



## **Sabbatical Proposal for spring 2021**

Dr. Amy Edwards

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Communication Studies Full-time Faculty  
Visual and Performing Arts Department (VPA)

# Putting Unity Back into Community College through the Power of the Performing Arts



## **Sabbatical Proposal: Dr. Amy F. Edwards**

### **1. Statement of Purpose**

Here at Oxnard College, a group of like-minded individuals gather each and every day to fight for student success and to support students on their journey towards the American Dream. It can be argued, however, that aspects of the system are broken; although parts of the system do work, it can also be argued that we lack community and unity, although they are explicitly in our name. This sabbatical proposal will outline a project that is intended to enhance our college's sense of community, and find out just how powerful arts education can be for students. Ultimately, I will be traveling to multiple colleges to see how their performance/lecture series events work in order to see how other colleges connect to their communities, their students, and to their arts curriculum.

A community college is a place to thrive and discover who and what you are, and it is the place that continually reinvigorates my passion for teaching and learning. On day one of a new semester, I am faced with a renewed sense of urgency because students walk into my classroom not knowing what they are capable of. However, when they walk out of my classroom, they have discovered the confidence to believe in themselves and they can begin their journey to find their passion. As all college employees are aware, there are several other places where the "magic" happens, besides the classroom. I have first-hand experience with the power of the performing arts, as the department chair for the Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) department, and as the director of OC LIVE, the college's signature educational entertainment series that began in the fall of 2017. This sabbatical project will utilize all of the skills I have acquired, from the variety of jobs I perform, and seeks to enhance our sense of community. This project is three-fold:

#### **Part One: Scholarship**

The first element to this sabbatical project will be to study visual and performing arts theory, and engage the scholarship about performing arts and the need for lecture series events on college campuses. I will read articles that discuss the power of performing arts in relation to student success. My sources for scholarship will include journals such as, *The Journal of Performance and Art*, *Theatre Journal*, and *Applied Theatre Research*. I will also include Trade

magazines such as *The Hollywood Reporter*, *American Theatre*, and *Stage, Screen, and Radio*. In a final report, I will review what I have read, and will make connections to OC, VPA, Communication Studies, and the community. There is a lot of research about communication and arts education, and this sabbatical will allow me to expand my knowledge in the field. (Sample articles can be found later in this proposal).

### **Part Two: Attending Events**

I will attend a minimum of six events at multiple community colleges and universities predominantly throughout Ventura County (including Ventura College and Moorpark College) and Los Angeles County in order to survey what others are doing. I will also visit colleges with similar sizes and populations outside of the area and colleges that are also Hispanic Serving Institutions. My plan is to research other college and university lecture series-type websites and attend one-two events per month in order to uncover themes and make connections to OC LIVE. I will watch the events through an academic lens with the hope of learning how we can make OC LIVE events better for our community and our students. Although I will be a guest at these events, I will not just be a “regular” audience member; I will be there researching how these colleges use such events to help students cultivate communication skills, interpersonal skills, performance skills, and connect to the community. I will also watch these events through a technical lens to see how they run their events, how and where they spend their money, how they use technicians, and how their events are organized, set-up, and run. I will also watch with an audience lens to see what the experience is like in the audience, how it could have been improved, and what types of experiences are missing.

### **Part Three: Meeting with People**

For the final aspect of this project, I plan to meet with the directors of the series events and see how they put the series together, how they budget for the events, and how they market them. Is there a team in place? Is it the individual working alone? These meetings will take place face-to-face, as live interviews, and may also include online discussions with stakeholders. These are the types of

questions that will help improve our own series, and make the connections to the community and the students more explicit. For this third and final part of the project, I will ultimately meet with my counterparts at these other colleges. If possible, I also plan to meet with audience members and students who attend the events to find out what they like, why they attend, and some of their personal pros and cons.

