

PANOLPY



Megan Kean knows
Cool Projects
aren't just for
Engineers
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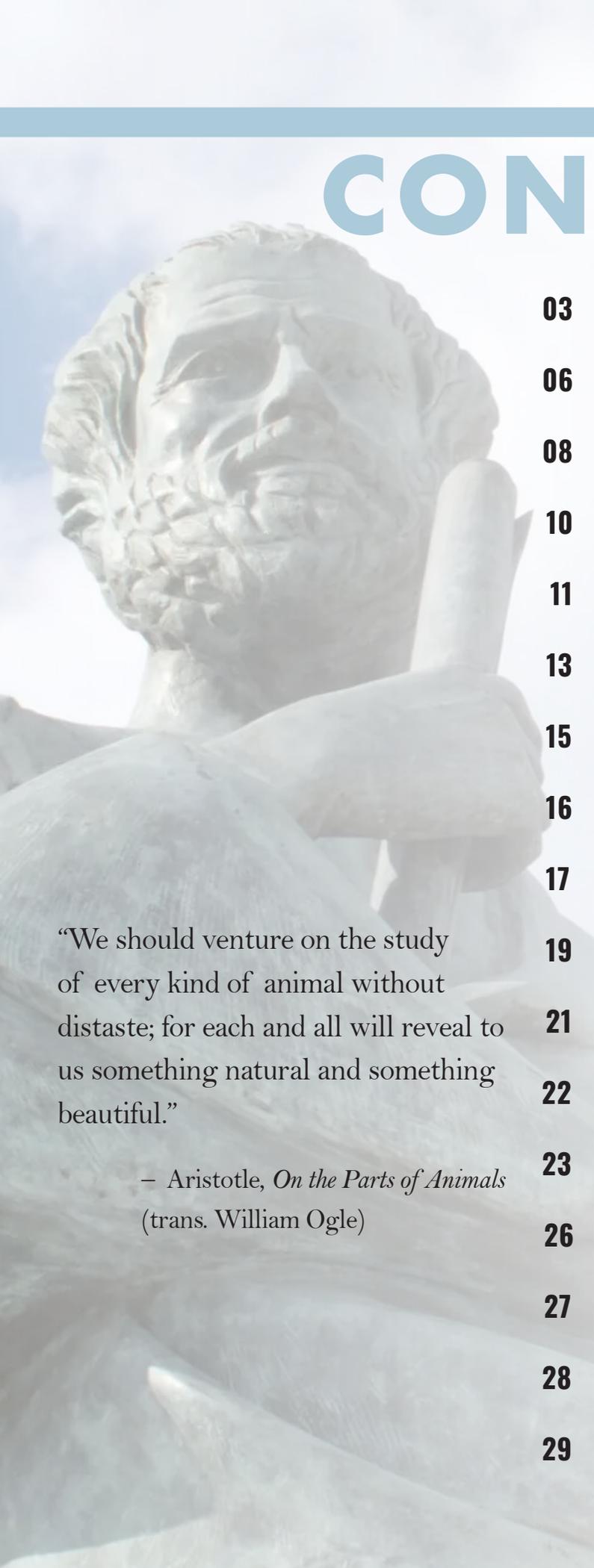
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English & Technical Communication / Missouri S&T / Volume 33

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“We should venture on the study of every kind of animal without distaste; for each and all will reveal to us something natural and something beautiful.”

– Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals*
(trans. William Ogle)

“COOL PROJECTS AREN’T JUST FOR ENGINEERS” AN INTERVIEW WITH ALUMNA MEGAN KEAN

Once a high school graduate labeled as lacking direction and having her “head in the clouds,” Megan Kean (MS Tech Com, 2012) now spends a lot of time above the clouds as she jets to client meetings around the country as one of Kiewit’s business development managers in power delivery. Megan’s work reminds aspiring professional and technical communicators that “cool projects aren’t just for engineers.”

Megan’s climb at Kiewit afforded her the opportunity to travel all over the country and abroad—Toronto, Calgary, Anchorage, Seattle, Orlando, San Antonio, Portland, and many other places. Her travels now focus on her assigned regions: Pacific Northwest, Rockies and upper Midwest. “It’s been a journey,” said Kean, whose current position was not on her radar when she came to Rolla from South Dakota nearly two decades ago.

Q: Why did you decide to move to Rolla and work at Missouri S&T?

A: Honestly, I had to get out of South Dakota. I had just graduated with a B.A. from Augustana University in Sioux Falls, majoring in English, art, and journalism. My cousin, who

works at S&T, mentioned a job opening in the marketing and communications department, so I flew out and interviewed. I was offered the job and accepted without hesitation, resulting in my boyfriend [future husband] and me becoming official Missourians six weeks later.

[Megan Kean-O’Brien worked as a communications specialist (2006-2011) and later a senior communications specialist (2011-2014) in S&T’s marketing and communications.]

Q: How did you go from being just an S&T employee to being a part-time graduate student as well?

A: I was bored, and it was one of those things where I wasn’t an engineer and my family, well, we like to challenge ourselves academically. And if I’m at an institution that has a great academic reputation and offers a discount for employees to attend, why not take advantage of it? I would have been a fool not to. It was a no brainer. If you don’t have something going on, do something for yourself!

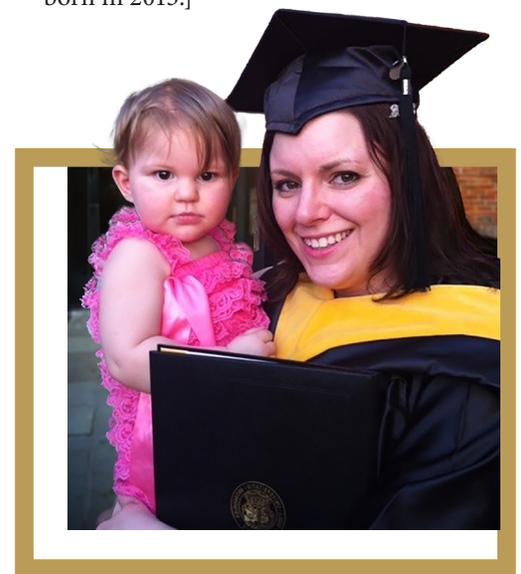
Q: Why did you choose technical communication?

A: I didn’t really understand what tech com was. I started by talking to some undergraduate students, and it made more

sense to me and felt like a natural progression considering my undergrad degrees. So I thought, let’s go for it!

Getting the degree was a lot of fun. You definitely form a lot of close bonds, at least we did back then. We were a pretty tight-knit group. We became a family, just like a real family. We ate together every Sunday. We pushed each other and wanted to see each other succeed. We realized we were all in it together, through the good, bad, and ugly.

We still talk; we are friends on Facebook, LinkedIn. They all remember Brooklyn when she was born in 2010. She was our tech com family’s first baby. [Megan graduated with her MS in tech com in May 2012, but she continued to work at S&T for two more years. A second daughter, Tori, was born in 2013.]



Q: When and why did you leave S&T for Burns & McDonnell in Kansas City?

A: I was going through a divorce and wanted a place to start over for my daughters and me. And as much as I loved working in higher ed, I wanted to put my degree to use on the corporate side. Burns & Mac has always been a highly regarded engineering firm, and the interview team made a big deal about Rolla being on my resume. When I received the offer, I figured it was an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that Rolla produces more than engineering and stereotypical science-field graduates.

Burns & McDonnell is an engineering firm headquartered in Kansas City. In my role as a staff marketing coordinator, I was a jack of all trades, master of none. I worked on proposals, client events, trade shows, marketing materials, interview presentations, etc. for the global facilities group. I owe Burns & Mac a lot of credit for building upon the foundation of my MS education.

Q: What drew you to Kiewit?

A: While I certainly appreciate my time at Burns & Mac, in 2017 Kiewit recruited me for a proposal coordinator role. Kiewit is best known for being a heavy infrastructure construction firm; however, they've made a name

for themselves in the energy, water, and engineering markets. Kiewit was more conveniently located than Burns and Mac [in Kansas City, MO]. Even though Kiewit's headquarters are in Omaha, they have an office in Lenexa, Kansas. It was closer to my daughters' school and our home [in Kansas], eliminating my need to pay taxes in both Missouri and Kansas.

Kiewit offered me the ability to focus solely on proposals, work on bigger proposals, while providing me greater flexibility as a single parent. It's like Burns & Mac provided me the opportunity to grow what I learned in my master's program, whereas Kiewit pretty much gave me the wings and said, "OK, now go fly."



Megan spent a week in Texas, where she visited different project sites for transmission lines and substations. During her time there, she learned about project planning and execution from engineers, construction project managers, and crews. This experience was in preparation for a significant upcoming proposal for engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC).

[Megan started at Kiewit as proposal lead (2017-2021). She was promoted to senior proposal lead (2021-2022) and then business development coordinator (2022-2023), before becoming business development manager in 2023.]

Q: Are there any projects that you are especially proud of?

A: As the senior proposal lead, I led the team developing major proposals for the energy sector of the business, focused primarily in power delivery and offshore wind pursuits. Many of the proposals required me to do a lot of research or take a "crash course" of sorts from a subject matter expert as preparation. My proudest achievement is writing the winning South Fork Offshore Wind bid for Kiewit. South Fork is the first American-made offshore substation. [Megan spent seven months writing Kiewit's proposal for the contract to build the substation for this historic project involving the American company Eversource and the Danish company Ørsted.]

Q: What do you do in your current role?

