

## Active learning with technology: bringing students, faculty, and information together

You will be joining a community of people devoted to creating and sharing information. Finding answers to the following questions can help you understand how technology is used to support learning and collaboration in your areas of interest or possible major(s).

### Coursework—in and out of class

- ▶ How does the campus use technology to enhance teaching and learning in your areas of interest?
- ▶ Is there technology in the classrooms?
- ▶ Will you use technology to collaborate with other students in both your introductory and advanced courses?
- ▶ Does the school give credit for courses taken online from other institutions and sources of instruction?

### Support services

- ▶ Does the school have multimedia labs you can use to work on projects? Is there help available?
- ▶ Are library collections and resources—such as catalogs, research databases, special collections, course reserves, full-text electronic journals, books, and streaming media—available online and accessible off campus?
- ▶ What technology resources and help are available to students with special needs?
- ▶ Can the library deliver documents to you electronically, either via e-mail, file transfer, or through Web posting? Is there a cost associated with that service?
- ▶ What kind of help does the library provide for research assistance, and when is the help available?

### Looking toward graduation and a career

- ▶ Does the campus offer general or profession-specific training programs that will ensure you are fluent in current information technologies when you graduate?

## Taking care of business online

Your campus experience will include some time spent taking care of practical matters, such as registering for classes, requesting transcripts, and paying tuition. Find out which transactions and the services that support them can be handled online and at a distance.

### Managing your personal information

- ▶ What personal information can you view online—your contact information, grades, degree progress, financial status, or other information?
- ▶ Can you update any of this information online yourself?

### Conducting business

- ▶ Which of the following can you do online?
  - Check admissions status
  - Pay bills
  - Apply for and view financial aid awards
  - Register for, add, and drop courses
  - Learn course grades
  - View and print unofficial transcripts
  - Check progress toward completion of degree requirements
- ▶ What campus and community services are covered by debit-card, smart-card, or one-card systems?
- ▶ Is the school catalog—including course descriptions, degree requirements, academic policies, and the semester/term schedule of classes—available on the Web?

### Privacy, security, and usage rules

- ▶ What security and privacy policies are in place to protect student information?
- ▶ How does the campus educate students about and protect them from identity theft?
- ▶ How does the campus notify students of their rights under the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)?
- ▶ How does the campus manage e-mail spam and spyware?

## Enriching your extracurricular experiences with technology

Whether you will be a full- or part-time student, living on campus or commuting, the school's social, extracurricular, and career services activities will be an important part of your educational experience. Find out about the technology tools that facilitate different communities on campus, allowing for communication, personal development, and getting together in person and virtually.

### Accessing computer services

- ▶ What public access for computing is available to students? Examples include computing labs, cyber cafés, residence-hall computers, and wireless access.
- ▶ Does the campus provide institutional e-mail accounts for all students and use e-mail as an official medium of communication?
- ▶ Does the campus provide and support electronic space for personal student Web pages?
- ▶ Is network bandwidth limited for peer-to-peer software, gaming, Web cams, or other programs requiring high levels of network services?
- ▶ Is there a campus code of behavior about using computer resources?
- ▶ Does the campus have policies addressing peer-to-peer file sharing, computer viruses, and copyright violations?

### Connecting with others

- ▶ Is contact information for students, faculty, and staff readily accessible electronically?
- ▶ Does the campus make online communities available (for example, forums, bulletin boards, and so forth)?
- ▶ Are there Web sites for student organizations and clubs?
- ▶ What technology-supported career-planning services are available for students?

## What you pay for and what you get

There is a strong connection between the quality of technology services and the associated costs. There is also a wide variation in the ways campuses charge for these services. To evaluate the benefits you will receive and to compare costs, you'll need answers to these questions.

### Fees and expenses

- ▶ What, if any, technology fee is charged by the campus? What does it cover?
- ▶ Will you be required to purchase your own computer equipment and software?
- ▶ Does the campus make computing and network access financially accessible? Is special student pricing offered for computers and peripheral equipment?

### Technical support

- ▶ What hardware and software standards, if any, does the campus require, recommend, and/or support?
- ▶ What kinds of support services (help desk, training, troubleshooting) are provided by the campus, and when are they available?
- ▶ Does the campus have a plan for keeping its hardware and software current, and if so, what is the replacement cycle?
- ▶ If you bring your own computer to school, what kind of technical support can you expect from the campus?

### Other services

- ▶ How does the campus support printing for students, and is there a charge for this service?
- ▶ Does the campus provide wireless network coverage? If so, how much of the campus has wireless connectivity?
- ▶ What security measures are provided by the institution's IT department and what will be the student's responsibility (for example, antivirus software)?
- ▶ Does the campus include the cost of technical accessories (for example, a technology-enabled note-taking pen that provides an interface to a CMS) in its technology fee, or are students required to purchase these items separately?
- ▶ Does the campus support the purchase and use of e-textbooks? Do the baseline hardware and software standards support this technology?

## Check IT out

Use this checklist to make sure you cover important questions about information technology—IT—on campus

- I talked to faculty in my areas of interest to find out how I would use technology in those courses.
- I checked out the services I could do online from my computer such as registering for courses, viewing my grades, and paying bills.
- I visited the library to see what kind of electronic resources I could access.
- I verified that the school would do everything it could to protect me from identity theft.
- I visited some of the computing labs I could use on campus.
- I asked about the fees I might have to pay for using technology on campus.
- I checked out the technical help that I could expect to get on campus.
- I talked to current students about the online social scene.

## Technology, learning, and you

Wherever you go to school and whatever you choose as a major or future career, you'll be using computers and other information technologies. It makes sense to check out the technology environment at the schools you're considering along with other factors that will influence your choice.

Even if you're undecided now about a program or a career, you'll be a learner, a discoverer, and a technology consumer at your school. Spend a little time learning how information technology will make a difference at your school and in your future.

One of the best ways to do this is to ask questions. Remember, there are no "dumb" questions—just those you want answers to before you make a commitment. This guide provides sample questions and a checklist to use as you explore your options and make your decision.

## Beyond This Brochure

This guide gives you the basic questions to ask about information technology. You can find other useful tips and data, including comparative information on specific technology issues for different types of colleges and universities, on the guide's Web site:

[www.educause.edu/studentguide](http://www.educause.edu/studentguide)



[www.aacrao.org](http://www.aacrao.org)



[www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org)

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# The Student Guide to Evaluating Information Technology on Campus

What you need to know and what you should ask when choosing a college or university