Hi, I’m Bethany Bowles from the University of Central Florida, president of the Sigma Tau Delta Zeta X chapter, and a student member of Orlando-Central Florida chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, or STC.

Hi, I’m Rachel Houghton from Hillsboro and the Willamette Valley Chapter of STC.
Bethany: Here’s what we plan to talk to you about today. I’ll begin with a couple of summary charts suggesting how the content of this presentation, which is focused on establishing and sustaining student mentoring programs within the Society for Technical Communication (STC) can readily be adapted to instituting similar mentoring programs within undergraduate and graduate English curricula.

ADVANCE TO NEXT SLIDE ...
Bethany (CONTINUING):

That way if you are interested in pursuing such an initiative, you can “process” the remainder of the presentation with that specific goal in mind. If you are interested in possibly pursuing a career within technical communication, then I strongly encourage you to join STC as a student member at the steeply discounted rates available at this conference and then tap into the infrastructure of the existing STC student mentoring programs I am about to describe.
Bethany:

So first, let’s talk about ways that the STC student mentoring programs Rachel and I will be describing could readily be adapted to other disciplines within the English curriculum.
Rachel: While this presentation is focused on STC student mentoring programs, but the guidelines, materials, and administrative tools we use to establish and sustain such programs— involving both face-to-face and virtual mentoring relationships — can be used to form student mentoring programs relevant to the curricula of undergraduate and graduate programs in English. As you can see here, two good possibilities for mentor/mentee pairings within the English curriculum would be to partner students with professors from different universities in virtual mentoring relationships or with professional writers, either from within the Sigma Tau Delta alumni community or through leads to professional writers and editors from the Sigma Tau Delta alumni community.
Rachel: Three possible disciplines within the English curriculum for mentoring partnerships would be creative writing, technical writing, and linguistics ... although I’m sure this list could be expanded.
Key Concepts of Mentoring Programs

* Pair student “novices” or mentees with professional practitioners (mentors)
* Match mentees’ areas of interest with mentors’ areas of SME
* Avoid “direct-line” reporting relationships
* Set specific objectives for the mentoring relationship, identify activities that will achieve those objectives, and establish a means of regular communication
* Communicate regularly

Bethany: Here are the key concepts for establishing and sustaining viable and productive mentoring relationships. The concept of mentoring dates to antiquity, when the peripatetic Odysseus enlisted the aid of Athena to “keep an eye” on his son Telemachus during his travels.

Rachel: It’s important to avoid “direct-line” reporting relationships (e.g., a professor should not mentor a student in his/her class; a professional should not mentor a novice he/she supervises and formally evaluates)

Bethany: And, most importantly, for a mentor/mentee relationship to be fruitful, it’s essential to communicate regularly (if face-to-face is not an option, then via e-mail, telephone, IM, and/or social media).
Bethany: If you are interested in starting a mentoring program, we can save you a considerable amount of administrative time because we have compiled descriptions of, guidelines to, and administrative forms for the STC student mentoring program into this “handy-dandy” turn-key toolkit, both in printed format and on a DVD.

RACHEL HOLDS UP GREEN BOOK AND DVD.

Rachel: We’ll have a couple copies of this book available at the STC table in the registration area, and if you’d like a copy, just leave us your business card with your mailing address, and we’ll send it to you after the conference.
Bethany: So, WHAT, exactly, is mentoring?
Rachel: There are 3 basic types of mentoring in technical communication.

1. Within industry
2. Within academe
3. And bridging the two ... This is our focus today.
Bethany: Our program in Orlando is primarily face-to-face, although e-mail, telephone, and other media play a role as well. Similarly, the program between the STC-France chapter and the University of Paris was mostly face-to-face, although it did involve a few virtual mentoring partnerships as well.
Rachel: Interestingly, it was a virtual mentoring relationship between Clio Fouque, then secretary of the STC-France chapter and a grad student at the University of Paris, and Dan Voss, Bethany’s mentor in the STC program, that led to the mentoring program over there. The two met once at the STC international conference in Atlanta in 2009, and all subsequent communication was via e-mail and occasional post cards.
Rachel: Social media could obviously also play an integral role in virtual mentoring.
Bethany: WHY would an STC community or Special Interest Group (SIG) want to invest precious volunteer time to establish and sustain a mentoring program with a student community or individual students?

PAUSE

Rachel: Basically, it’s a win-win-win situation: for the mentees, for the mentors, and for their respective communities, as well as the Society ... and the same would hold true for any mentoring programs that might be established within Sigma Tau Delta.
Bethany: As you can see on the chart, there are many benefits to mentees. One of the greatest, I believe, is assistance in job search and placement. Many mentees have their resumes and portfolios critiqued by their mentors; some do job shadowing; some practice job interviewing skills. And while being in a mentoring program is no guarantee of rapid job placement upon graduation, networking within a professional organization has, indeed, led to several job opportunities for mentees in our program.
Rachel: From the mentor’s standpoint, the greatest benefit is the satisfaction of helping new technical communicators as they enter our profession. But there are other benefits as well. Students bring the latest techniques and technologies; Bethany even taught her mentor, Dan, how to master Facebook.