A: In the role of power delivery business development manager, I focus on building client relationships in the Pacific Northwest, Rockies, and

Upper Midwest regions. My role is about building trust and becoming a liaison between the client and Kiewit. I take client information back to the proposal team and tell them exactly what the client wants; I'm essentially the client's advocate. In a way, I help lead the charge by providing our team the strategy.

Q: What has been the biggest obstacle in your professional life?

A: Being a female in a male-dominated field; but anyone who knows me knows I can hold my own and I don't put up with anyone's BS. I'm fortunate to work for a company that recognizes women's contribution to the A/E/C industry.

Q: Has your Tech Com degree been useful to you?

A: Without a doubt! Even in business development, I still apply usability and learning styles. It's my job to know the clients in order to communicate with them effectively and efficiently. I ask the TPC questions: How can I appeal to future clients? How can I communicate with them? How can I meet my client's needs? There are so many aspects that I'm able to pull from the master's program into what I'm currently doing today.

Q: What advice do you have for aspiring professional and technical communicators?

A: The quality of work you do in school will prepare you for the real world.

Employers don't want to see anything incomplete, and especially in technical communication, it is imperative we complete work efficiently and effectively because it can impact the end result.

"Be ready to explain what technical communication is. One of my biggest challenges as someone with a tech com degree has been explaining what technical communication is—and I'm not joking. This is still happening after a decade! Push yourself. You got this!"



PANCAKES, PHOTOGRAPHY, PHELAN, & FEELING



Felix Nyikwagh and Portia Ofori-Benefo dancing.

On October 14, STC partnered with Bob Phelan, the outreach manager at the Student Design and Experiential Learning Center, and the Ozark Shutter Junkies to host a pancake brunch and viewing party of the eclipse. Center, and the Ozark Shutter Junkies to host a pancake brunch and viewing party of the eclipse.

The eclipse was a no show, but Phelan provided some photography instruction. The participants had pumpkin spice pancakes and played Jenga, and ETC graduate students danced.

IMPROVING STUDENTS' WELL-BEING

Cognitive Reframing through Narrative Writing

With the help of the Missouri S&T's Student Well-Being, Kelly Tate and Matt Goldberg, both associate teaching professors in our department, have successfully designed a narrative writing component focused on cognitive reframing as part of their English 1120 syllabus. The unit has been taught every semester since Spring 2022.

In the winter of 2021-2022, Professor Tate was deeply concerned when she noticed that not only many of her own students but also those of her ETC colleagues seemed fatigued from the pandemic and had low energy levels. "I was filling out more UCARE forms than usual," she said, "and working to convince students to return to class when they struggled."

Thus, Tate began to seek out tools that her English 1120 students, many of whom are freshmen, could learn with ease and that would make them feel empowered and inspired as they negotiated the transition from high school to college. It was then that she came across cognitive reframing, a psychological technique.

Tate offers the following explanation of cognitive reframing: "We aren't neutral observers of our lives. We tell ourselves stories about our experiences, and when those stories are negative, we can become entrenched in counterproductive ways of viewing our lives and ourselves. Reframing asks us to pause before coming to conclusions about how to interpret events. For example, is this story about me being bad at math, or is it about needing to try out some peer tutoring sessions? I'm simplifying, but the idea is that reframing builds resilience, which we know is important in terms of student retention and navigating life in general."

Working with Student Well-Being, Tate explored how cognitive reframing could be combined with narrative writing to offer meaning and give students lifelong tools. She then joined forces with Professor Goldberg to design assignments for narrative writing that would include cognitive reframing components, which he subsequently also included in his English 1120 unit. Whenever the narrative writing unit is being taught in Goldberg or Tate's class, Senior Well-Being Counselor Amber Johnston visits as



Professors Kelly Tate and Matt Goldberg gave a presentation about their curricular innovation at the UMSL-sponsored Focus on Teaching and Technology Conference in St. Louis on October 6, 2023.

“What is the story you are telling yourself?”

“Is there another story you should consider?”

a guest speaker to promote cognitive reframing skills.

The unit not only supports the traditional learning outcomes for English 1120, but it also offers students skills to help them deal with difficult situations and stress they might be facing and will face one day. One thing Tate asks her students is, “What is the story you are telling yourself, and is there another story you should consider?”

Aside from writing narratives in this unit, the students engage in peer review workshops. The students offer constructive feedback to their peers on their writing. “I observed higher attendance and engagement after this unit,” Tate said, “and the response from my students was resoundingly positive.” The peer workshops sought to remind the students that they are not alone. Tate and Goldberg are confident that the connections that the students have

developed through these activities will last a long time.

“Some students will say that they don’t have anything to write about,” Goldberg said, “and I always explain that that isn’t true.” He takes time to work with these students to help them identify those moments when they experienced challenges such as starting college, moving, or receiving a less-than-perfect grade, and this approach has worked all the times he tried it.

Commenting on the assignment, one student said, “[The assignment] was a good mental check. It gave me reassurance that I can do a lot more than I think I’m capable of at times. It will help me in my future because no matter what I will come across, I know that I can overcome it. I’m glad I had the opportunity to write this narrative and reflect on what I overcame.”

Other students were happy they found

narrative writing to be interesting and were glad that the assignments went beyond getting grades; they gained something to use throughout life.

Tate and Goldberg emphasize that, right at the start of the unit, students are encouraged to explore past experiences but not to explore trauma. If a student submits an essay expressing a matter of concern, the student is directed to Student Well-Being for help.

For her work on this project, Tate won a CASE Innovative Teaching Award for Spring 2022. Additionally, both Tate and Goldberg presented their curricular innovation at Missouri S&T’s Innovation in Teaching and Learning Conference in March 2023, and again at University of Missouri-Saint Louis’s Focus on Teaching and Technology Conference in October 2023.

“LEARNING IS NOT CHILD’S PLAY;
WE CANNOT LEARN WITHOUT PAIN.”

Aristotle

GENERATIVE AI IN HIGHER EDUCATION

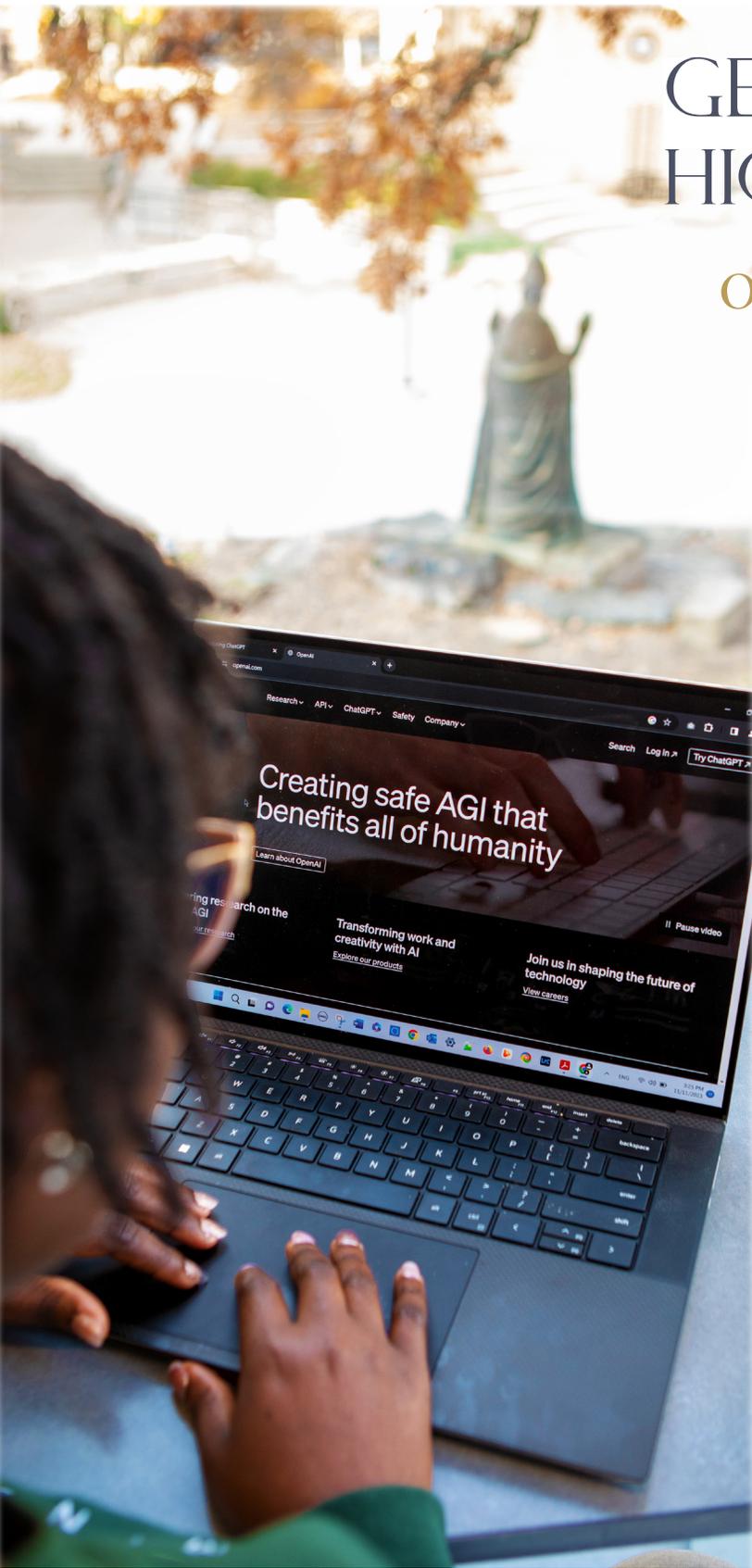
Opportunities & Challenges

In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has created both opportunities and challenges for academic institutions like Missouri S&T. As students and faculty navigate this new terrain, the integration of AI technologies into educational practices is reshaping traditional teaching and learning methods while raising concerns about academic integrity.

