New Chair Leads English and Technical Communication

Dr. Kathryn Cornell Dolan, professor of English, became chair of the Department of English and Technical Communication on Aug. 1, 2025. A longtime member of the Missouri S&T faculty, she is recognized for her interdisciplinary scholarship, collaborative leadership, and student-centered approach.

"I'm very excited about starting as the chair," Dolan said. "It's an exciting department with vibrant elements—the technical communication side, the literature side, the speech and media studies side, the linguistics side—and I want us all to work together to build strong, engaging programs that look exciting to students."

Dolan joined Missouri S&T more than a decade ago and has developed a distinctive scholarly profile that spans literature, history, and cultural studies. Her books, including *Beyond the Fruited Plain* (2013), *Cattle Country* (2021), and *Breakfast Cereal: A Global Histor*y (2023), examine how food reveals political, environmental, and social change. "Food tells stories just like books do," she explained. "When literature and food intersect, we see a rich picture of human experience."

Her interest in food studies grew from experience. Raised vegetarian in California and always drawn to books, Dolan discovered in graduate school that food studies was a formal academic field. "Once I realized food

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carries cultural narratives, everything clicked," she said. That insight continues to shape her research and teaching.

Dolan also brings a strong background in instructional innovation. For more than fifteen years, she has guided students through a "remediation project" in which they reinterpret a literary text through another medium—ranging from sculptures and video games to knitted characters and performances. Colleagues say that the creativity she inspires and her approachable leadership style position her well to support both faculty and students.

In addition to her scholarly and instructional work, Dolan has been deeply involved in university governance and student support. She served as president of the Missouri S&T Faculty Senate and represented the campus on the UM System's Intercampus Faculty Cabinet. For over a decade, she advised the S&T student chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the international English honor society. She has also participated in national leadership development programs, including HERS Network's Leading from the Middle initiative. In the classroom, she teaches a range of American literature courses that encourage students to connect stories with cultural change. During the pandemic, she offered a course titled American Gothic: The Zombie Apocalypse.

Her appointment comes at a pivotal time for the department. The number of majors in the bachelor's and master's degree programs has declined, the MS program is undergoing a major revision, and the department is preparing for an external review. Dolan sees these as opportunities to rethink programs and better align with student needs. "We face real challenges—changing demographics, shifting student expectations, and a rapidly evolving world," she said. "My goal is to help us meet those challenges while strengthening what makes English and Technical Communication special."

Missouri S&T's growing emphasis on integrating humanities with technological innovation also amplifies her role. "What excites me most about leading a department on a STEM-focused campus is being the counterprogramming," Dolan said. "Engineering wouldn't be engineering without communication, reflection, and cultural understanding." She added that the humanities provide skills technology alone cannot: "Our department brings something essential—critical thinking, the ability to work with AI, critique it, and understand the language and cultural choices it makes."

"K.C. is an outstanding student advocate and a talented writer who is constantly pushing herself to find new and better ways to educate and inspire our students," said Dr. Mehrzad Boroujerdi, vice provost and dean of the College of Arts, Sciences, and Education (CASE) at Missouri S&T. "I am confident she will bring that same energy, passion, and commitment to the entire English and technical communication department."

Dolan earned her Ph.D. in English from the University of California, Santa Barbara. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of South Florida before joining Missouri S&T in 2012, where she has since served as assistant, associate, and now full professor of English. She stepped into the role of acting chair for one semester when the previous chair was on sabbatical in Fall 2024.

Dolan describes Missouri S&T as a community that feels like home. "During my interview, everyone was so welcoming that I went home and told friends it felt like a warm hug," she said. She hopes to extend that same sense of belonging across the department. "My role is to ask, 'How can I make your work easier and your experience here better?' I want our department to be a place where people feel supported, do meaningful work, and enjoy the journey."