine.”

Dr. Swenson: “In the spring for Victorian Literature, I tried to put up virtual Zoom backgrounds that corresponded to what we were studying that week, such as Oscar Wilde’s jail cell or the London Natural History Museum. And I tried to incorporate online and virtual resources into the class so that my students weren’t just sitting watching me drone on in a Zoom.”

Dr. Wright: “I was glad that we had already been doing online courses. Most of our faculty had at least some experience with that technology, so it was much easier for our department than some others. I also thought that the Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence did a great job of helping people with technology.”

Professor Goldberg: “Our department already had best practices in place for online teaching. I think the university, like many in the country, is trying to set universal standards for our new reality. We also have a very supportive department that shares ideas and strategies.”

Dr. Bryan: “It was really an impossible situation, but you saw professors coming together and helping one another, encouraging one another. It was a really tough time, no doubt about it, but it’s always in the difficult times that character is built. I hope I was half as helpful to others as they were to me.”

Dr. Reardon: “I was really impressed by the way all of our faculty really came together. I felt like we were way ahead of the game. We had been talking for years and many of us had been working and teaching in an online digital environment. Dr. Ed Malone, for instance, has been teaching online for years. He has been a tremendous resource. I think we were well prepared for this change because we were in constant communication with

one another. Dr. Swenson, our department chair, made sure that we all met regularly, and she was always available to talk to us about some of the challenges we were experiencing. I think we were really in a lot of ways sort of at the forefront, at the lead, at the university in making the conversion to online instruction this past spring.”

Dr. Swenson: “On top of my work, just like everyone else, I was worried about my family and the state of the world. We had two relatives die of COVID in March (one in New Jersey and one in Colorado); my parents are older and live by themselves in a little town six hours away; my husband had to start working from home at the same time I did, and one son was doing high school from home too; our three older boys who don’t live with us had to stop coming over for dinner. It was pretty crazy. Only the dogs were happy!”

Dr. Bryan: “About the students, I’ll say this: I’ve been doing this job for a long time, and I have never been prouder of a group of students in all my life. However hard we as teachers had it, they had it much, much worse. They were resilient in the face of an impossible situation; they were determined to find relationships with one another and with their instructors; they insisted upon learning and growing despite all they faced; they were courageous and strong and persevered in a time of uncertainty and fear that the world hasn’t seen for at least as many years as some of them have been alive. Despite all that, despite having to move out of their dorms and many having to go back home to their parents’ houses or find a place to live elsewhere, despite having to leave behind all their friends and the life they know, despite everything they face, they came to school. Even when there wasn’t a school to come to, they still came to school. Those students have all of my admiration and gratitude. I will never forget them.”

Professor Goldberg: “In many ways, this event brought out the best in our students. I saw great drive and energy from so many of my students. For myself, I looked forward to class interactions. I’m so proud of my students and the work that they produced.”

Dr. Swenson: “I think we did great, but I’m not surprised by that. We are campus leaders in teaching innovation, and we work hard to reach students wherever they are at. I’m really proud of how well our instructors pulled together and helped each other as well as our students. We learned quickly and made adjustments.”



Dr. Eric Bryan in his workspace at home

JOB SEARCHING DURING THE PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an immediate rise in unemployment as well as a reduction in job opportunities around the country. Our 2020 graduates entered the worst job market in decades. Some already had jobs; others went on to graduate school; some are still searching.



Actively Seeking Job Opportunities

Sumina Nasrin, originally from Bangladesh, is a May 2020 graduate of our MS program in technical communication. She feels very proud to have completed her degree. “Technical communication is a relatively unusual major; many universities in the U.S do not offer this major, and I am very happy I studied in this program.”

COVID-19 has not spared any industry, and like many other recent graduates, Sumina is actively searching for job opportunities. “Since graduating I have put out a lot of applications. I wake up in the morning, and my job now is to look for opportunities and make myself more fit for employment. I get really excited when my skill set matches the job, but it is also depressing when I get rejected.”