Dr. Dan Reardon is a full professor in our department as well as Missouri S&T's vice provost of undergraduate education. One of his many responsibilities in his current role is overseeing cases of potential academic dishonesty. He highlighted the growing concern that students are resorting to generative AI for improper academic gains. "Last summer was the first time faculty reported noticing students using generative AI [in questionable ways]," Reardon stated.

He emphasized the difficulty in identifying instances of academic dishonesty facilitated by AI, but he noted a few cases where a proctored exam revealed clear evidence of unauthorized AI use.

In response to these challenges, Reardon underscored the necessity of faculty guidance and transparency when implementing proctoring software. He stressed that instructors must inform students about monitoring practices and the parameters for assessments to avoid ethical breaches and ensure



Portia Ofori-Benefo, a graduate student in technical communication, fires up ChatGPT for a conversation.



At the table (left to right): Elizabeth Reardon, instructional technologist with S&T's CAFÉ; Ryan Cheek, assistant professor of technical communication; and Huiyuan Yang, assistant professor of computer science. Both Professor Reardon and Dr. Cheek teach in our department and participated as panelists in the October 30 forum about generative AI in the classroom.

academic honesty. “When instructors use proctoring software, it is mandatory that they make it known to the students for ethical reasons,” he added.

Reardon acknowledged the dilemma faced by faculty in balancing surveillance measures with the preservation of the educational experience. “I think what a lot of faculty are probably grappling with right now is how much they want to monitor their students’ work and then to what extent does that monitoring really detract from the learning and educational experience. I don’t have good answers for that.”

Dr. Ryan Cheek, assistant professor of technical communication, shared a more optimistic perspective on AI’s role in education, considering it a disruptive force that prompts a redefinition of the educator’s role in the digital age. Emphasizing the precedent

of disruptive technologies, Cheek compared the integration of AI to past technological innovations, such as the calculator and the Web, that initially caused upheavals but eventually became commonplace and necessary within the educational system. “AI is all around us and it’s not new. We’ve been using this technology for a while, but the difference is the democratization of it,” he explained.

Cheek emphasized the need for policies and support from academic institutions to facilitate the flexible integration of AI into various disciplines. “The institution needs to be able to have policies in place that allow for disciplines to have flexibility in their use of AI,” he said. He urged a shift in the mindset from resisting AI to identifying the unique value that human educators bring alongside AI’s

capabilities. “We have to realize that betting against AI is not going to be the way this happens, but rather figuring out what things we can provide as human beings and what things we can delegate to AI.”

The views of graduate students majoring in technical communication shed light on their experiences and perceptions regarding AI integration. Portia Ofori-Benefo expressed her interest in leveraging AI’s potential for academic improvement but highlighted the need for proper training and guidance due to her apprehensions about using AI tools. “AI can boost my academics, and I want to learn how to use it properly,” she said. “I value honesty and ownership of my work.”

Summer Potter acknowledged AI’s valuable role in aiding comprehension and organization for students with learning differences. “ChatGPT helps me decode instructors’ homework directions into steps and see the process of an assignment,” she noted.

Jude Enete pointed to the practical uses of AI for academic work. “I use AI for content generation and improvement,” he explained.

In response to these varying perspectives, ETC instructors face challenges in properly integrating generative AI into their courses and assignments. While the technology offers great potential for aiding students in their education, that potential hinges on ethical considerations and the importance of academic integrity.



Neal Kisor lecturing in Eng.1120 in the physics building on 11/15/2023. Kisor, an ETC 2021 graduate, now teaches in our department.

TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING

in ETC Foundational Courses

Critical thinking skills are essential to success in college, and many students need help in developing those skills beyond the high-school level. The foundational courses in English and technical communication (ETC) are designed to emphasize critical thinking skills. Foundational courses include English 1120 Exposition and Argumentation, English 1160 Writing and Research, and Speech and Media Studies 1185 Principles of Speech.

Definitions of Critical Thinking

According to Dr. Josselyn Gale Larson, director of ETC foundational courses, critical thinking involves

in-depth examination of problems, serving as the foundation for creative thinking and innovation. Lecturer Neal Kisor points out that critical thinking goes beyond gathering surface-level knowledge and requires specificity, precision, and the ability to seek insightful answers. Both Larson and Kisor stress the benefit that critical thinking can have on a student's ability to communicate effectively.

Beth Reardon, a lecturer in ETC and an instructional designer at S&T, defines critical thinking in the context of crafting solutions that meet audience needs through diverse document formats.

Cooperation among ETC faculties

Faculty collaboration is integral to coordinating critical thinking education across ETC foundational courses. Larson explains, "We evaluate and revise curricula each semester based on faculty feedback and student analytics." This cooperative effort involves the exchange of course objectives, scaffolding strategies, and example assignments, fostering a dynamic teaching environment.

"Collaboration between ETC faculty gives me access to their experiences and ideas and to share mine," says Reardon. "This collaboration can lead to much stronger ways to help our students."

Continued on page 12

SOME ETC MAJORS ADD TEACHING CERTIFICATION TO THEIR DEGREES

Students who pursue the BS degree in English and technical communication with teaching certification must complete the same major requirements as other ETC students, but they also take courses in education and have to pass a Missouri content exam before doing their student teaching. When they graduate, they are certified to work as full-time English teachers in high schools throughout Missouri, but they are also qualified to do any job an ETC major can do.

“Students go out into the community with a full content degree, as well as training in how to teach,” said Phyllis Blackwell, Missouri S&T’s academic advisor for middle school and high school teaching certification.

Seven ETC majors are currently pursuing teaching certification in English. They have different motivations for wanting to be teachers. Senior Kate Schisler has always loved reading and working with children. “I chose English secondary education because it puts the best of both worlds together.”

Both of her parents are teachers. Junior Madison Kastner was inspired by her senior year English teacher. “He solidified my desire to go into English education because I liked what he taught and how he taught.”

Teaching certification students complete a set number of hours of in-class observations per semester at area schools. This on-site experience provides them with a preview of their future roles. They start with 30 hours of observation in the first semester, increasing to 60 hours in the second semester and beyond. After passing the Missouri content exam for English,

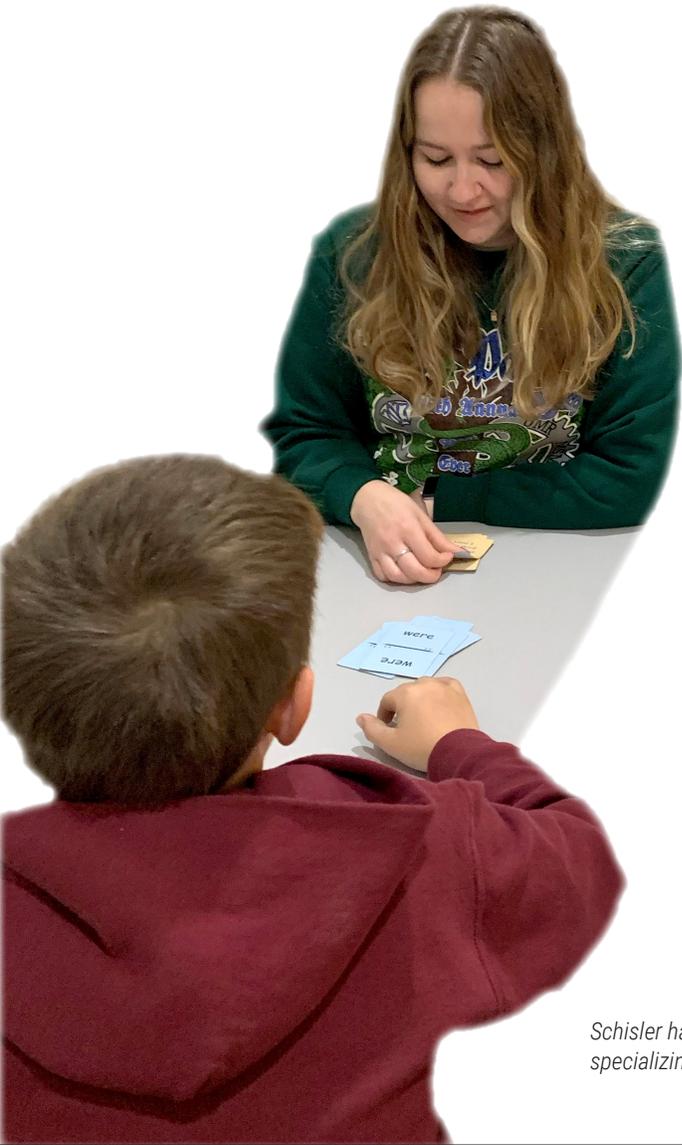
they engage in student teaching in their final semester.

The field experience is crucial because, among other things, it helps the students confirm that they really want to be a high school English teacher. Even if they decide they do not, they will have a degree they can use for other jobs, such as writer or editor, content developer, social media strategist, or web designer.

Kastner, who is currently observing a class in Rolla High School, underscores the importance of field experience. “I cannot imagine going into student teaching without the field



Madison Kastner is photographed above.



experience because you need to see the different dynamics in classrooms, which vary greatly in size.” Her exposure to different classroom dynamics has equipped her to meet opportunities and challenges.

