

Remarks
From Sandra Sollod Poster, Ph.D.,
Borough of Manhattan Community College,
Principal Investigator, National Science Foundation Grant
“Creating Career Pathways for Women and Minorities in Digital Video Technology”
SMPTE Technical Conference
Hilton Hotel, New York
November 11, 2005

Question: What do you do when someone gives you \$900,000?

Answer: Say, “Thank you.”

I am here tonight to say “Thank you, SMPTE” for the invaluable support you gave to Borough of Manhattan Community College. We were recently awarded a \$900,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to create a three-year program, “Creating Career Pathways for Women and Minorities in Digital Video Technology.”

It is our hope that the program will become a national model and evolve into a Regional Center.

SMPTE was our partner and our supporter. You gave our proposal credibility, merit, and prestige. And we say, “Thank you!” And I especially want to thank Robin Schanzbach for the leadership role she played in this effort.

Tonight, besides saying thank you, I want to do three things in the next three and half minutes: I want to give you a snapshot of BMCC; I want to give you a peak at the project; and I want to tell you what we want from you next.

First, a snapshot of BMCC.

Borough of Manhattan is a campus of the City University of New York. We’re located in trendy Tribeca where we serve 19,000 full and part-time students. Sometimes BMCC is called “Bootstrap U.” Most of our students are the first in their families ever to go to college and we serve a huge immigrant population. Our students are gritty, gutsy go-getters. All of them are graduates of the School of Hard Knocks.

BMCC offers a fantastic Video Arts and Technology Program. It is now 25 years old, but we are always upgrading it. We use as our teaching labs our high-definition television studios and networked edit suites. Few schools can rival our technology holdings and fewer can match them. We are unabashedly proud of our claim as being one of the best-equipped academic media centers in the United States. (Take that, NYU!)

Now that you have a picture of BMCC, let’s take a peak at the grant-funded project I told you about earlier.

At BMCC, we are leveraging our high-definition media center to teach, to train, and to prepare people for careers in digital video technology. We are the only college in the United States to do this at this time.

The name of the project is “Creating Pathways...in Careers in Digital Video Technology” and we are trying to bring four groups onto the path.

The first group, all the way at the far end of the path, is high school students. We want to get them onto the path early and offer to them college classes while they are still in high school. We want to encourage them and motivate them to attend BMCC’s VAT program and help make the seamless transition from high school to the two-year college to the four-year college to jobs in digital video technology.

The second group we will bring onto the path is BMCC’s own VAT students. We will revise our curriculum with your help and guidance. We want to bring them up to speed in high definition so they can meet the FCC standards and prepare for four-year colleges and careers in digital video technology.

The third group on the path will be media professionals. We will help them upgrade their skills and knowledge through summer workshops we will offer to union members, trade organizations, and members of special interest groups, especially those serving women and minorities.

The fourth group on the path will be faculty from high schools and colleges. We will offer summer workshops to upgrade the graders and help prepare them to prepare their students.

It is an ambitious comprehensive project and we are aiming to create a path crowded with motivated, educated, well-prepared people: The workforce of the future.

Last, I want to tell you what we want from SMPTE next. (We are not going to ask for another \$900,000, but if you offered it, we wouldn’t say no.) Actually what we do want is your knowledge, your vision, your expertise, your experience, your perspectives, your participation, your internships, your invitations, your introductions. We want you to meet with our staff and talk with our students. We want you to be our champions.

As you know, this field is both art and science. It is mastering the details and understanding the big picture. We want our student to have their hands on the hardware, their feet on the ground, and their eyes on the skies.

We look forward to working with you over the next three years to create a trained workforce of technology professionals: A Pathway to Careers in Digital Video Technology.

Thank you.