Amberly's Answers: The Role of Technology on Campus?

Ryan's Question: What do you think the role of technology plays on a college campus?

Amberly's Answer: To be frank, I think it would be easier to ask what part of campus and college at large isn't affected by technology. Everywhere you look, you will see a laptop or a phone out, ready to connect with the internet and the world. The lobbies (at least in the Honors College) have a TV screen, ready to play the Superbowl or the latest episode of American Horror Story. In classrooms, we have an increasing number of projectors and smart screens. We use sites like Moodle and Blackboard for school assignments. A lot of the library's resources are digitized now.

I would just like to say that this is by no means a condemnation of technology! I'm not going to be like one of these cartoons...
... that, in my opinion, completely (and rather lazily) oversimplifies the issue at hand and the amazing possibilities that technology allows.

What the cartoonist doesn't recognize is that the father in the comic might be catching up on the news, learning important information about the day's events. The daughter beside him could be in the middle of a much-needed listening session to her favorite Broadway musical, the closest she will ever get to the real thing because tickets to the real thing cost hundreds of dollars. Her brother could be texting the friends he didn't get a chance to say hello to today in school. The other daughter could be doing intense research for her latest history paper. The mother could be browsing through Trip Advisor, planning the next family excursion.

No idea what the dog is doing, but you get my drift, right? The family is actively consuming the technology in front of them, and who knows, maybe at dinner, the daughters will talk about that musical or that paper, the father will bring up the news. The mother will fill everyone in on the upcoming trip, and the son will be paying full attention because he's already talked to his friends.

Technology is not this Very Evil thing! In fact, cartoon aside, technology has helped me so much throughout my time here at UMass. It's nice to have the resources at the library digitalized — I don't have to carry all of the heavy books and papers in my backpack. Projectors and smart screens make everything easier, and I've always been better at typing my essays than handwriting them.

Should there be some concerns about technology? Yeah, absolutely. There are humongous companies that quietly hold a monopoly over everything (ironic, given that the internet was supposed to be a decentralized medium) and collect a lot of your data. Data collection is particularly alarming because of how intrusive companies can be as they use the collected data.

But while it's important to keep this in mind as we navigate technology in our world, it's important that we recognize the technology itself isn't necessarily bad — it just depends on how we use it.