## 2. **Rationale**

### a. **Professional Development**

Although OC LIVE has been very successful for the last two years, I sort of jumped in headfirst and have been learning “on the job.” The same is true for VPA. Communication Studies moved to VPA when it was brand new, and it has been growing and developing since its inception. It is now necessary to study the visual and performing arts theory, and see how others have been connecting to the communities and the colleges overall. This will make me much more successful in my many jobs, including in the classroom, as the department chair, and as the director of OC LIVE.

### b. **Value to Department or Discipline**

This sabbatical project is absolutely fundamental to my discipline and to the VPA department, overall. This project will help me identify the best ways to lead and direct faculty and students throughout the academic year.

### c. **Value to College and/or District**

This project will make events even better at OC, which is great for the college and the district. We lack a Theatre program and have very small Music, Dance, and Art programs. OC LIVE is one of the best ways to show off our programs on campus. VPA has been working hard to grow, but we need the support from the college in order to do so. I am hoping this project helps me discover the best ways to go about bringing change that is even more positive. Live college events are part of the staple that is college, which is why many higher educational institutions have thriving programs. A culture without art isn't possible. Art is at the very core of our identity as humans. I feel that the greatest gift we can give students at our college, within our district, is an understanding, appreciation, and ability to create art. Making OC LIVE and VPA stronger brings more visibility to OC and VCCCD.

**d. Value to Students**

The arts are critical to student development and human growth, and the arts should be treated that way in college curriculum. Increased self-confidence and self-awareness, enhanced social and communication skills, and improved cognition are among the many benefits of teaching the arts. While the positive impact of the arts on academic achievement is worthwhile, in itself, it is also the tip of the iceberg when looking at the whole person. Immersion in the Arts goes beyond creating more successful students; it creates more successful human beings, which is our mission at Oxnard College. Further, OC students do not have a lot of access to events like other students in other counties. Thus, making VPA and OC LIVE stronger means more student success and growth.

**e. Value to Community**

The city of Oxnard does not have much in the way of live performing arts. Now, with the potential closure of the Oxnard Performing Arts Center, and multiple other arts entities that have already been closed in the city of Oxnard, OC LIVE is one of the only games in town. I want it to be successful so the entire community gets to experience live performances. The community will gain valuable insight, learning opportunities, multicultural awareness, comradery, enjoyment from attending our OC VPA events, and take pride in the enrichment of their college and their community.

**3. Implementation:**

**a. Implementation Procedure**

**January:**

1. Read a theoretical article that outlines the wealth and value in performing arts. Example article: *What Determines Young People's Engagement with Performing Arts Events?* by Andrew J. Martin, Michael Anderson & Ricci-Jane Adams
2. Buy tickets/plan the one-two events to attend for the month.
3. Book meeting with the director of the event, if possible.
4. Attend the one-two events.
5. Gather data through face-to-face interview.
6. Write a short report of the month.

**February**

1. Read a theoretical article that outlines the life skills inherent in the performing arts. Example article: *Performing Arts Students Develop Skills Needed for Life and Work* by Treva Dayto
2. Buy tickets/plan the one-two events to attend for the month.
3. Book meeting with the technical director, if possible.

4. Attend the one-two events.
5. Gather data by retroactively examine OC LIVE events that did not have great attendance and prepare questions for face-to-face interview.
6. Write a short report of the month.

### **March**

1. Read a theoretical article that discusses the necessity of performing arts. Example article: *Take Me Out to the Opera: Are Sports and Arts Complements? Evidence from the Performing Arts Research Coalition data* by Sarah S. Montgomery and Michael D. Robinson
2. Buy tickets/plan one-two events to attend for the month.
3. Book meeting with an ASG participant, if possible.
4. Attend the one-two events.
5. Gather data by examining OC LIVE pitfalls and then discuss these 'failures' with organizers at this campus in face-to-face interviews.
6. Write a short report of the month.

### **April**

1. Watch a live college event online and make explicit connections to OC LIVE.
2. Read a theoretical article that outlines the power of performing arts. Example article: *Creativity and Academics: The Power of an Arts Education* by Neil Swapp
3. Buy tickets/plan the one-two events to attend for the month.
4. Attend the one-two events.
5. Gather data by meeting with faculty and other stakeholders via face-to-face interviews and through online dialogue.
6. Write a short report of the month.

