S&T Hosts ATTW 2025 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.

Engaging Participants From Across the Globe

The event was made "virtually free" through the support of CAFE, CSTS, the ETC department, and the campus Zine Lab, according to 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.

Alumna Abigail Boafo, Dr. Edzordzi Agbozo (left) and Dr. Isidore Dorpenyo (center) at the 2025 ATTW Conference.

Dr. Ryan Cheek (back right) joins Dr. Sam Clem (back left) and Dr. Chris Dayley (front right).

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. ETC faculty members victoria braegger, Carleigh Davis, Kathryn Dolan, Kathryn Northcut, Rachel Schneider, and David Wright supported the process by serving as peer reviewers for the conference. Dr. Schneider and MS alumna Abigail Boafo presented on "Zines as Technical Communication" and braegger presented on "Chronically (Gaming) Online: Ten Years of Gamergate and the Rise of the Alt-Right." Dean Mehrzad Boroujerdi provided opening remarks on Iranian politics.

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 her scholarship as "work that operates in the perfect intersection between democracy and communication design in technical communication."

Exploring Political 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 that support political processes, such as ballot design, voter interfaces, election platforms, and civic information systems. This differs from political communication, which concentrates 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 ...

Conference attendees gather between sessions, including dr. victoria braegger (center, back) conversing with Derek Sparby. Other individuals in the photo include Michelle Eble, Erin Clark, and her son (on the right-hand side), and Sarah Warren-Riley and Angela Haas (on the left-hand side).

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, he noted that "the leading scholars in technical communication are international scholars, and the pieces they are writing are about democracies or governments beyond the U.S."

Showcasing Faculty Research in Political Technical Communication

He pointed to the work of ATTW conference co-chair Dr. Isidore Dorpenyo, whose research on biometric voter technology in Ghana has influenced how PxTC scholars understand both U.S. and international election systems. "He has a different perspective even when thinking about U.S. politics, and working with him gives me a different perspective about international politics," Cheek said.

Hosting ATTW 2025 allowed Missouri S&T to support a large academic conversation on campus and to highlight the ETC department's growing engagement with global issues in technical and professional communication. The event illustrated the department's capacity to facilitate international research and to participate actively in discussions about technology, democracy, and political communication practices.