Schisler has witnessed “how draining teaching can be.” Some teachers give too much of themselves to their jobs. They sacrifice other parts of their lives and risk burnout. Schisler knows she will have to find a satisfactory balance. “I can’t give 100% of myself all the time.”

Kastner praises the ETC faculty for helping her learn the content of her discipline. “I really like our department. I am Dr. [Rachel] Schneider’s biggest fan. I have learned a lot from her.” The faculty play a crucial role in shaping the soon-to-be teachers’ understanding of not only the content but also different teaching styles they could adopt.

Looking ahead, Schisler plans to teach in the St. Louis area upon completing the program. Kastner would like to teach at Marquette High School in the Rockwood School District because of their excellent English program.

Schisler has a part-time job as a tutor at Uniquely Wired Consultants, a Rolla-based firm specializing in reading support services. She works one-on-one with students of different ages.

CRITICAL THINKING CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Challenges in ETC courses

Recognizing the diversity of ETC students, Larson emphasizes the need to meet students where they are and adapt to their individual challenges. “Each semester’s students are exposed to new things—new traumas, new technologies. The key is to stay flexible.”

Reardon identifies rhetorical analysis as a common struggle, as students often

resist the idea of analysis and drafting, preferring quick, error-free answers. Successful writing is usually an iterative process that begins with an analysis of the rhetorical situation and progresses through multiple drafts of a document.

Kisor notes that students struggle with rhetorical invention, the process of generating ideas and arguments through critical thinking. He helps them develop

strategies for approaching the writing process and builds their confidence by highlighting strengths in their writing.

Instructors in ETC foundational courses try to foster critical thinking skills by being adaptive to students’ needs and existing skills, helping students across all disciplines on campus transition successfully from high school to higher education.



ALUMNA SUBHASHINI GAMAGEDARA

From Technical Communication to Landscape Architecture

When she started our MS program in technical communication in 2011, Subhashini Herath Gamagedara never dreamed she would become a landscape architect. She now works as a park planner for the City of Oklahoma City. Over the last fifteen years, she has traveled a long, wind-ing road from her beginnings in Sri Lanka.

Gamagedara graduated from the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, in 2010, having majored in geography, sociology, and English. Instead of remaining in her home country and working as a teacher or other professional, she accompanied her husband, who was already a graduate student in chemistry at Missouri S&T, back to the United States.

Finding herself in Rolla, Gamagedara decided to make productive use of her time by furthering her education. She applied for admission to S&T's master's degree

program in technical communication, which was only six years old at the time. She was not only admitted to the program, but she was also awarded a graduate teaching assistantship.

Under the guidance of Dr. Kathryn Northcut, then supervisor of our department's GTA program, Gamagedara taught one section of English 65 Introduction to Technical Communication each semester. "As a graduate student, I not only took courses but I also taught them, enriching my understanding of technical communication," she says.

Also under Dr. Northcut's supervision, Gamagedara wrote a master's thesis, "Understanding the Challenges that International Graduate Teaching Assistants (IGTAs) Face in Technical Communication Programs in the US." She looks back on this major project with both satisfaction and pride.

After her graduation in 2013, Gamagedara moved with her husband to Oneonta, New York, when he had accepted a teaching position at Hartwick College. The city, though beautiful with its mountains, presented a career challenge for her. “It was a small town and lacked career opportunities for a professional spouse,” Gamagedara notes, recounting her initial struggles with unemployment.



Left to right: David Young, Melissa Wampler, and Subhashini Gamagedara, three classmates in our MS technical communication program, gave presentations at the Society for Technical Communication's region 6 student conference at Missouri State University in April 2013.

Opportunity eventually knocked in the form of a small IT company, where Gamagedara dabbled in marketing and web design. It was during this time that she began to contemplate an art-related career. “I always had a passion and talent for art,” she says. Taking the Strong Interest Inventory Assessment helped her identify a profession. “Landscape architecture emerged as a potential career path.”

Supporting her career, her husband obtained a teaching position at the University of Central Oklahoma. “He applied there specifically because there was a graduate program in landscape architecture that I could apply to within a reasonable distance.”

“In 2015, I joined the University of Oklahoma’s Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) program,” Gamagedara

recounts, her voice imbued with excitement. The three-year professional degree program was rigorous and challenging, but she excelled. For her graduate research project, “Healing Spring Creek: A Community and a Watershed Based Approach,” she won an award from the American Society of Landscape Architects.

After her graduation in 2018, Gamagedara was hired by the City of Oklahoma City as a park planner, and she continues in this role today. “I conduct research to assist both short and long-term planning efforts for the City’s parks and trails system, coordinate with internal stakeholders, consultants, and contractors through design and installation of projects, and compile various types of documentation for the department’s administrative tasks” – just to name a few of her activities.

After three years of working under a licensed landscape architect and passing four national exams, she recently acquired her own license.

Throughout her journey, Gamagedara never forgot the lessons from her technical communication education. “As someone from Sri Lanka, for whom English is a second language, going through the technical communication program at Missouri S&T was invaluable.”

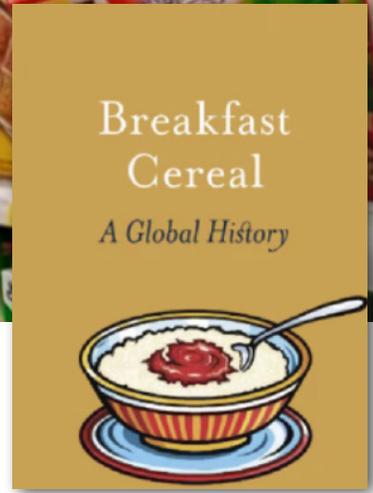
As a park planner, Gamagedara applies her technical communication skills daily. “Whether it’s conducting research for a presentation or tailoring communication to an audience, the foundational principles I learned from technical communication are always at play.”

Gamagedara’s success is not just a story of career transformation but also the power of determination. “Many opportunities that enriched my career were due to taking initiative, having a good work ethic, and networking.” To students in our department, she gives the following advice: “Do good work, make an impression, and build your professional network, and when a job opening arises, you’ll be at the forefront of their minds.”



“Totally granola”

Dr. Dolan in a grocery store in Muscat, Oman, in July 2019.



DOLAN WRITES HISTORY OF BREAKFAST CEREAL

What might encourage a university English professor to conduct historical research about breakfast cereal? Dr. Kathryn Dolan, associate professor of English, is an American literature scholar who studies the connections between literature and food. As she explains in her latest book, *Breakfast Cereal: A Global History*, she became interested in cereal’s intriguing history after making an odd observation about granola.

“I was noticing a pattern specifically with granola,” she said. “It was really popular in the 1960s with hippies, and my parents were hippies. Folks would even say, ‘You’re totally granola.’ It was like an adjective for being counterculture or liberal hippie.”

However, she discovered that granola was also popular throughout the health reform movement in the 1880s and 1890s. That coincidence grabbed Dolan’s interest and motivated her to investigate the full history of morning cereals.

Dolan found it challenging to cover the very long and diverse global history of breakfast in a concise book. The task required her to synthesize and consolidate a huge amount of information. As Dolan noted, “I spent months on what became just one chapter.” She had to narrow down her research to the most

intriguing details; otherwise, the book would have been too long for publication.

The book discusses ancient civilizations’ porridges as well as the eventual birth of cold boxed cereals. Dolan explains how John Harvey and W.K. Kellogg Flakes revolutionized breakfast in 1896 with Corn Flakes. She also compares breakfast staples from other cultures, such as bread, tea, and honey in Iran vs. cheese and bread in Italy.

The author hopes that her book will inspire people to reassess their breakfast routines in light of its history. She wants people to “be more thoughtful about what you are putting in your body and appreciate the history of how it all started and where it came from.” *Breakfast Cereal* urges people to be more intentional about breakfast by looking at it through the perspective of centuries of breakfast history and traditions.

For any fan of breakfast foods, Dolan’s book provides an appetizing adventure through the evolution of the morning meal. She said, “I hope people just enjoy the book and they want to read more about the subject, or they think more about breakfast or about food in general.”



BENEFITS OF GRADUATE STUDENT DIVERSITY

Our department has continuously evolved, especially through the growing presence of international students, reshaping the academic landscape. This ongoing transformation has not only diversified the student body but also significantly enriched the experiences and perspectives of faculty members.

Dr. Ed Malone, assistant chair for graduate studies in ETC, has witnessed the evolving demographics within the student population. From his arrival in 1993 to the launching of the technical communication programs in 2005, the department had very few international students as majors. From 2005 to 2020, however, the new MS program attracted international students from many different countries, such as Poland, India, Bangladesh, China, Taiwan, South Korea, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. In 2020, students from Ghana and Nigeria entered the program and now comprise 52 percent of all our graduate students.

Dr. Sarah Hercula, associate professor of linguistics, expresses profound appreciation for the ongoing evolution in demographics. “International students have shaped my personal and professional growth in many ways,” she said. In her research as a linguist, she explores the interaction between language and various social identity elements to address systems of oppression and inequality, and she advocates for

the acceptance of linguistic diversity and cultural differences.

She emphasizes the critical role of diverse perspectives in creating a truly inclusive educational experience. “I delight in cultivating an inclusive classroom atmosphere that embraces diversity, including students of varying national origins, native language proficiency, and racial and ethnic backgrounds.”