### **May**

1. Analyze all of the scholarship and report out findings.
2. Write a report of lessons learned as an audience member.
3. Write a report of lessons learned from interviews with faculty, students, directors, and audience members.
4. Write up a plan for OC LIVE, VPA, and Communication Studies moving forward based on what I learned throughout the semester

#### **b. Projected Results**

At the end of the period of my sabbatical leave I will have achieved the following:

1. I will be up-to-date on scholarship related to visual and performing arts programs on college campuses.

2. I will have attended at least six live events at other colleges/universities.
3. I will have explored the many facets of live performing arts events at other colleges and universities.
4. I will have met with multiple arts directors, faculty, and staff for first-hand learning.
5. I will have a better understanding of how to make OC LIVE more successful for the college, district, and community.
6. I will have a better understanding how to draw in the community through outreach, and create more unity between OC and the city of Oxnard.
7. I will produce a final report that accounts for all that I have learned or observed.

**c. Dissemination Plan: Benefit to Colleagues/Students/College**

- My report will be available for viewing by anyone in the College community. Specifically, I plan to discuss my results at the Academic Senate, the Departments Chair’s meeting, OC LIVE team meetings, ASG leadership meetings, and the VPA Department meetings. Further, I intend to present my findings to The VCCCD Board of Trustees and the Student Success Committee. I hope that this project helps everyone I work with produce better, more engaging, more inspiring and delightful events.

**4. Past Contributions to the District**

**a. Scholarship**

- I was published in the journal *New Directions for Community Colleges* in the fall 2017 edition (number 179). The title of the Journal is, “Constructions of Gender,” and the title of my article is *Achieving Gender Equity for Women Leaders in Community Colleges Through Better Communication*.
- Earned an Ed.D in 2016 and wrote a dissertation titled: *The Role of Gender in Higher Educational Leadership*.
- All of my scholarship and professional development has been on behalf of Oxnard College at the Regional Communication Association, Western States Communication Association (WSCA). A sample list of scholarship follows by date and location. I have many more pieces of scholarship to showcase, if needed.

2018 in Santa Clara, California

Panel Chair and Participant: *Classroom Hacks: Sharing our tricks of the trade.*

Panel Chair and Participant: *Another trending initiative? Mindfully increasing student success.*

2017 in Salt Lake City, Utah

Panel Chair and Participant: *Great Ideas for Teaching Students*

Panel Chair and Participant: *Giving voice to gender and transgender experiences in community colleges.*

Panel Chair and Participant: *Mitigating the divide between adjunct and tenure track faculty in the communication department.*

2016 in San Diego, California

Panel Chair and Participant: *The state of academic labor in communication studies.*

Panel Chair and Participant: *Great Ideas for Teaching Students*

Panel Chair and Participant: *Leading and creating positive departments.*

2015 in Spokane, Washington

Panel Chair and Participant: *Public Speaking Outlines: Dos and Don'ts*

Panel Chair and Participant: *Innovative projects create positive and productive departments.*

2014 in Anaheim, California

Panel Chair and Participant: *Utilizing social media and technology in the community college classroom.*

Panel Chair and Participant: *Interpersonal G.I.F.T.S (Great ideas for teaching students)*

2013 in Reno, Nevada

Legislative Assembly Member (two-year term)

Panel Chair and Participant: *Utilizing Social Media and Technology*

Panel Chair and Participant: *Do you see what I see? A short introduction to Perception*

Panel Chair and Participant: *A roundtable discussing the pros/cons of outlining, the why or why-not.*

2012 in Albuquerque, New Mexico

Chair of Community College Interest Group: 12 theoretical panels organized and facilitated.



