Missouri S&T Hosts 2025 ATTW Conference Focused on Global Election Research

Missouri S&T's Department of English and Technical Communication (ETC) hosted the in-person portion of the annual conference of the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) in June 2025. The event was hybrid in format so that attendees could participate in person at S&T or virtually from locations around the world. The conference explored the role of technical and professional communication in the 2024–2025 global election supercycle, a rare alignment of national elections across many countries.

The event was made "virtually free" through the support of CAFE, CSTS, the ETC department, and the campus Zine Lab, according to ATTW vice president, co-conference chair, and ETC faculty member Dr. Ryan Cheek. The resources provided by campus partners helped bring together participants representing 57 institutions, 26 U.S. states, two Canadian provinces, and research focused on elections in 22 nations.

Coordinating the 2025 ATTW Conference required managing peer review, developing the call list, and navigating institutional logistics that were significantly more complex than other events Cheek has organized, such as debates. Several ETC faculty members served as peer reviewers, and two of them, dr. victoria braegger and Dr. Rachel Schneider, along with alumna Abigail Boafo, presented papers. CASE Dean Mehrzad Boroujerdi delivered opening remarks. Cheek emphasized that the event "provided a valuable place to discuss technical communication" and showed that S&T's ETC program can convene and contribute to wide-ranging conversations in the field.

Featured speakers included former ATTW president Dr. Natasha Jones, whose work centers on social justice and technical communication pedagogy, and Dr. Whitney Quesenbery, executive director of the Center for Civic Design. Cheek described Quesenbery's scholarship as "work that operates in the perfect intersection between democracy and communication design in technical communication."

Many presentations focused on the growing area of political technical communication, or PxTC. Cheek described the field as "still a niche but growing part of the technical communication discipline." Political technical communication examines the technologies, infrastructures, and communication practices related to political processes, such as voting, election administration, and civic governance. Political communication, by contrast, focuses on how political messages are created, circulated, and interpreted by the public.

Cheek noted that as technical communication "continues to mature out of a purely career and instrumentalist oriented discipline to one that roots itself in a larger philosophical tradition … it realizes more and more how much it has to say about the polis." He added that PxTC is less centered on the United States than political communication has traditionally been.

In describing current work in this developing area, Cheek noted that "the leading scholars in technical communication are international scholars, and the pieces they are writing are about democracies or governments beyond the United States."