Sumina shares the same worries about COVID-19 and the current job outlook. Besides looking for jobs in technical communication, she is also considering teaching jobs, since she was a graduate teaching assistant for two years in our department.

The current situation has taught Sumina that, whatever the decision is, you need to learn and cope with it. She has the following advice for students and graduates seeking job opportunities:

“Make good use of the online experience that the pandemic has presented. Seek internships to build your experience while in school. Finally, create professional networks, learn beyond the curriculum and engage in volunteering activities.”

Taking Advantage of Student Work Experience

Jasmina Mehanovic graduated in May 2020 with a bachelor’s degree in technical communication. She counted it a blessing that she had been hired by Missouri S&T’s IT department in February before her graduation. Jasmina had been a student IT worker for about six years before she was hired full time. Currently, Jasmina works as a Business Support Specialist on campus

“I wear a lot of different hats, as it’s a bit of a hybrid role,” Jasmina said. “My IT role entails work on a knowledge base. In my technical communication role, I help create a lot of processes for documentation.”

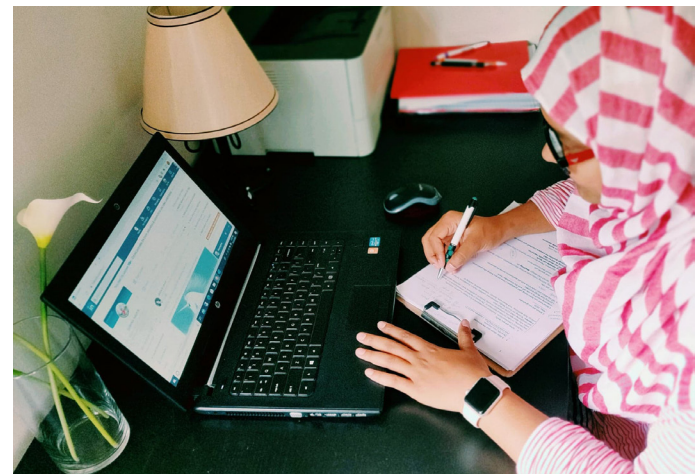
Jasmina admits that she applied for other jobs in Spring 2020, but the market was a lot more competitive as things started to close down and move online. “Because I was already in the IT family, I had an interest to stay.”



Pursuing Higher Education

Chloe Francis graduated in May 2020 with a bachelor’s degree in English. She had hoped to find a job after graduation, but soon realized that wasn’t possible because of the COVID-19 pandemic. About midway through the spring semester, when everything was moved online, she realized how difficult it would be to find a job. She filled out a bunch of applications, but did not get a response from anyone. According to Chloe, “it was just difficult finding anything at that time.”

She made a choice to get her master’s degree in technical communication and hope for a better job market in a year or two. After talking to her academic advisor, Dr. Reardon, about her interest in applying for the master’s program in Technical Communication, she put in an application and was accepted. Chloe applied only to Missouri S&T because she was already familiar with our department and comfortable in Rolla, where she already had an apartment. For her, it was just easier to stay in Rolla than to go someplace else.



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JOB SEARCHING DURING THE PANDEMIC

(continued)



Enhancing a Career

Amy McMillen is a Senior Academic Advisor in the Advising Center at Missouri S&T. She graduated in May 2020 with a master's degree in technical communication. She worked full-time on campus while pursuing graduate studies, completing a graduate certificate before the MS. She aspires to stay at S&T and move up.

Amy feels good about getting a master's degree and believes her degree is really going to be valuable and open doors for her. "I am blessed that I absolutely love my job. I am blessed that I already had a job when the pandemic started and didn't have to go out and try to compete in this job market."

In her current position, Amy's main goal is to be an advocate for students and keep them on that critical path towards degree completion. If she were to leave her current position and move somewhere else on campus, she would like to go to Career Opportunities and Employer Relations. "I get to work with students when they start their academic studies; that's what I do now. Just as much, I would like to help them find their dream jobs when they are ready to leave S&T."