“Teaching students in our graduate courses, especially Advanced International Technical Communication, has been an enriching experience,” Malone said. He especially enjoys the lively class discussions. Because of their diverse backgrounds, the students provide particularly valuable insights into language, culture, communication, and politics.

Dr. David Wright, professor of technical communication, takes pride in the diversity of our graduate students, from their varied national origins to their different undergraduate degrees and work experience. “In the realm of our M.S. program, a mosaic of students emerges, each carrying a unique blend of personal, educational and professional backgrounds.”

He finds this mosaic to be in harmony with the discipline of technical communication. “The beauty of technical communication lies in its versatility, effortlessly weaving together individuals from various fields, finding common ground amid a diverse tapestry.”

FROM ROLLA TO OXFORD

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALUMNUS ZACH BURKE



Alumnus Zach Burke graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English from Missouri S&T and went on for a master's degree in creative writing at the University of Oxford in England. After brief stints as a podcast producer, a bookseller, and a web developer, Burke now works as a licensing operations manager for Oxford University Press.

"I actually started as a computer science major at S&T in 2009," he said. "After about a year of that, I discovered that either my math skills or my patience—I'm not sure which—weren't quite there, so I ended up moving to English, which is what my passion was anyway. I love writing." He earned minors in creative writing and history in addition to the BA.

While he was in our department, he was active in student organizations, serving as president of the Missouri S&T chapter of Sigma Tau Delta and vice president of the literary magazine Southwinds. He also worked as a resident assistant in a dormitory and a writing tutor in the campus writing center.

In his senior year at S&T, Burke applied to a number of graduate schools. He was delighted when the University of Oxford accepted him into its graduate-level creative writing program. He began his studies at Oxford a few months after graduating from S&T in May 2013.

"We would go off and write and then come and tear each other apart."



Zoom interview on Nov. 15, 2023

The Oxford program was a two-year, part-time course of study. "We basically had intense two-week residences every few months," he said. "We would go off and write and then come back and tear each other apart."

His class had about 15 students in it, working on a variety of projects. "There were poets and documentary makers. There was a CNN news anchor who was writing a memoir. It was a really strange mix, a really great mix of people, a musician, novelists."

Due to UK visa restrictions, Burke couldn't live in the UK full time because the program was part-time. "I ended up getting a freelance artist visa in Berlin and living there while I was in the Oxford program. I was traveling between Germany and the UK."

His course of study lasted for two years, from 2013 to 2015. His thesis won the A.M. Heath Prize for Fiction, the crowning achievement of his newly acquired Master of Studies in Creative Writing. "Oxford is an incredible university. A crazy amount of resources. By far, the biggest library I've ever seen. It was a great place to be."

After graduation, Burke stayed on in Oxford for another two years. "I was awarded a graduate entrepreneur visa from the University for an arts podcast, which I ran for two years." The podcast featured episodes focusing on new writers and musicians in the U.K.

During the same period, he also worked at Waterstones as a bookseller. That is where he met his future wife, a fellow employee. Although he had to move back to Berlin in 2018 because of visa difficulties, his absence did not derail his love life. "We got married just as the pandemic hit." His wife eventually became a marketing assistant for

Oxford University Press (OUP). After his return to Oxford, Burke joined her as an employee at OUP.

In his current role as a licensing operations manager, Burke provides support to the sales team in many ways, but he also works with OUP's audiobook program. "I pitch audio books basically. If I think one of our titles would be good in audio, I'll pitch it to places like Audible or Recorded Books. After we get an agreement in place, we'll turn it into an audio book."

Looking back at his time at Missouri S&T, Burke said the skills he acquired have been valuable. "I have had a lot of experiences that I owe to S&T." He credits English professor Kate Drowne for the encouragement she gave him. "Dr. Drowne was huge for me. I owe her quite a bit."

Burke offers the following advice to current students in our department: "I know AI tools are a big topic of discussion in computer science, but I think English and communications majors would do well to get familiar with those tools, as well. Majors should start thinking about how they can use AI in the content creation process. We're already seeing it change the way we work."



Will generative AI accelerate our ongoing evolution into full-fledged cyborgs? Summer Potter's creative adaptation of this photograph begs such questions.

ROBERSON LEAVES ETC

FOR A MEDICAL WRITING POSITION

Elizabeth Roberson, an associate teaching professor, left our department at the end of last semester to become a medical content writer at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. A 2011 graduate of our MS program in technical communication, Roberson taught in our department for fourteen years, first as a graduate teaching assistant and later as a teaching professor, covering courses such as Layout and Design, Technical Marketing Communication, and Business Communication.

Her university education began in 1998. "I initially ventured into the health field at the University of Missouri in Columbia with dreams of becoming a pediatric oncologist." Having left Mizzou without a degree, she later resumed her education at Drury University, eventually earning an associate's degree in business administration and two bachelor's degrees, one in English and the other in writing.

The crowning achievement of her master's degree at S&T was a thesis titled "The History of Technical Communication Instruction at Missouri University of Science and Technology: The Evolution of a Curriculum." "The work was difficult but rewarding," she said, "and I think the findings are not only important but could (and, perhaps, should) lead to further research." After graduation, she became a technical editor in S&T's Office of Graduate Studies and remained in that role until she joined our faculty in 2015 as a teaching professor.

In her new role, Roberson is crafting accurate, informative content for St. Jude's Children Research Hospital. "My primary goal is to communicate complex medical information in a clear and understandable manner. This involves translating medical jargon and technical terminology into plain language that is easily comprehensible to the general public."



She credits serendipity for leading her to the job announcement. "I came across this job posting on LinkedIn when I was doing what I did often as an educator, preparing for class."

According to Roberson, there were several factors that prepared her for her current role:

- Background in technical writing: Her expertise and enthusiasm for technical writing provided a strong foundation for the work she now does.
- Interest in working with children and their families: She was drawn to the hospital's mission and its work with families.
- Personal experience with illness: She grew up in a family affected by various illnesses, including cancer.
- Research skills: Her proficiency in research further equipped her for the job of medical content writer.

Roberson hopes she can make a positive difference in the lives of the families seeking treatment and care at St. Jude. "I love the written word; there's power in it. I hope to apply my knowledge, experience, and passion in such a way as to remove communication barriers, to the best of my ability, and contribute to the high quality of excellence that can be expected from St. Jude."



JAMES LEAVES S&T

For Teaching Position in Northwest Arkansas

Kendrea James, assistant teaching professor of speech and media studies, left Missouri S&T at the end of last semester for a teaching position at Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC). “I’m excited about my new job at NWACC,” she said, “but I was sad to leave my S&T family.” She taught at Missouri S&T for nearly six years and in the ETC department for three years.

James earned a BA in media studies in 2014 & an MA in communication in 2016, both from Northeastern State University in Oklahoma. After teaching part-time at several colleges, she came to Missouri S&T in Fall 2017 as a faculty member in the Department of Arts, Languages and Philosophy. After one year, she was promoted from lecturer to assistant teaching professor.

When the speech and media studies program moved to ETC in January 2021, James moved with it and continued to teach the public

speaking course, which she referred to as her “bread and butter.” She loved seeing and hearing the students learning from one another.

One of James’s significant contributions during her time at S&T was the establishment of the speech and debate team in 2018. Starting from a modest beginning, the team grew steadily and now boasts over 10 actively participating students as it moves towards Registered Student Organization (RSO) status.

Some of her favorite memories are from traveling and competing with the team over the years. “It was so exciting to watch students go in and make an argument. Most of them had little experience in forensics, and it was always fun to watch them compete for the first time.”

James holds S&T students in high regard: “The students there are really special. They’re sincere and diligent, kind and intelligent, real problem solvers with compassion.”

The move to NWACC in Bentonville was motivated by her desire to be closer to family, but it also presents new opportunities for collaboration because of NWACC’s proximity to corporations like Walmart and Tyson. “I’m excited to see what the next chapter holds,” she said.

James plans to grow NWACC’s speech and debate team and hopes to coach the team to success in competitions, perhaps even against S&T students. “My former S&T students are already planning to meet me at some competitions next year. I’m really looking forward it.”

Reflecting on her time at Missouri S&T, James said, “I couldn’t have asked for better people to work with. I learned so much from my colleagues and students at S&T. I am so grateful for every class, every student I met there, and I will carry all the lessons I learned with me forever.”

MEET OUR 2023 NEW GTAS



Olivia



Abigail



Adam



Kira



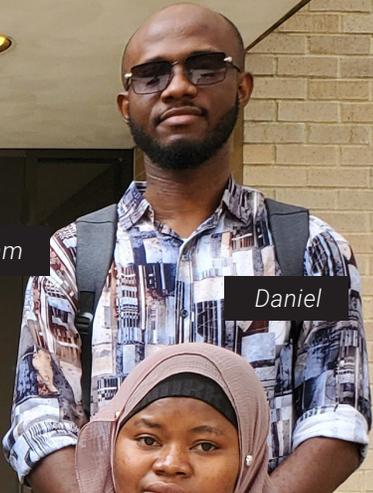
Ebenezer



Saber



Chilotam



Daniel



Keillyn



Martha



Edrina



Maryam

GTA INTRODUCTIONS

In our department, a graduate teaching assistant (GTA) is a full-time student pursuing the Master of Science in Technical Communication and a part-time employee with teaching responsibilities in English and technical communication courses.

The following GTAs were new to our department in 2023.

