

Technically speaking ...

A publication of the STC@NC State

Vol. 1, No. 2

November 2000

NCSU Cooperative Education programs for English majors

When: Monday, November 6 @ 7:30PM

Where: Tompkins, Room 123

Do you want to ...

...explore English-related career fields?

...experience corporate cultures?

...develop and/or improve communication skills?

...cultivate a sense of confidence based on successful job experiences and newly developed competencies?

...earn money for college expenses?

...improve job prospects upon graduation?

...develop career and life goals?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then please join us on Monday, November 6 at 7:30PM to learn more about the cooperative education opportunities for English undergraduate and graduate students.

Dr. Tracy Appling-Biel, Student Development Coordinator, will present information and answer your questions about the many local, national, and international cooperative education opportunities available. In addition to an overview of the Cooperative Education Program, Dr. Appling-Biel will discuss the following:

- Benefits of a Co-op Position
- Co-op versus Internships
- Co-op Logistics
- Questions & Concerns

Refreshments will be served.

– Christine F. Belledin, Program Committee Manager, 2nd year MS Student

Mission

To introduce and orient incoming students, both graduate and undergraduate, to the field of technical communication, the Society for Technical Communication, and the professional writing and technical communication programs at NC State, and to provide academic and professional networking opportunities.

Contact information

Student chapter website:

http://www4.ncsu.edu/~brad_m/STC@NC-State/

Carolinas chapter website:

<http://www.stc-carolina.org>

National STC website:

<http://www.stc-va.org>



STC@Brueggers

We will be at Brueggers on Wednesday, November 15, and Thursday, November 16 from 5:00 until 6:00. Come join us as we discuss our end-of-semester activities. We will meet again on Wednesday, January 10, and Thursday, January 11 to kick off the new semester and welcome new student members.

Pro and con: Two perspectives of the co-op experience at NC State

As promised, this issue of Technically Speaking looks at the co-op program here at NC State. Read what Kim Gee, a recent MS graduate, and Rebecca Bessinger, a current MS student, have to say about their personal experiences with the co-op program.

I approached the co-op office my second year ... looking for work experience as well as a lead for a permanent position.

I approached the co-op office my second year in the Technical Communication program at NC State, looking for work experience as well as a lead for a permanent position. From the start, I had some difficulties with the co-op office. First, I went to an orientation session where the speaker didn't show up for thirty minutes. I left before she arrived, thinking she wasn't going to show up at all. I sent an email to the director of the co-op office, Dr. Arnold Bell, complaining. He apologized and agreed to meet with me.

Dr. Bell told me that there were many jobs available in the Technical Communication field through the co-op office. He explained the salient points of the program: how to search for jobs online and how to apply for those jobs. You submit a copy of your resume and transcript, along with a sheet listing the specific companies you are applying to, place this paperwork in a box in the co-op office, and wait for the company to contact you.

I submitted applications for the few jobs that were listed online and I waited. I heard nothing. I kept checking the site and no new jobs were added. Finally, about a month and a half later, there were some additional job postings, including a posting for IBM in RTP. I submitted an additional application and waited. And waited.

Fortunately, I had a connection: my father works at IBM, and one of his former managers worked in a department that needed tech writers. My father asked

Nelson if there were any co-op positions opening. A few weeks later, due to my dad's intervention, I got an e-mail asking me for a resume. I interviewed with IBM's Design and Information Development in November and found out at the end of the Fall 1999 semester that I was hired.

In order to be hired, the co-op office or the office of admissions at NC State has to fax a sheet detailing how many credit hours you have completed towards your degree. I was faced with a moral dilemma at this point: in order to participate in co-op, you have to register for it and pay a fee (about \$300 for a full-time co-op). I might have been able to circumvent paying for the class by having the admissions office fax the necessary information to IBM. I felt to some degree that I shouldn't have to pay anything because my connections helped me get the job, not the co-op office. But in the end, I wound up working through the co-op office and paying the course fee.

I started working at IBM in January, 2000. I was working for a division of IBM that was basically a full-service ad agency. Design and Information Development (D&ID) had a marketing subdivision that created marketing materials and web pages. My primary job responsibility was writing marketing collateral, although I did get to do some HTML coding as well.

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Work for that department was feast or famine, and I had many times where I had nothing to do (not always a bad thing—I got a lot of work done on my final project!). The other co-op student in the department and I sought out work to do; we participated in a mentoring focus group which examined what new hires wanted to get out of the mentoring process at IBM; we brainstormed ideas for a co-op orientation folder for our department;

and we participated in a technology camp for middle-school girls. Our efforts to seek out work were noticed and appreciated.