Finding an Alternative

Stephen Buechter is another May 2020 graduate in technical communication. He is hoping to find an entry level position in technical writing to get some experience and then move up to higher ranking writer positions.

Since graduating, he has been actively searching for jobs, and reaching out to some of his contacts. "I am mostly doing online job searching because that is the easiest thing to do. That is what's sort of available," Stephen said.

In the pandemic, he feels it's a lot harder to get a job. According to Stephen, "it feels like there's still opportunities out there, but also there's a ton of competition for every opportunity, which makes it a lot harder than I expected."

He believes in enhancing networking skills. "I feel like if I knew more people, then I would have potentially had a better shot at getting out and knowing about how to directly apply for openings," Stephen said. "People say it all the time, but it's true: you want to expand your network as much as possible because that will increase your opportunities a lot down the line."

Stephen is considering applying for a part-time job, but he is not giving up on finding full-time employment. Stephen was secretary (2018–2019) and president (2019–2020) of the S&T student chapter of the Society for Technical Communication.



Teaching Awards



Dr. Dan Reardon poses with his class after being presented with an outstanding teaching award in November 2019. (left)

In late 2019, Dean Steve Roberts surprised Dr. Eric Bryan in his classroom and presented him with an Outstanding Teaching Award. Also shown in the photo is ETC Chair Kristine Swenson. (right)





Lindsey Stratton (formerly Dunstedter) graduated from Missouri S&T with a BS in Technical Communication in 2009 but returned to her alma mater to work and teach. Currently, she is the social media strategist in the web and interactive unit in Missouri S&T's marketing department, and, when she can, she teaches TCH COM 1600 Introduction to Technical Communication. After working for several years at Phelps County Regional Medical Center, Lindsey feels like she has come full circle now that she is back at Missouri S&T. She had always wanted to work for a non-profit and teach in some way, so this is the best of both worlds for her.

When classes moved online in March 2020, Lindsey was teaching a section of TCH COM 1600 and found the transition challenging. "Students require a variety of teaching modalities to ensure instruction is engaging, meaningful and transactional," she said. "Removing the in-person interaction was worrisome for me because it was abrupt and disruptive to the current learning environment, and I was uncertain how the students would respond to the change in routine."

In TCH COM 1600, a significant part of classroom time revolves around peer reviews. Working in groups, students learn how to give and receive feedback in a positive but constructive way; group work must be managed differently in an online environment. Additionally, Lindsey worried for the mental health of her students who were now isolated from one another. "Isolation can amplify anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues." To reassure her students, Lindsey posted "pep talk" videos each week to let her students know that "we were all alone in this together."

In Missouri S&T's marketing department, Lindsey works closely with Tara Stone (formerly Dudney), a user interface and experience (UX) designer who graduated from our BS and MS programs some years ago. "I met Tara in one of my undergrad classes; she had the technical knowledge I lacked, and I was able to help her with the nuances of writing and editing."

When Lindsey returned to Missouri S&T in 2016, she was delighted to reunite with her classmate and friend. Teamwork makes the dream work.

Hannah Ramsey-Standage began work on a political science degree at the University of Louisville, planning to become a lawyer one day. A difficult roommate and other problems affected her health and prompted her to leave Kentucky. In Summer 2015, she returned to Rolla, her hometown, to work on a bachelor's degree in English at Missouri S&T.

Hannah's return home would come with many benefits. She re-joined her family, who loved and cared for her, and her Rolla friends. Hannah had the opportunity to work in Missouri S&T's marketing department to improve her writing. She wrote an article for the *Missouri S&T Magazine*, a publication for alumni and other stakeholders in the university. She was also involved in theatrical programs in Castleman Hall.

Most importantly, while at Missouri S&T, she met and married Chayne Standage, a computer science major who graduated two years after her.