2011 in Monterey, California  
Vice-Chair of Community College Interest Group  
Assistant Program Planner  
Chair of four different panels around theme G.I.F.T.S (Great Idea for Teaching Students)  
Presenter on Theory of Performance Studies panel

2010 in Anchorage, Alaska  
Vice-Chair of the Community College Interest Group  
Panel Participant: *“Creating Community from one community college to the next: Profiling current issues on our campus.”*

2009 in Phoenix, Arizona  
Panel Participant: *Baby Boomers, Gen Xer’s, and Gen Yer’s: Integrating the generations in the classroom is its own mixed metaphor*  
Panel Participant: *The “Crack Cocaine of College Life”: Students, Popular Technologies & the Ideological Conditions for a New Culture*

2005 in San Francisco, California  
Chair of panel: *Theory in the Community College Classroom*  
Presenter in panel: *Gender and the Classroom*

2004 in Albuquerque, New Mexico  
Roundtable Panel Participant: *Strategies for Dealing with Hard Times in Community Colleges*

2003 in Salt Lake City, Utah  
Original Performance Piece: *Memories of When It Still Mattered*

**b. Service**

**1) Department/Discipline**

For the last 15 years I have been working very hard to develop and grow my program and department here on campus. When I arrived there were only a few Communication Studies R101 classes were offered. They were actually still called SPEECH 101 when I began, but I have since changed our name and brought the discipline into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We now have a complete Communication Studies program with an AA-T. I have written all of the curriculum and have done all of the program business as lead faculty. All of the Communication Studies SLOs are updated,

assessed, complete, and up- to-date in eLumen. In the spring of 2017, we hired an additional full-time faculty, giving me the chance to create and chair VPA.

I direct and host an intramural speech tournament once or twice a year, and direct our VPA student showcase every spring. I have been on the Academic Senate for 12 years, with nine of those years in an executive position. I also co-chair all of the VPA TRC committees, and am the co-chair on all VPA hiring committees.

Further, I have attended and participated in WSCA for the last 14 years and have held positions voluntarily in order to make Oxnard College a prominent part of the conference. Communication Studies was awarded the Model Communication Program Award by WSCA in 2015. Even before travel funding was available, I was paying my own way to the conference to make sure I knew who and what was going on in the field. Thus, this sabbatical allows me an opportunity to continue to work at this high level.

## 2) College

- Academic Senator and Executive Board 2005-present
  - Secretary 2011-2019
  - Vice President 2019-2020
  - President 2020-2021
- PEPC Co-Chair 2017-present
- OC LIVE Director 2017-present
- Academic Senate elections chair 2006-present
- Division Meetings when scheduled 2004-present
- CDC Task Force 2019-present
- PG Manual Work Group 2019-present
- Multiple Hiring Committee 2005-present
- Tenure Committee Co-Chair and Member 2005-present
- Graduation Speaker Committee 2006-present
- Speech Tournament Creator and Director 2005-present
- Students presentations “Solving a Campus Problem” 2004-present
- Sing National Anthem at most college events 2004-present
- Planning and Budget Committee 2013-2019
- Strategic Planning Tri-Chair 2017-2018
- Project ALAS 2015-2017
- Theatre Arts Club Founder and Leader 2011-2016
- Outreach Committee 2013-2015
- AFT/VCCCD Health Benefits Committee 2010-2013
- Intercultural Grant Project with CSUCI 2011-2013
- Literature, Arts, and Lecture Series Director 2012-2013

- Curriculum Committee 2006-2013
- Performance and Marketing Committee 2009-2011
- Student Services Committee 2007-2008
- Professional Development Committee 2004-2006

### **3) District**

- Teaching in the district for 15 years
- Participate in all trainings and in-service activities as offered
- AFT and District Health Benefits Committee
- OC LIVE Director
- Part-Time Hiring Committees for VC and MC

### **4) Community**

- OC LIVE events
- Intramural Speech Tournament once-twice a year is open to the community
- Theatre Club Advisor
- Literature, Arts, and Lecture Series Director 2012-2014
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Camarillo Speech Tournament
- Secured professional theatre facilitators to run Theatre Club workshops on a volunteer basis

## **5. Length of Service & Past Sabbaticals Awarded**

I was hired at Oxnard College as full-time faculty in August 2004. This is my second request for a sabbatical leave. I was on sabbatical leave during the Spring 2014 semester.