

Sinking or Surfing:
Facing the Wave of Technology
in Community Colleges

Mark Bates

September 2024

Sabbatical Proposal

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1. Purpose: The purpose of my sabbatical is to explore, research, and analyze issues surrounding technology which affect community college students—especially those in our Oxnard College population.

In my twenty-five years of teaching at Oxnard College, the last ten have provided a number of different ways that technology has directly affected how our students learn, how they feel, and how they interact with the world around them. Some main areas of technological influence include the following:

Smartphones: These devices, once a luxury item, are now ubiquitous among student populations. Advertised as a way to continuously connect to their culture, they also have the effect of isolating students while among their peers, and threatening to be a constant distraction in the classroom.

Zoom: This different modality of learning brings education to those unable or unwilling to enter a campus environment. However, online teaching, made commonplace during the COVID-19 pandemic, has also brought challenges in the areas of student interaction, effective teaching practices, and academic integrity.

Artificial Intelligence: This burgeoning field brings many temptations to students wishing to bypass the traditional learning processes, as well as introducing increasing difficulty to professors trying to assess proper usage.

While the effects of these technological advances—among many others—are felt throughout education, faculty are often left feeling “behind the curve” in knowing how to react to the issues that these technologies bring.

In my sabbatical project, I would like to take time to focus on the following:

Research: I would begin to explore the latest books and articles concerning the technological impacts to education, focusing on the community college

classroom. Such research will never be “complete”, but my goal would be to synthesize the latest thoughts and findings for faculty resourcing.

Intervention: With the help of faculty at Oxnard College, as well as other institutions, I would gather strategies that have been used in the modern classroom, with assessments of their level of success. I am currently employing strategies in my classes focusing on limiting the distracting effects of technology, but as I am currently teaching, I have limited time to discuss this topic with other faculty.

Communication: My goal would be to create a presentation that could be used for Academic Senate presentations, Professional Development Flex Days, and District-wide trainings.

2. Rationale

a. Professional Development: This proposal would help me continue to improve my teaching effectiveness to a student population less prepared than ever for transfer-level math courses (and more susceptible to the negative impact of technology), due to the changes in remedial mathematics education brought on by AB 705 and AB 1705.

b. Value to Department: The Department would benefit by having consistent data and finding specifically related to mathematics education. While many institutions provide broader training around technology, most fail to address specific skills which math courses provide.

c. Value to College or District: Because I hope to survey faculty at all three campus in the VCCCD, as well as other community colleges, I should be able to provide a broader look at the challenges and opportunities that technology offers among a variety of disciplines.

d. Value to Students: Of course, my goal in this proposal would be to find strategies that promote student success, both inside and outside of the classroom. Furthermore, I would like to use this work to make students aware of the educational and mental health challenges their generation uniquely faces, having grown up with this technology, and through a pandemic. This

information could be provided through orientation, personal growth classes, or through faculty themselves.

e. Value to Community: This work could be integrated into a larger societal understanding of the direct impacts of technology on education. Even if the benefits of this understanding are limited to Oxnard College, the multiplicative impacts

3. Implementation

a. Implementation Procedure: Beginning January 2026, I will begin intense study on the current literature surrounding technological influences on education. As of this proposal (September 2024), some resources in this field include the following:

Cloete, Anita L. "Technology and Education: Challenges and Opportunities". *HTS: Theological Studies*, Vol. 73, No. 3, 2017.

Couch, John D. *Rewiring Education: How Technology Can Unlock Every Student's Potential*. BenBella Books, 2023.

Haidt, Jonathan. *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. Penguin Press, 2024.

Khan, Salman. *Brave New Words: How AI Will Revolutionize Education (and Why That's a Good Thing)*. Viking, 2024.

Raja, R. and P. C. Nagasubramani, "Impact of Modern Technology in Education". *Journal of Applied and Advanced Research*, 2018.

Sarma, Sanjay and Luke Yoquinto. *Grasp: The Science Transforming How We Learn*. Anchor, 2020.

Song, Felicia. *Restless Devices: Recovering Personhood, Presence, and Place in the Digital Age*. IVP Academic, 2021.

Stanford Report. "How Technology is Reinventing Education". February 14, 2024.

Concurrent with this reading, I will also be reaching out to community college faculty at a variety of campuses, and across disciplines, to gather perspectives around the following questions:

- How do you see the role of technology within your classroom?
- What are the biggest challenges that technology brings to the education process?
- How has technology benefitted you and/or your students?
- What guidelines do you put on the use of technology in your courses?
- Do you put statements around technology in your syllabus?
- Have you instituted any practices in your classroom around technology?
If so, how would you rate their success?

By mid-March 2026, I would like to have a working document merging the latest research, along with perspectives from faculty peers, with the goal of discussing some basic tools which could be explored to improve academic success and student well-being in the classroom.

Where possible, I would like to partner with Oxnard College faculty who would be willing to institute some practices in their classes, beginning Fall 2026. If possible, I would hope to collect data (both quantitative and qualitative) from such collaborations to further research in this field.

b. Projected Results: While I can not predict the results of my research, I would hope this exploration could serve as a baseline for future discussion among faculty, staff, and administration. During this discussion, I would strive for consistent data analysis, as well as practical applications that can be implemented by a variety of community college faculty.

c. Dissemination Plan: Such results will be available for viewing by anyone in the VCCCD community, and my final presentation to the Board will also be posted to YouTube, for public observation and comment.

d. Project Timeline: My rough timeline will be as follows:

January 2026: Read and research relevant works on technology and education.

January-March 2026: Reach out to community college faculty with Technology Questionnaire, following up with personal interviews.

March 2026: Begin drafting working document merging current research with faculty perspectives.

March-May 2026: Find faculty colleagues who would be interested in enacting various practices within their classrooms in Fall 2026, with plan for data collection.

August 2026: Final report for presentation to the Board.

4. Past Contributions to the District

Program Director, *Proyecto Access*, 2001-2004

Department Chair (Mathematics), 2004-2008

Basic Skill Coordinator (Mathematics), 2009-2017

BSI Grant Coordinator, 2013-2017

Transitional Studies Committee Co-Chair, 2011-2017

Technology Committee Member, 2018-2022 (Co-Chair 2021-2022)

Sabbatical Committee Member, 2018-2020 (Chair, 2019-2020)

Past Academic Senator

5. Length of Service: 28 years in VCCCD, 25 years full-time at Oxnard College

Past Sabbaticals Awarded: Spring 2015: "Traditional or Transitional: Are They Transpositional?"