In July, IBM held a co-op job fair, where graduating (or, in my case, graduated) co-ops met with representatives of other IBM divisions that had job openings. I handed out my resume and within two weeks I had three job interviews, two of which ended up in job offers. I decided to go work with IBM's Software Group as an information developer for a suite of e-commerce products.

Overall, I do think that my co-op experience was a valuable one, and I do recommend that current MS students check it out, but the process needs to be improved. I wonder if I hadn't had that "in" with IBM if I would have gotten a co-op job with any company. I had no job interviews with any of the other

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companies I submitted applications to within the co-op office. To some degree, I felt that I gave them money for no reason. It's a shame because the co-op office could potentially be a really valuable resource for people in the Technical Communication program.

– Kim Gee, Class of 2000



When I think of co-op, I think of engineering. It never would have occurred to me ... to investigate the co-op pages.

It turns out MS students in Technical Communication at NC State have a valuable opportunity available in the co-op program, but very few know about it. Generally, when I think of co-op, I think of engineering. It never would have occurred to me as a Technical Communication student to investigate the co-op pages of the university's website had I not learned from a classmate that the opportunities extend to us as well.

Recently I sent an email to the co-op office inquiring about the program. I got a fast, very enthusiastic response pointing me to the advisor for Technical Communication students, Dr. Arnold Bell. I called Dr. Bell, who informed me that the first steps I would need to take would be to attend a co-op orientation session and then make an appointment to see him.

The orientation sessions are held about once a week in the classroom in Tucker Hall on Central Campus. I had a hard time finding this location, so leave plenty of time for wandering around before your session. The

session lasted about thirty minutes and provided general information and a packet of materials, including a co-op application. The next day, I turned in my application to the co-op office and made an appointment with Dr. Bell.

Dr. Bell was extremely nice and seemed genuinely pleased with my interest in co-op. He explained that he has little trouble placing technical communicators in jobs and then showed me a list of participating companies, including Nortel, IBM, Alcatel, and even Disney in Orlando. He told me that I could choose the companies that interested me, and then he would send an employment packet on my behalf. The resume was all I needed to provide.

I had my eye on one company in particular, which I told Dr. Bell. He responded eagerly, saying that he would call them first and tell them of my interest. He sent me on my way, explaining that now I would simply wait to hear from the companies I had chosen.

This has all happened so recently that I cannot tell you how it ends. What I can say is that my experience with the co-op office has been a positive one. If you are interested, check out their website at www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/co-op_ed for more details.

– Rebecca Bessinger, Membership Committee Manager, 2nd year MS student



Our advisor speaks

I became faculty advisor for the Student Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication when I arrived at NC State in 1992. For many years it was all I could do to find someone to volunteer to serve as a tentative president for the chapter, just so that it would remain "official" to the larger international organization. Elections were not held, budgets fell overdue and, in 1998, I began to discuss folding the chapter altogether with officials from the Carolina Chapter. Then, in 1999, Sarah Egan became treasurer for the chapter and immediately brought the books up-to-date, became president of the chapter and, since (as chapter coordinator) has generated more enthusiasm, creativity, and activity than I managed to generate for the first five years I served as advisor.

We now have a thriving executive board. This of course is a far cry from the days when the requirement of two signatures for official chapter check-signing presented me with a serious membership challenge! With such an executive board in place, the chapter has achieved a great deal in recent months: members have created a listserv (stc@listserv.ncsu.edu), begun to establish fund-raising activities, developed a list of guest speakers and upcoming presentations, given away "door prizes" at several Brueggers STC@NC-State get-togethers, distributed volunteer activities, and worked to triple membership in a single semester.

Therefore, I want to welcome everyone and to encourage all of you to contribute as much time as you can to build our chapter. It seems fitting that NC State University, with a 13-year old M.S. in Technical Communication program that was the first of its kind in the Southeast, should have such a thriving STC chapter in its midst.

– Brad Mehlenbacher, Advisor



Call for articles

In our January issues, we will be welcoming new students beginning the program in the spring. What did you wish you knew your first semester? Send your questions to us, with or without answers, and look for the answers in January's issue.

Email updates

If you would like to be added to our listserv, please send an email to our Membership Committee Manager, Rebecca Bessinger, at rbessinger@aol.com. She will be happy to add you!

Web speak

This month, because our focus is on co-op, our web link is for the co-op office here at NC State. Check it out.

http://www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/co-op_ed

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