After graduating with her BA in English in Fall 2018, Hannah stayed in Rolla while waiting for her husband to finish his degree. During this time, she worked two full-time positions: as an executive assistant at the Community Partnership, a non-profit organization serving the needs of several Missouri counties, and as an instructional developer for Mizzou Academy, an online high school operated by the University of Missouri's College of Education. The instructional developer role was more closely related to her field of study. She assisted K-12 teachers who wrote curricula for the online high school. She designed Canvas sites for the students who took those courses.

Hannah "loved being part of the English program." She speaks highly of the faculty. "Dr. Dolan, Dr. Bryan and Dr. Reardon are always willing to hear feedback from students and change their approach when or if needed. Dr. Reardon is one of the biggest assets to the students. He always makes time and goes over and beyond for his students. He was my advisor and I never had to worry about meeting a requirement or staying on track to graduate."

Hannah recently moved to Colorado with her husband. She hopes to find a job like the one she had in Missouri S&T's marketing department. She remains passionate about returning to university communications to use her writing skills and to drive and advance the communication of campus research and events with the public.



INTRODUCING A NEW COURSE

Dr. David Wright teaching the Project Management course for the first time

In interviews with department faculty, several alumni mentioned that a course in project management was missing from the technical communication curriculum. Our department heeded their advice by creating a new graduate-level course, TCH COM 6420 Project Management in Technical Communication. The course was taught for the first time in Fall 2020 by Dr. David Wright, who emphasized the interrelatedness of project management and technical communication: “Project management is just one of those things that seems to go well with tech com because it is so communication intensive.”

Future offerings of TCH COM 6420 will be open to all graduate students on campus as well undergraduate students enrolled in the accelerated BS/MS program in technical communication. Students enrolled in the accelerated program can take up to 9 credit hours of 5000- and 6000-level coursework that counts simultaneously toward both BS and the MS.

A primary goal of TCH COM 6420 is to prepare students to eventually take an exam to become a Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM). The CAPM is an entry-level

or foundational certification that is accredited by the Project Management Institute (PMI).

To take the exam, a person must have a secondary degree (e.g., a high school diploma) and 23 hours of project management education. The contact hours in TCH COM 6420 will easily fulfill the 23-hour requirement.

How important is project management in our interconnected world? Consider Wright’s shoemaker analogy. The shoemaker of the past was a professional artisan who did everything from sourcing the leather to fastening the sole. Today, our manufacturing processes are more complicated. Shoes may be sourced in India, but the assembly takes place in China. The parent company of the shoes may be in a completely different country, which adds complexity to business regulations.

Project management has increased in importance because of the need to manage complex process flows and implement cost savings in an interconnected business world. TCH COM 6420 will provide technical communication students with a baseline of project management principles that are applicable to this environment.

Making Revisions

A revised version of our Master of Science in Technical Communication went into effect in Fall 2020. The major changes are as follows:

- Students no longer have to take a comprehensive examination or complete a thesis, although completing a thesis is still an option.
- Rather than taking 10 specific courses for the degree, the student now must take TCH COM 6600 Foundations of Technical Communication and 9 more courses of their choosing from a list of 15 courses. (Their choices

are constrained, of course, by what is being offered in any given semester.)

For more information about the revised MS, visit <http://catalog.mst.edu/graduate/graduatedegreeprograms/technicalcommunication/#masterstext>

This revision was informed by an external review of the MS program in February 2019. The external reviewers were Dr. Julie Watts, University of Wisconsin-Stout; Dr. Miles A. Kimball, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; and Dr. Kirk St. Amant, Louisiana Tech University.

The revised degree requirements apply only to students who begin their studies in Fall 2020 or later. Students who began the MS before Fall 2020 must complete the degree requirements that were in effect when they matriculated unless they change their “catalog year.”

SERVING AS GUEST EDITORS

Professors Dan Reardon, David Wright, and Ed Malone served as guest editors of the August 2019 issue of *Technical Communication*, the peer-reviewed journal of the Society for Technical Communication. They discuss the project in the following interview.

