

UT Southwestern Medical Center

**Frequently Asked Questions:
The Computer Requirement
and
The Curriculum Network**

7 August 2009

Dear UT Southwestern Student,

It is time to start thinking about the options for obtaining the computer you will be using during school. The biggest decision confronting you now is whether you wish to purchase a UT Southwestern computer package, purchase a computer elsewhere, or use a computer you already own.

Since these are important decisions, we have composed a list of answers to "Frequently Asked Questions" to help. These answers are directed at students opting to purchase a new computer; the questions are divided into three sections: 1) What should I buy? 2) How should I buy it? 3) What can I expect?

This FAQ is provided as a supplement to the "UT Southwestern Computer Purchase Site" on the web at UTSouthwestern.edu/student . Here students will find more detailed instructions on how to purchase their computer, once the questions in this FAQ are answered to their satisfaction.

Sincerely,

[Amy Williams](#)

Student Computer Support

The Student Computer Curriculum Steering Committee:

[Jim Wagner, MD, Associate Dean for Student Affairs](#)

Part 1: What should I buy?

Should I take advantage of the UT Southwestern computer package or buy a computer on my own?

We recommend that you compare the prices offered with the UT Southwestern discount to prices on the manufacturers' web sites, because often Dell offers better pricing to the general public. We have Dell and Apple certified technicians on campus who can assist you with hardware problems and can order Dell parts for you if your system is under warranty. Our technicians can do some hardware replacements on other models, but we may refer you to a business that works on your particular hardware. If your computer is not under warranty or not a Dell, you are responsible for bringing the parts. We recommend that you get a warranty for as long as you plan to keep the computer. UT Southwestern makes no money from students purchasing from any manufacturer. Soon we will be able to offer warranty support on Lenovo computers as well as Dell computers.

Students who will be using financial aid to purchase their computers will find two additional benefits: First, students will be able to order their computer *before* they actually receive the loan on the first day of school. Secondly, the University Store will allow the purchasing plan to match the disbursement of financial aid. That is, since financial aid is disbursed semi-annually, students will be allowed to pay for their computers with money they will not receive until the middle of the academic year without financial penalty.

What choices will I have if I purchase the UT Southwestern computer package?

Students will be able to configure the machine that best meets their needs directly with the vendor.

Should I buy a Mac or PC?

Either will be fine. UT Southwestern supports both. More software is available for

PCs, but for medical school purposes you will be fine either way.

Currently the second year medical school class organizes streaming of their lectures. The software that is used is Microsoft Producer 2003. Mac users have found it necessary to use Flip4Mac or run Windows using Boot Camp or Parallels.

Should I buy a laptop or desktop?

Most students purchase laptops. You will have wireless access in most places on campus as well as Ethernet options in the library and in your carrels. There are student workstations available in the library and your carrels, so you do not have to have a laptop, but most students like the convenience. We strongly recommend that you never leave your laptop unattended (even in your car) on campus.

How much can I expect to spend on my computer?

There is a wide price range for both laptops and desktops. The best thing to do is compare the prices offered by different manufactures.

What are the minimum requirements of the computer hardware?

We do not support 64-bit operating systems. Other than that, any computer on the market today will meet the minimum requirements. A PC that runs Windows XP is fine.

What software should I buy?

If you are purchasing a PC, we support XP. We support Vista on a “best effort” basis. That means that because some of our hospital’s software does not work on Vista, Information Resources does not fully support Vista, so you might encounter some problems with Vista that we cannot resolve. However, about 1/3 of last year’s incoming class uses Vista without any known problems, as long as it is not 64-bit.

Some of our software does not work on 64-bit operating systems. We are unable to support Windows 7. We offer Sophos antivirus software once you become a student. Don’t spend money on an antivirus application.

You might want to wait on your purchase of software until you are able to learn of the special software packages negotiated by the U.T. System. For example, Microsoft Windows and Office are available through the University Store for a very reasonable price to UT students. **Their phone number is 214/648-9024.**

There is also much software available for free download; more details will soon become available.