Edrina Adjei-Manu

A resident of Ghana's Western North Region, Edrina earned a BS in real estate (2021) from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. Edrina's ambition is to build upon the communication skills – both speaking and writing – that she developed in the real estate industry back home and apply them toward technology instruction. While in the MS program she hopes to become well versed in technical editing, technical writing, and multimedia design, enhancing her marketability and opening new employment vistas. Dr. Wright's research into smart home technology is particularly appealing to her because of her real estate background. Apart from her academic pursuits, she finds joy in cooking, especially experimenting with new recipes and trying out different national cuisines.

Daniel Obekpa Agbo

Daniel came to us with a BS in statistics and computer science (2010) from the University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Nigeria, and over a decade of work experience in the banking industry. He hopes to exploit connections between statistics and technical communication as well as computer science. His vision involves bridging the communication gap between business stakeholders and technology experts. Beyond academics, Daniel takes pleasure in the complexities of soccer, immersing himself in analyzing strategies and drawing inspiration from the sport's teamwork and determination. Recently he became a new father.

Saber Mirzaei Ahandani

Saber is only the second student from Iran in the history of our MS program. He holds an associate's degree in mechanics-machinery (2002) from the Majlesi branch of Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, and a BA in industrial management (2011) from the Eslamshahr branch of Payam-e Noor University, Tehran. His employment history includes over a decade as a quality control inspector for one company and almost a decade as an HR consultant for another. Saber is dedicated to mastering technical communication, equipping himself with the skills to streamline communication processes for companies. Apart from his academic pursuits, he enjoys fishing, finding both tranquility and focus in this leisure-time activity.

Ebenezer Amofo Ameyaw

Ebenezer, a versatile professional from Ghana, possesses a BA in religious studies (2011) from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, and an MBA in human resource management (2017) from the University of Ghana, Legon Accra. One of his goals is to facilitate better communication and organizational understanding by combining technical communication skills with his expertise in HR management. Besides his professional pursuits, he indulges in writing, reading, and competitive table tennis. He is the author of *Every Soldier Will Go to Heaven*, available on Amazon.

Maryam Muhammad Bashir

Born and raised in Nigeria, Maryam has a diploma in information technology application (2012) from HiiT Training Institute, Kano, and a bachelor of fisheries (2018) from Federal University, Dutsin-ma. She was drawn to technical communication by a desire to translate complex ideas into simple language. Her goal is to use technical communication to enhance user experiences in the fast-paced tech world. Outside of work and studies, Maryam enjoys preparing traditional African meals, listening to Nigerian hip-hop music, and dancing with friends. She is particularly proud of her role in leading a group of Muslim sisters when she was serving with the National Youth Service Corps in Osun state.

Abigail Boafo

Hailing from the Eastern Region of Ghana, Abigail has a BS in geological engineering (2012) from the University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa, and an MS in sustainability and climate policy (2019) from Curtin University of Science and Technology, Perth, Australia. She worked as a data analyst, project engineer, and project supervisor for Safety and Environmental Research Consultancy in Accra before coming to the United States. Abigail aspires to be a catalyst for transformative action, fostering dialogue, understanding, and action for a more sustainable world. Beyond her professional pursuits, she enjoys cooking creatively, singing, and exploring interesting places.

Olivia Winslow Cheek

A native of Louisville, Kentucky, Olivia earned a BS of English and technical communication (2022) and a graduate certificate in technical communication (2022) from Missouri S&T. She aspires to create tangible positive change in society by enhancing accessibility, improving user experiences, and promoting inclusivity. Her passion lies in visual technical communication, and she excels at document design and layout. She had one of the winning designs for the 2023 issue

of Panoply, the department's newsletter. Olivia has been very active in S&T's student chapter of the Society for Technical Communication.

Kira Courtois

Kira, a former resident of Arizona, began her studies at Missouri S&T as an engineering student, but she switched to technical communication after enjoying one of the courses in our curriculum. She graduated with a BS in English and technical communication (2023) from Missouri S&T and entered the MS program as a graduate track pathway student. Last summer, she had a remote internship with Medical Solutions, a staffing and recruiting company headquartered in Omaha. Kira is a dedicated musician, a former writing center consultant, and a current staff member of Southwinds, S&T's literary magazine.

Martha Dey

Coming from Ghana's Volta Region, Martha possesses a BA in geography and rural development (2017) from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. After her undergraduate studies, she collected, analyzed, and interpreted data for Cocoa Marketing Company and conducted institutional research for the Medical and Surgical Skills Institute in Korlebu. Following her entrepreneurial bent, she started her own catering business called Deychills in 2019. She has an interest in the use of social media and web genres to communicate technical information. She hopes to learn more about technical editing, content creation, cross cultural communication, and proposal writing as she progresses through the MS program. In her leisure time, Martha expresses herself through song and cooking, especially baking. One of Deychills's specialties is pastries.

Keilynn Johnson

Keilynn, a resident of St. Louis, graduated from Missouri S&T with a BS in English and technical communication and

a BS in applied mathematics in December 2022 and an MS in technical communication in December 2023. Whereas most tech com students shy away from math, Keillyn embraced it, making it a second undergraduate major. They were able to finish the MS in just one year, even while working as a GTA, because they took advantage of the department’s graduate track pathway program, which allows for some credits to be shared between the BS and MS. Keillyn was very active in the S&T chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the national English honorary society, participating in live readings on Twitch for charity and helping to organize the brown bag speakers series. They were also a cherished writing consultant in the campus writing center.

Gilda Chilotam Ojukwu

Chilotam comes from Alor in Nigeria’s Anambra state. She earned a BA in English and literary studies (2020) from Covenant University in Ota. She also earned certificates of completion for the following online courses: Business English (2020) from the University of Washington, Cracking the Creativity Code (2020) from Israel Institute of technology, Speak English Professionally from Georgia Institute of Technology (2020), and both Becoming a UX Writer (2022) and Introduction to UX Writing (2022) from Udemy. These

courses betray her interest in business communication and user experience. Her ambition lies in enhancing user experience within the business sector through writing and knowledge sharing. Beyond academics, Chilotam actively creates YouTube content, sharing insights about technical communication and life experiences in Nigeria and the United States.

Adam Rentz

As an undergraduate at Missouri S&T, Adam participated in extracurricular activities such as the rocket design team and the campus literary magazine Southwinds. He also served on the department’s undergraduate advisory board for a year. After graduating with a BS in English and technical communication in 2023, he immediately entered the MS program through the graduate track pathway. His motivation for pursuing a graduate degree in technical communication was to deepen his knowledge of the discipline, providing greater context for the skills he acquired in the undergraduate program. He expects to graduate in May 2025. A resident of Aurora, Illinois, Adam enjoys hiking, practicing gymnastics, and exploring different parts of the United States.

SHERLOCK HOLMES READING RAISES \$600



Members of the S&T chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the national English honorary society, held a live reading of selected Sherlock Holmes stories on November 4. The eight-hour streaming event on Twitch was a fundraiser for the Rolla Mission. Student members and their faculty advisor, Dr. Kathryn Dolan, read the following works out loud: “A Scandal in Bohemia,” “The Adventure of the Silver Blaze,” “The Final Problem,” and A Study in Scarlet, all by Arthur Conan Doyle. They raised \$600.

Dr. THU TRAN

assistant teaching professor, is the most recent addition to our faculty. He joined the department in 2022 and brought with him a wealth of experience and training in the teaching of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). The department has added new undergraduate and graduate courses in English as a Second Language so that Tran can help students improve their English language skills.

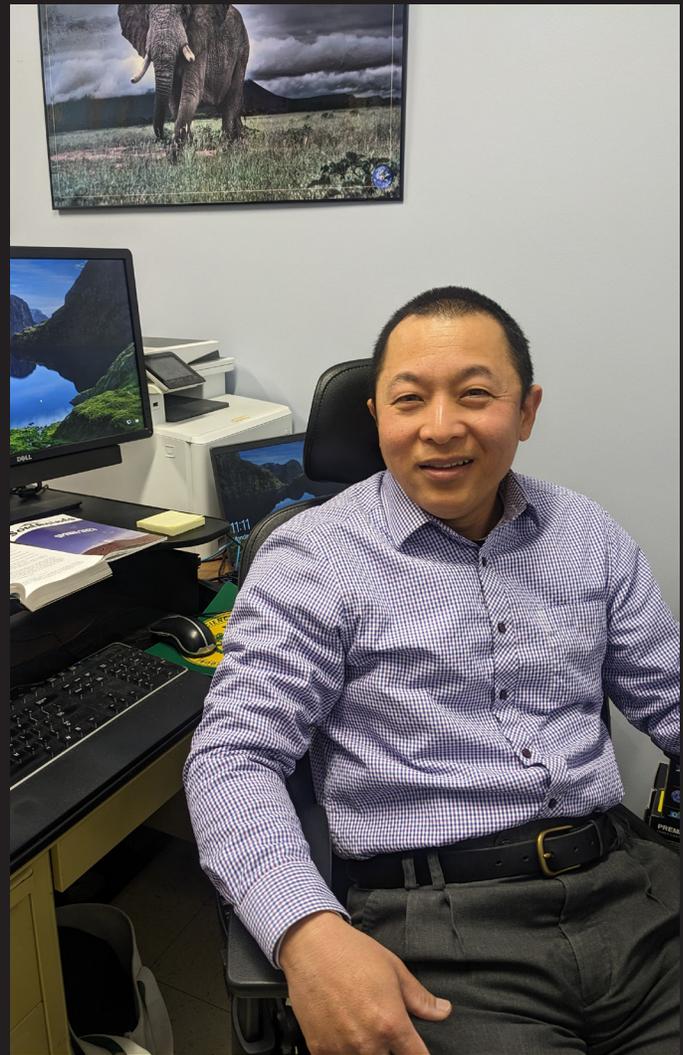
Born in Vietnam, Tran received a BA in English Linguistics and Literature from Ho Chi Minh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities, an MA in TESOL from the University of Canberra, Australia, and a doctorate in education with an emphasis in TESOL from Alliant International University, San Diego, CA. He has been very active in the professional organization Mid-America TESOL, even serving as its president in 2019-2020.