Bethany: Well, I don’t know if I’d say “master” ... Dan’s first Facebook entry was 500 words.

Rachel: But Dan told me you actually use punctuation in your text messages.

Bethany: Guilty as charged.

Rachel: But seriously, Bethany’s and Dan’s mentoring relationship is a perfect example of the last item on this chart. There is no way Dan would have undertaken, let alone accomplished, as many STC initiatives as he has in the past 3 years without the help of Bethany and his previous mentee, Sarah Baca.

Bethany: And, for our part, we both had opportunities for professional publication that we would not otherwise have had as students.
Bethany: At the University of Central Florida, we have a student government-sponsored organization called Future Technical Communicators, or FTC, instead of an STC student chapter, so as to benefit from university support on funding for conferences and speakers, meeting space, promotion, etc. Many of the FTC members are student members of the STC-Orlando chapter. FTC has benefitted enormously from our partnership with the STC-Orlando chapter, particularly from the mentoring program.

Rachel: That has definitely been a two-way street: the mentoring program has been equally beneficial to the Orlando chapter. It has provided the community a steady pipeline of new talent and leadership. In fact, former mentees recently filled two gaps on the Administrative Council caused by attrition of long-time active members for personal/family reasons. That’s why we are encouraging other STC chapters to consider establishing student mentoring programs with nearby universities that offer a degree program in technical communication.
Bethany: Hopefully, we’ve convinced you WHY you should consider establishing a mentoring program with a student community. On that assumption, we’re going to show you HOW. 😊
Rachel: That’s Bethany trying not to laugh as Dan attempts to paint a ceramic mug at a get-to-know-you icebreaker/kickoff meeting for the STC-Orlando/UCF mentoring program. This photo does illustrate the two key ingredients for a successful student mentoring program. You need a motivated leader on the professional side and a motivated leader on the student side. Both need to be willing to put in a couple months of effort recruiting and pairing mentors and mentees and staging a kickoff meeting. From there, it’s up to the mentors and mentors; the workload for the coordinators drops off considerably.

Bethany: That’s true. And all the work is worth while when you see the mentors and mentees chatting excitedly and beginning their partnerships.

Rachel: Returning to the “ingredients” part, if you have both those ingredients, you will almost certainly succeed in forming a mentoring program. If you lack either one, the opposite is true; there is little chance of success.
Recipe

* Combine equal proportions of mentees and mentors
* Season with guidelines and turnkey administrative tools
* Mix well
* Bake for one academic year
* Garnish with job placement or graduate school acceptance icing

Bethany: So how do we achieve the kind of success we have enjoyed with our program? It’s all about organization and tools.
Bethany: As we mentioned earlier, we have a turnkey toolkit that will keep you from “reinventing the wheel” in establishing and administering a mentoring program.

Rachel: Come see us at the STC table and check out our toolkit.

Bethany: So, when you have all the tools, what’s next?

Rachel: It’s more a case of WHO’s next, right?
Bethany: Exactly! So WHO would you think it would take to have a mentoring program? Well, this is kind of obvious, now isn’t it? Mentors and mentees, of course!

Rachel: It’s just a matter of finding them!
Bethany: It’s all about recruitment.

Rachel: It’s the professional coordinator’s job to line up commitments from mentors and student coordinator’s to find prospective mentees. They use promotionals on the chapter listserv and in the newsletter, announcements at chapter meetings, and personal phone calls. Once they have at least a half dozen firm commitments, they turn it over to the student coordinator to troll for mentees.

Bethany: I faced a big challenge at UCF in recruiting mentees because we do require students to join the STC Orlando chapter to participate in the mentoring program ... SQUEEZING MONEY OUT OF STARVING, JOB-HUNGRY COLLEGE STUDENTS. I did whatever it takes ... bribery with candy, car-jacking people to STC meetings, etc. So if we did it, you can do it!

Aside from money, the main thing we’re looking for from mentees is their time.

Rachel: Once you have the time commitment on both sides, the next step is pairing.
Bethany: And these are two of our PAIRS. Pairing is probably the most important responsibility for the coordinators. The better the matches, the better the mentoring. And here’s where the TOOLKIT really comes in handy.

Rachel: The professional coordinator extracts data from mentor applications and compiles it into a mentor summary form. The data includes areas of expertise, schedule availability, preferred means of communication, areas of personal interest, teaching style, and a self-assessment of personality ... introverted/extroverted).

Bethany: And the student coordinator executes a parallel process extracting data from the mentee applications and compiling it into a mentee summary form. The data is the same as for mentors, except areas of expertise turn into areas of desired specialization and “teaching style” becomes “learning style.”

Rachel: Then the coordinators get together, compare the data on the summary forms, and make the pairings.