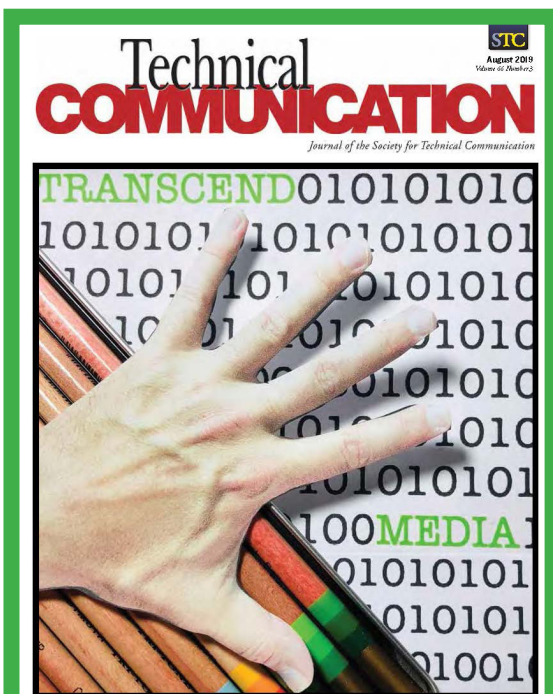
Q: What are guest editors?

Wright: “A journal typically has a regular editor who coordinates the peer-review process and makes the final decisions about accepting or rejecting articles and then works with contributors to prepare their manuscripts for publication. A guest editor relieves the regular editor of these duties for a single issue, usually an issue with articles on a common theme. That’s why it’s referred to as a special issue.”

Q: What was your special issue about?

Malone: “The title of our special issue was ‘Transmedia, Participatory Culture, and Digital Creation.’ *Transmedia* refers to storytelling or some other activity that extends across different media such as graphic novels, movies, digital games, and posters. The activity usually involves collaboration and interaction among producers and consumers in digital environments. Think about how the story of Spiderman is told, but also think about how the CDC communicates pandemic-related information through videos, brochures, infographics, etc.”

Wright: “Our special issue has an introduction and six articles on a range of topics--from a virtual ‘workbench’ for working on a musical instrument to the Facebook page of a popular weight-loss program to collaboration among player-developers in gaming communities.”



Q: How did you become guest editors of this special issue?

Reardon: “The idea for the issue was born over coffee at Panera. All three of us had done some research and writing about transmedia, and I was deeply immersed in research on transmedia relating to the game studies course I was developing.”

Malone: “The editor of the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* sent out a call for proposals for special issues. We decided to submit a proposal. Dan suggested the theme of transmedia communication, and we went with it. Unfortunately, the editorial board chose a different proposal. But this didn’t deter us. We revised the proposal and sent it to the editor of STC’s *Technical Communication*. A few weeks later, we were soliciting manuscripts for the special issue.”

Q: Why is this topic important for tech com professionals and for students?

Reardon: “Transmedia is both the past and the future of communication. Consumers who used to access information in only one format can now consume that same information in multiple ways through different mediums. Technical Communication professionals need to be aware of how their communication changes in these different formats and media.”

Q: What do you believe are the highlights of the issue?

Malone: “The articles in the special issue explore the different content-flow logics of storytelling, branding, playing, working, and learning across media and genres. For example, one article discusses a safety training program for Navy pilots during World War II. The program featured a misfit pilot, Dilbert, and his mechanic sidekick, Spoiler, in related stories told through posters, films, magazine columns, poems, aircraft nose art, a doll used in demonstrations, a dunking machine used in exercises, and shaming rituals. Another article about ‘Next-Gen Resumes’ discusses a young professional’s use of transmedia storytelling on LinkedIn as a career-building strategy.”

Q: How did you divide up the work for the special issue?

Malone: “Each of us wrote a section of the introduction. Dan was responsible for the nine paragraphs in the introductory section, David for the five paragraphs in the middle section, and I for the six paragraphs in the final section. It was something like tag-team wrestling.”

Reardon: “Each of us, I think, brought particular strengths to the issue. I contributed my understanding of current research in transmedia studies. Ed and David found the connections between transmedia and tech com. Ed is also an expert reviewer and editor. The issue’s polish owes much to Ed’s eye for detail.”