In his teaching philosophy, Tran intertwines his passions with his pedagogy. “As a dedicated gardener, I often equate the process of teaching to gardening. Just as seeds require the right environment to sprout and bloom, students need nurturing, guidance, and access to the right resources.”

Tran speaks fondly of Rolla as his home. “The tranquility of Rolla, with its gentle rhythms and close-knit community, complements my teaching philosophy. I moved here partly due to my family ties and have found both peace and inspiration in this charming town, a sentiment I readily share with my students.”

Tran served as Director of Missouri S&T’s Intensive English Program (IEP) from 2012 to 2022. The IEP program was discontinued for lack of funding.

FACULTY PROFILE THU TRAN



DOLAN STEERS FACULTY SENATE



Toward Inclusion & Collaboration

One of Dolan's initiatives was advocating for representation of non-tenure track (NTT) faculty on the faculty senate. They need more representation by fellow NTTs "because we're not them," Dolan explained. "We would advocate as strongly as possible with the best of intentions, but we might get something wrong." Last year, the faculty senate officers appointed an NTT faculty member as the parliamentarian, ensuring their integral voice is heard in the decision-making process.

Acknowledging the significance of student voices, Dolan tries to engage with the student representatives on the faculty senate, addressing the challenges and needs of students. Her interactions with student groups are not limited to formal settings; she also meets with them informally for more in-depth conversations.

Dolan's term as president extends through the end of this academic year. Next year, as past president, she will chair the faculty senate's rules, procedures, and agenda (RP&A) committee, bringing to a close a five-year-long cycle of service as officer.

Dolan is not the first English professor to serve as faculty senate president at Missouri S&T. The last one was Dr. Dennis Perry in 1998-1999, more than 25 years ago. Perry is now a professor of English at Brigham Young University.

Dr. Kathryn Dolan, an associate professor of English, plays an instrumental role in the academic governance of Missouri S&T. She is the current president of the faculty senate, "the legislative and policy-making body of the General Faculty." As such, she leads a body of over 40 elected senators from every academic department on campus.

Over the past several years, Dolan has ascended through the ranks of the faculty senate, first serving as one of our department's two senators and

then assuming a series of officer's roles, from secretary to parliamentarian to vice president, culminating in her current role as president.

Dr. Dolan is only the fourth woman president of the faculty senate and one of the few humanities professors to serve as president. "It's good to have a humanist in the room and to have the perspective of the humanities," she said. In her approach to leadership, she emphasizes qualities like good faith, adaptability, and communication as essential for governance. She has been a proponent of inclusion and diversity.

ALUMNA LAURA STUDYVIN

Former Distance Student Finds Success

Laura Studyvin earned a graduate certificate and master's degree in technical communication as a distance student and is now working as a strategic communicator on campus. She is part of Missouri S&T's marketing and communications team. Her journey to find a job she liked highlights the benefits of continuing education and distance learning.

Studyvin graduated from Rolla High School, but she did not stay in town for her undergraduate degree. She chose the University of Missouri – Columbia, the state's flagship university, earning a BA in English. "I was always a bookworm, so the English degree was inevitable," she said.

Returning to Rolla after graduation, she worked as support staff in a local office for several years. Meanwhile, in Fall 2018, she started taking courses in technical communication toward a four-course graduate certificate. "Finding a job that fit my interests was difficult," she said, "so I decided to pursue technical communication to expand my skill set." She was able to work full-time during the day and take one or two online courses per semester, usually at night.

Our graduate certificate program can be a pathway into the master's degree program, in that a student can count the four certificate courses toward an MS, leaving only six more courses to complete. Studyvin finished the certificate in December 2019 and immediately transitioned to the master's, again as a part-time distance student. She made this transition just as the coronavirus was spreading around the country. At S&T, all classes went online in March 2020. Fortunately for Studyvin, her technical editing course was already

online. "When the pandemic hit, I was very glad to already be a distance student!"

In early 2021, one of her professors recommended her for a student writing position in S&T's marketing and communications department. For the next year, she worked part time as a writer in what amounted to an informal internship. She was offered a full-time position as a senior strategic communications associate in March 2022, about two months before her graduation with the Master of Science in Technical Communication.

"There was some restructuring in marketing and communications, and a full-time position became available," she explained. "I was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time."

Her byline appears frequently on press releases issued by the university. Her news stories are often reprinted verbatim in area newspapers and used in adapted form by many other sources.

"I write a lot about what's happening at Leach Theatre, and big annual events like Celebration of Nations and St. Pat's. Sometimes I get to write about what the design teams are doing, or about student research projects. Sometimes, I get to help with department projects that have nothing to do with writing, like working at S&T's booth at the fair."

Studyvin offers the following advice for students in our department:

"Always do your best' does not mean 'always turn in perfect work.' Writers are horrible perfectionists, and this is something I still struggle with! But some days, your best will be 'not completely terrible,' and it will have to be okay."

S&T's Haunted Mine opens Oct. 20

Posted by Laura Studyvin
On October 9, 2023

India Association at Missouri S&T to host Diwali celebration Nov. 5

Posted by Laura Studyvin
On October 26, 2023

Former U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt to open Chancellor's Speaker Series at Missouri S&T

Posted by Laura Studyvin
On October 17, 2023

FROM MASTER'S TO PHD

Journeys of two Alumna

The transition from a master's degree program to a PhD program is a moment of anticipation and excitement, but also uncertainty and anxiety. It is part of an educational journey that takes many years and a lot of self discipline and hard work, but promises rewards and satisfaction and usually delivers. This journey is exemplified in the stories of Manushri Pandya from India and Puspa Aryal from Nepal. They are both alumni of our master's degree program in technical communication.



Manushri at Missouri S&T in 2020

MANUSHRI PANDYA

Embracing a dynamic journey

technology, so she sought a field that combined technology with communication, setting her on the path to a master's degree.

In the master's program at S&T, Manushri's coursework introduced her to technical communication as a discipline. She chose the thesis track and began an analysis of CDC and WHO COVID-19 infographics distributed during the pandemic. This research experience and an internship convinced her that she should continue her education after graduation in May 2021

The decision to pursue a Ph.D. came with challenges, such as finding the best PhD program. She began by shortlisting Ph.D. programs based on their curricula, faculty expertise,

and the research undertaken by each department. This process demanded extensive research and communication with potential advisors. Mentors at Missouri S&T provided valuable recommendations that helped her gain admission to several Ph.D. programs, with offers of funding.

Ultimately, Manushri chose North Carolina State University, drawn by the multidisciplinary nature of its Ph.D. program in communication, rhetoric, and digital media. She secured a fellowship for the first year, a research opportunity that reinforced her decision.

Comparing her master's and Ph.D. experiences, she noted that the latter demands an even higher level of independence and self-motivation. "While the master's program was rigorous and prepared students for various communication topics, the Ph.D. program introduced more intensive coursework and allowed for

Manushri Pandya, a dedicated scholar, is on a journey that so far has taken her from India to Missouri to North Carolina. She has been driven by a fascination with the intersection of technology and communication.

Completing a BA in English literature from Gujarat University in India kindled her interest in the connection between language and communication and their potential to shape unique experiences for individuals. She was also interested in

extensive exploration of research areas and methodologies.”

“Time and energy commitment emerged as an unexpected challenge in the Ph.D. program,” she noted, “particularly the shift from structured guidelines to individual accountability.” However, she has found balance through time management, setting clear goals, and building a support network.

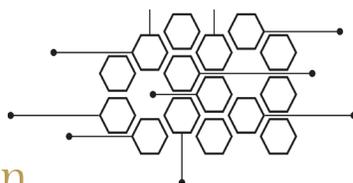
Mentorship and self-care became vital to sustain her journey.

Manushri’s support system extends to her family and close friends, providing security and a sense of belonging during challenging times. She maintains a work-life balance through regular exercise and a positive mindset. Manushri’s research in her Ph.D.

program focuses on risk communication frameworks, technical communication, and UX. Her academic and professional aspirations remain flexible, with one foot in academia and one in industry. She embraces the dynamic journey that her Ph.D. has set in motion, ready to navigate whatever path unfolds before her.

PUSPA ARYAL

A circuitous route to her destination

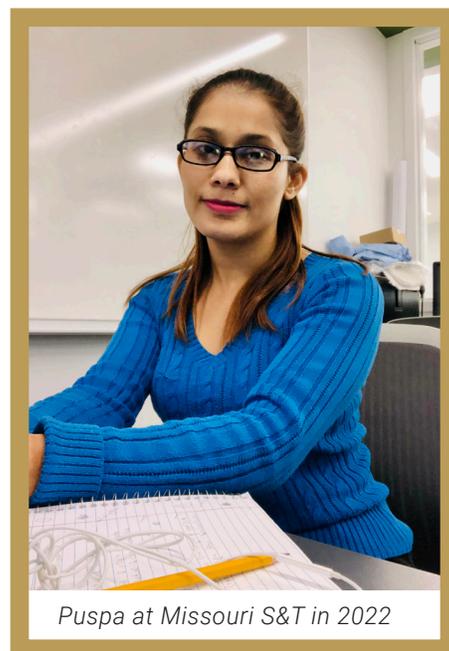


Puspa Aryal, originally from Nepal, traveled a circuitous route on her academic journey, from a master's degree in chemistry to a master's degree in technical communication to a PhD in chemistry. Although her route was circuitous, she never lost sight of her destination. Her passion was always chemistry.