Bethany: Then we build suspense by NOT announcing the pairings until the first meeting. We invite all the mentors and mentees—we call them “M&M’s” for short—to a kickoff meeting centering on an ice-breaking activity that introduces them.
Bethany: So, WHEN and WHERE can kickoff meetings be held? Over the years, our program has staged many memorable kickoff meetings in many different venues.
Bethany: The photo on the left is from our first kickoff meeting at UCF, and the photo on the right is from the 2009 kickoff at STC-France’s annual regional conference in Paris. The initial kickoff meeting at UCF was a favorite... the co-founder, of the STC-Orlando/UCF mentoring program, Bonnie Spivey, set up a “treasure hunt.” After meeting in the tech writing lab for breakfast, she sent the mentors and mentees off in different directions following clues that led them around campus via circuitous routes to their ultimate rendezvous points, where then, and only then, did they discover who their M&M partners were. It was great! ... only one pair was lost to the gator in the swamp next to UCF’s Education Building.
Bethany: We held our kickoff meeting last year at a pottery shop called Painted by Hue ... My friend Rachael and I—that’s another Rachel, not this one!—“catered” the event with home-made sandwiches, snacks, and, of course, a cake – that’s an Orlando chapter tradition. We ALWAYS have cake.
Bethany: The key function of the kickoff meeting, other than introducing the M&M’s and having fun, is for the M&M’s to chart their course for the year. It’s important this planning happen right up front, so we allow time for the mentors and mentees to complete their forms.

Rachel: The form is a template for establishing mutual objectives, identifying activities to achieve those objectives, and arranging a mutually convenient schedule for meeting.
Rachel: So, what are some typical activities in a mentoring relationship? That varies considerably.

Bethany: For example, in last year’s mentoring program, Rachael and Erika paired up on STC projects; Zack and W.C. met at Panera Bread where W.C. provided insight into “Corporate America” as well as strategies for job placement; and Jessica job-shadowed Deborah.
Bethany: For more normal mentor/mentee pairs who are not co-dependent workaholic perfectionists like Dan and me, we suggest a more reasonable slate of activities. As an integral part of our kickoff meeting, we “prime the pump” with the M&M’s by suggesting several possibilities concerning activities and mutual projects they may wish to pursue.

[After giving the audience a moment to digest this slide, FLIP TO 31.]
Suggested M&M Activities (cont)

- Write a short review of one or more web sites that would interest or help readers
- Create a short, engaging article that teaches a grammar and/or mechanics point – creative formatting encouraged!
- Join an STC SIG in an area of mutual interest and participate in a SIG-related project together.
- Use social media (e.g., IM, texting, Facebook, Skype, or even asynchronous color-coded “e-mail ping-pong”*) to engage in some real-time “chats” from time to time to get to know each other better and share ideas.

[Let audience read.]

Bethany: This list is by no means exhaustive, but you get the idea. It’s helpful to offer some suggestions ... once you do that, the M&M’s pretty much take it from there.
Bethany: To return to the original concept of modifying the infrastructure of STC’s student mentoring program to accommodate mentoring in other disciplines within the English curriculum, here’s an idea of how a “Suggested Activities” chart might look for such a program ...

Possible Activities for Mentoring within the English Curriculum

* Co-author an article for a literary journal
* Attend a local reading together
* Revise a creative writing piece of the mentee’s
* Review the mentee’s portfolio
* Write a literature review on a topic of mutual interest
* And more!
Bethany

... and this shows how readily the STC mentee application form could be adapted for mentoring within other areas of the English curriculum ...
Bethany ... as could the STC mentor application.

Rachel: The same thing holds true for the many other materials that are available in the “turnkey toolkit” for the STC student mentoring program. The printed reference guide and accompanying DVD include descriptions of successful student mentoring programs, program guidelines, and a full suite of administrative support materials and forms. If you are interested in starting a mentoring program pairing members of your Sigma Tau Delta chapter with professional writers, linguists, professors with whom students do not have a class, professors from other universities, or, for that matter, technical communicators from STC, be sure to stop by the STC table.

Bethany: And while you’re there, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of our special steeply discounted 9-month STC student membership offer to members of Sigma Tau Delta. 😊
Available Materials

- STC guidelines for mentoring programs
- Specific program guidelines and procedures
- History of successful mentoring programs
- Mentor/mentee (M&M) application forms
- M&M summary forms (for making pairings)
- M&M agreement form
- Suggested M&M activities and projects
- M&M contact log
- Link to typical M&M Facebook page
- M&M pre-assessment forms
- M&M post-assessment forms
- M&M program evaluation form

Bethany: In addition to the printed guidebook and DVD, materials are also available on the STC-Orlando website and on the resources page for STC’s Community Affairs Committee.
Bethany: We are excited about the potential that mentoring programs offer for professional technical communicators and students entering the profession, and we believe similar mentoring programs in other disciplines within the English curriculum could be equally rewarding. If you share that enthusiasm, we are here to help you get started.

Rachael: We’ll be glad to answer any questions at this time and, of course, at the STC table.

Bethany: Also, free to contact us at any time after the conference. Our contact information is on the slide.