Q: Did you encounter any difficulties?

Wright: “We did. One contributor withdrew from the project at the last minute and left us hanging. We had to scramble to find a replacement article for the issue.”

REMINISCING ABOUT THE CAMPUS WRITING CENTER



This photograph from the Missouri S&T archives shows Dr. Liz Cummins working in a computer lab in the H-SS building in the mid-1980s. Our best guess is that the computers are IBM PC 5150s.

Dr. Elizabeth Cummins, professor emerita of English, is well known to ETC alumni. She was chair of our department from 1990 to 1999—the first woman department chair in the history of our campus. Although she retired about 15 years ago, she still lives in Rolla and stays in touch with members of the department.

From 1967 to 2005, when Missouri S&T was still called the University of Missouri–Rolla (UMR), Cummins taught American and British literature surveys courses, genre courses (science fiction, the British novel, literature by women), and various writing courses (composition, technical writing). She is an internationally known Ursula K. Le Guin scholar.

Cummins and her late husband, Dr. Larry Vonalt (1937-2005), were instrumental in creating the BS and MS programs of technical communication, a long process that was finally realized in 2005. She also collaborated with Vonalt and Dr. Linda Bergmann (1950-2014) to create a writing center at UMR in the 1990s. Nearly 25 years later, the writing center is still going strong. Cummins shared the following reminiscence about her efforts:

“I remember having two very clear goals: the center was not to be regarded as a place for remedial work; it was to help students improve their writing to a professional level. Secondly, it was not to

be located in an unused, dark space in some musty basement.

“I was reading current articles to educate myself on Writing Centers and WAC, and talking to people about the importance of adding this lab. I hoped that to faculty in the sciences and engineering for whom labs are as critical as books, it would seem a logical development to improve their students’ writing.

“For two years, I attended the annual national meeting of English department chairs; I skimmed *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (our dept had a subscription) for related articles; I read articles Chancellor John Park sent me, especially the negative ones (although I felt he was convinced a writing center would be a good idea); I attended an excellent week-long workshop at the University of Michigan on teaching technical writing and then started teaching English 160 myself; I held a couple of meetings for a cadre of faculty called Primary Freshman Advisors (I was one myself). I think I gave a talk at a meeting of the Chancellor’s Council on the significance of having a Writing Center.

“In 1996, we hired Dr. Bergmann, who was well versed in the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) movement throughout higher education; and the Campus Support Facility was under construction. I remember taking Linda into the unfinished building for a tour. She spotted the two classrooms on the first floor as an ideal space. One could be used as an office, reception, and tutoring space; the other could be transformed into a computer classroom.

“Once Linda Bergmann was hired, she took over planning and furnishing the two rooms that became the Writing Center. One spring afternoon she came rushing into my office to say that the lead electrician had just called her to say he was bringing a team the next day to wire the computer classroom, which, because of the design Linda had chosen for the tables, was going to require some direction. Fortunately, Larry (who had a great sense of design and organization) was in his office. So Larry gathered up masking tape and tape measures, Linda brought her drawings, and the three of us trooped down to the Campus Support Center in our customary dress-up clothes which we wore back then. Off came the suit jackets and dress shoes, and we went to work—mainly crawling on the floor with measuring tapes.

“Linda’s plan was to drop wires from the ceiling to round tables where there would be four computers for students to use at each table. Linda had measured the room and knew exactly how many tables could fit in the room, but now we had to mark the exact position of each table, which, of course, would not be lined up in rows. She had ordered the tables, they were stacked in the bare room, and we unwrapped one to be sure we were using the right measurements. I wish I’d taken photos!

“We rewarded ourselves with dinner at Gordo’s hours later.”

Now in her 80s, Cummins enjoys swimming in the pool at Rolla’s Health and Recreation Complex (better known as “the Centre”) and staying in touch with her two sons, five adult grandsons, and two sisters. For more information about the writing center, visit <https://writingcenter.mst.edu/>.

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