After completing her first master's degree in Nepal in 2013, she planned to pursue a Ph.D. in chemistry immediately, a long-term goal she had set for herself. However, this plan was modified when she accompanied her husband for his studies to the United States in 2014. Some of her new Rolla friends were already enrolled in our technical communication program, and their experiences and insights piqued her

curiosity about scientific and technical writing. She decided to pursue a master's degree in technical communication, recognizing its potential to enhance her ability to communicate her scientific work effectively.

Following her successful completion of the second master's degree in 2017, Puspa turned her attention back to the goal of a PhD in chemistry, choosing Missouri S&T's chemistry department because of its solid reputation and close proximity. “My Ph.D. research focused on solving real-life problems and contributing to the field of medicinal chemistry,” she said. She successfully defended her dissertation, “Design and Synthesis of Purine-Based Neuroprotectors



Puspa at Missouri S&T in 2022

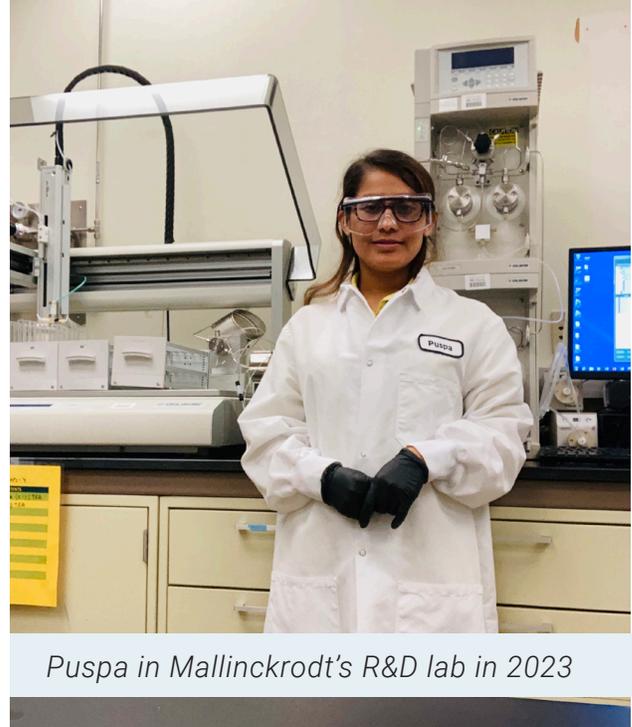
and Novel Synthetic Methods for the Trifluoromethylation of Aldehyde Hydrazones,” and graduated in July 2022.

Dr. Aryal’s aspirations extend beyond her current duties as Senior Synthetic Chemist at Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals in St. Louis. Her long-term career goal is to continue researching drug design and development while documenting her work

through journals and patents. Her master's in technical communication has played a crucial role in helping her effectively communicate her scientific contributions.

She attributes much of her motivation to her mentors and advisors. Their guidance and support were instrumental in her academic and professional growth.

With two master's degrees and a PhD to her credit, Dr. Aryal speaks with authority when she says, "A Ph.D. is more about researching and solving real-life problems, whereas a master's degree is more about developing certain skill sets." Communicating scientific information effectively is one of the skill sets she developed in our technical communication program, and it continues to serve her well as a publishing research scientist.



Puspa in Mallinckrodt's R&D lab in 2023

OTHER PHD DEPARTMENT ALUMNI

The following is a partial list of other department alumni who have gone on for the PhD:

Bruce Edwards (BA, 1977), deceased, earned a PhD in Literature and Rhetoric from the University of Texas – Austin in 1981. He was a C. S. Lewis scholar.

Robert Haselwander (BA, 2005) earned a PhD in Geology from Missouri S&T in 2016.

Amy Patterson (BA, 2007) earned a PhD in Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design from Clemson University in 2020.

David Young (MS, 2013) earned a PHD in Technical Communication and Rhetoric from Texas Tech in 2017.

Priyanka Ganguly (MS, 2020) is working on a PhD in Rhetoric and Writing at Virginia Tech.

Joy Amponsah (MS, 2021) is working on a PhD in Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design at Clemson University.

Agaba Ame-Oko (MS, 2021) is working on a PhD in Electrical and Electronics Engineering at New Mexico State University.

Oluwafemi Osho (MS, 2021) is working on a PhD in Human-Centered Computing at Clemson University.

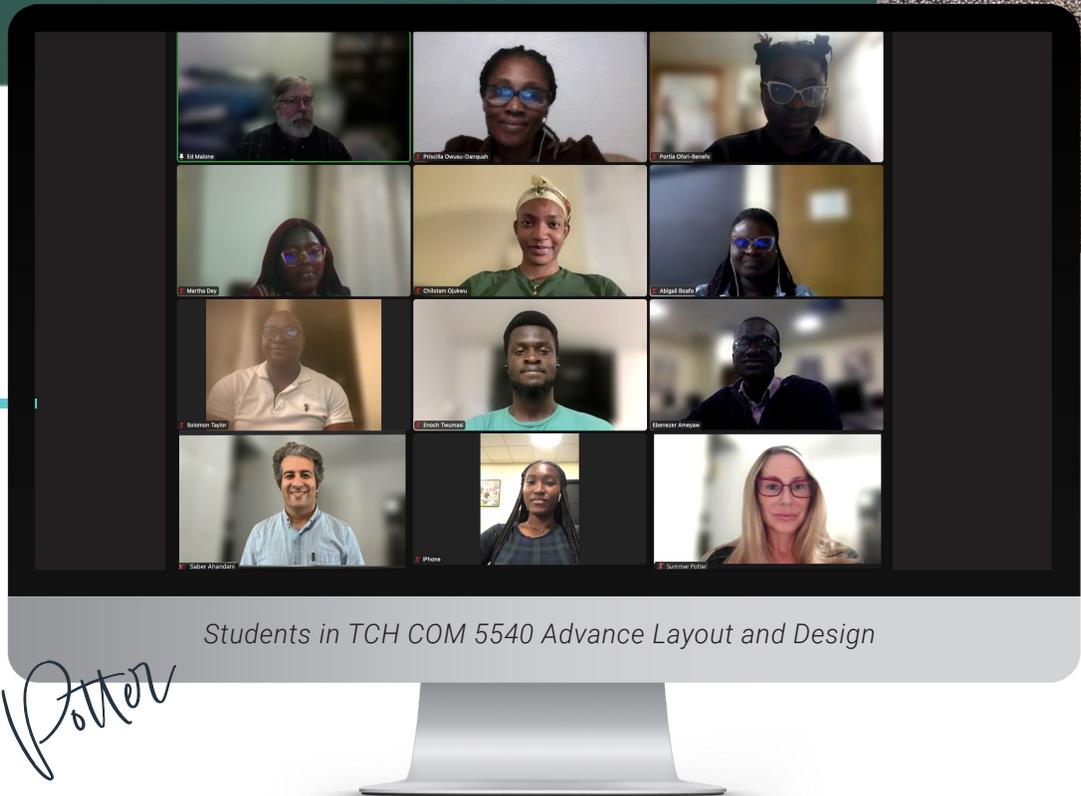
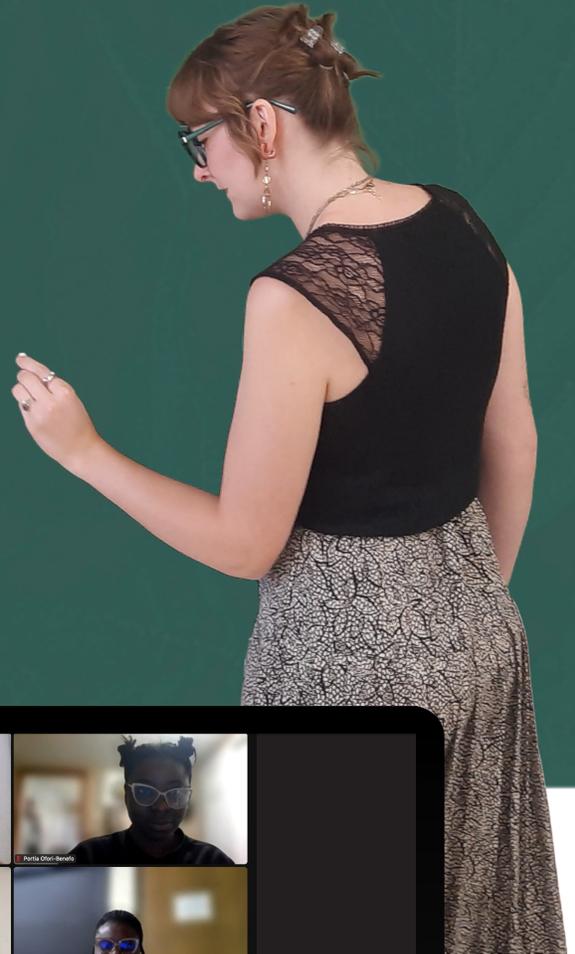
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Thanks for the class!