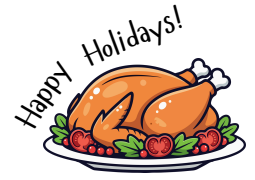




Educational Assistance Center



THE ADVOCATE: A Newsletter Devoted to Disability Equity



COLLABORATION IS KEY

by Leo Orange

College professors who effectively collaborate with Disabled Students Programs (EAC) create inclusive learning environments that promote the academic and personal success of students with disabilities. This collaboration begins

with open communication between professors and the EAC staff. Professors work closely with disability specialists to understand students' individual needs, accommodations, and learning preferences. Through this partnership, faculty gain valuable insight into how to design their courses, assessments, and classroom environments to be more accessible and equitable for all learners. EAC staff often provide professors with accommodation letters outlining approved support, such as extended test time, note-taking assistance, or alternative formats for course materials. When professors actively implement these accommodations and maintain dialogue with both the student and EAC staff, it ensures that barriers to learning are removed promptly and fairly. Training and workshops provided by EAC also help faculty build awareness about disability rights, universal design for learning (UDL), and inclusive teaching practices.

Moreover, successful collaboration extends beyond compliance. Professors who engage with EAC foster a sense of belonging by encouraging self-advocacy and respecting students' confidentiality and autonomy. They may consult EAC to adjust instructional methods, integrate accessible technologies, or modify classroom layouts to support mobility and engagement.

Ultimately, when college professors and the EAC work together, they cultivate an inclusive academic culture that values diversity and empowers all students to reach their full potential. This partnership not only enhances educational access but also strengthens the entire campus community.

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION OR SUGGESTION FOR NEXT MONTH'S CONTENT?

Contact Leo Orange at lorange@vcccd.edu

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE THROUGH THE LENS OF DISABILITY

Oxnard College's Educational Assistance Center provides accommodations to students with disabilities. Our mission is to help them learn their course material and achieve academic excellence. Some of the accommodations we offer incorporate assistive technology, and some of these assistive technologies incorporate artificial intelligence. These tools help students synthesize and interact with lecture transcripts and textbooks like never before. But these tools are, understandably, under scrutiny.

Artificial intelligence, in all its rapidly inevitable ubiquity, is a controversial topic, especially as it applies to academia.

Opinions split three ways: Those who think AI should be fully embraced, those who think AI should be used in limited circumstances, and those who think AI should be banned entirely. If you search for evidence-based studies to support your preferred paradigm, you'll find it. The jury's still out on this one.

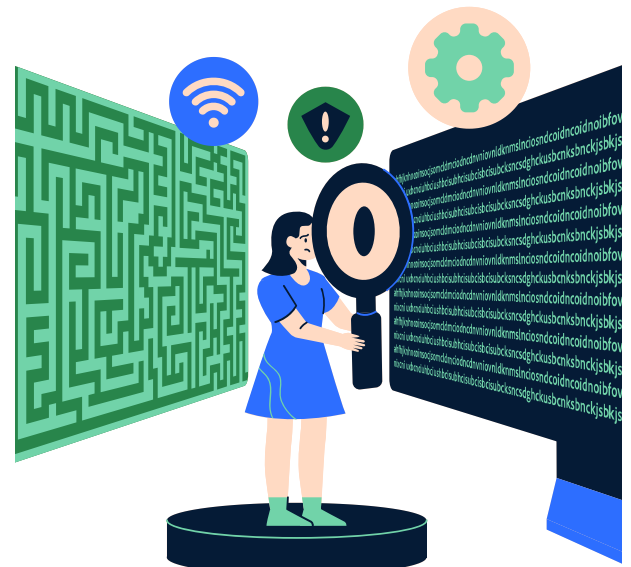
A primary concern rampant in the field of education is the potential for vast cognitive offloading. The fear is that using generative AI to concoct elaborate responses to otherwise potentially thought-provoking questions is robbing us of critical thinking skills. Essentially, we are outsourcing our ability to interpret, refine, and postulate. This can have negative repercussions in one of two ways: For those who have yet to develop critical thinking skills, it can stunt the growth of such skills, and for those who already have critical thinking skills, it can cause these skills to atrophy. The "use it or lose it" argument is a valid concern supported by numerous studies. But the question is: Should this concern apply equally to everyone?

Consider this: If your legs function, but you decide to use a wheelchair to get around, your legs will weaken. At some point, if you use the wheelchair exclusively, you may be unable to use your legs at all. You will have become reliant on your tool. But if your legs don't function to begin with, and you are provided with a wheelchair to get around, you have gained opportunities you didn't have before. Your world has become more accessible.

Not all students learn the same, study the same, or test the same. ADHD, dyslexia, autism, anxiety, and depression are but a handful of disabilities that can make it difficult to absorb and interpret course material in traditional ways. Unfortunately, these populations are often believed to be lacking in motivation or effort, and too often, the tools EAC provides them with are seen as coddling rather than accommodating.

While students with disabilities may compose a small percentage of our student body, they compose 100% of the students EAC serves. We see neurodiversity in all its forms every day, all day. We see firsthand how effective assistive technology can be. We see engagement increase when Snoop Dogg reads essays aloud with Speechify. We see eyes light up when lecture notes are synthesized with Jamworks. And we hear the same thing from our students, over and over again.

"I can finally learn this."



NOVEMBER 7-11 IS INTERNATIONAL STRESS AWARENESS WEEK



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Feeling a little stressed this time of year? You're not alone. The holiday season can prove stressful for many of us. Toss a few final exams and essays into the mix, and it's natural to feel overwhelmed. But don't worry, we've got you covered! Here are seven ways you can address stress and move past it.

- **Exercise:** This will pump up your endorphins. There's nothing like post-workout clarity for a reboot.
- **Connect with others:** Reach out to friends or loved ones. Put things into perspective.
- **Help others:** This provides you with an immediate sense of accomplishment.
- **Prioritize:** Focus on what's most important. Acknowledge to yourself that you are doing the best you can.
- **Relax:** Give yourself a break. Make time to do something you enjoy. Include it in your schedule. You deserve it!
- **Be grateful:** Take a moment to reflect on some positive aspects of your life. Mindset is what you make of it.
- **Acceptance:** If you can fix a problem, don't worry about it. If you can't fix a problem, don't worry about it. There is no benefit to worrying.

EAC STAFF SPOTLIGHT: BILLY SOWERS

Billy serves as an Office Assistant and ASL Interpreter for EAC. With a background in American Sign Language, he is passionate about making accessibility for everyone as they see fit. He holds an Associates in American Sign Language Interpreting from LA Pierce College and attended



Gallaudet University for one year to immerse himself in Deaf Culture. Billy has been with Oxnard since 2023 as an Interpreter and looks forward to working with everyone connected to Oxnard College. In his free time, he enjoys rock climbing and spending time with his two cats, Alley and Stacy.

CONNECT WITH US

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Stay tuned for December's Edition of the EAC Advocate to learn more about the reading tools we provide to our students!