Part 2: How should I buy it?

UT Southwestern computer "packages" will be available through three vendors. Dell and Apple have a long history with UT Southwestern and working relationships with our University Store. We now also have a relationship with Lenovo. Students are welcome to purchase computers from other vendors; however, the campus is most able to provide support for these "packages", the machines with which we are most familiar. Once a student is ready to purchase, he or she should begin by reading specific instructions outlined on [this site](#).

Will I be able to order a customized computer if I use the "packages"?

Yes. The above vendors provide sites at which students may configure computers and check pricing and availability of components.

Will I be able to use financial aid to purchase my computer?

Yes. As a matter of fact, an amount of \$3,200 is automatically included in your financial aid allocation.

If I decide not to buy a computer this year, is there anything I need to do regarding financial aid?

Yes. You should decline \$3,200 of your financial aid award.

Do I have to purchase my computer from the above vendors if I am getting financial aid?

No. You will be eligible for the money regardless of where you purchase your computer. HOWEVER, there are two advantages to purchasing your computer from the above web sites. First, federal regulations mandate that financial aid be awarded in two equal portions: at the beginning and in the middle of the academic year. The University Store has agreed to accept payment for your computer directly from the student financial office with one half of the payment extracted from the initial disbursement and the remaining half from the mid-year disbursement. There is a modest handling fee for this service. Of course, purchasing a computer elsewhere will likely require payment in full at the time of delivery.

Second, financial aid money does not become available to the student until school starts. The University Store has agreed to facilitate the ordering of computers from these starts with promised financial aid money starting June 1.

Do I have to take the full \$3,200 even if my computer costs less?

Absolutely not. You can decline any amount of financial aid and you are strongly encouraged to borrow only what you need.

Is there anything else I need to know about financial aid and the purchase of a computer?

Yes. You can only get financial aid to buy a computer once. If you get the loan, buy the computer because subsequent loans will not be possible. If you don't plan to buy a computer, don't take the loan. Also, be aware the aid will come in the form of loans. The implication is that you will want to borrow no more than the amount needed to cover whichever computer purchase option you choose (buy UT Southwestern package, buy elsewhere, no purchase). This money will be available to you once, either in your first or second year. That is, don't borrow the money the first year and spend it on a trip to Hawaii instead of a computer. When you realize later that you really DO need the computer, the money is already spent.

Will I be able to lease a computer?

We have explored the lease option in the case of financial aid and have not been able to find an option that offers any benefit over outright purchase. Since the financial aid is limited to the duration of the time the computer is required (e.g. the first two years of medical school), the final lease price is almost identical to the purchase price.

Part 3: What can I expect?

What will be available and what software will I need?

Material from most courses is available and will be accessible using an Internet browser. As with all internet connections, the speed of access to the network will influence the feasibility of access. For example, on-campus access will be quicker. Some class material will also be available on CDs. The same material is accessible using Netscape Navigator, Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer or Apple Safari, but there may be slight differences in appearance. Other software used at the University will be Microsoft Office, Novell's GroupWise for E-mail, and Shared Folders (common areas of data storage that allow students to share data). Some proprietary software will be available on campus only. By using Virtual Private Networks (VPN), students may configure their computers while off campus to be "virtually" on-campus, allowing access to material restricted to on-campus computers.

Remember to wait to see the special deals on software negotiated by the UT System.

Will the computer be safe and secure?

Keep in mind the computer you purchase is your property and is completely under your control. UT Southwestern has established minimum standards to help you protect your equipment, but please be very cautious with your computer on campus. Each student is responsible for ensuring that their computer has current anti-virus and up-to-date operating system patches.

Security also involves the use of computers in the context of the curriculum network. Computing and networking resources at UT Southwestern are protected by information security legislation. These resources must be used for University business. Education is considered the business of students, so e-mail fraud and browsing inappropriate web sites are among the activities listed in the "no-no" category.

You will be asked to sign a computer use policy and an information security agreement (ISA) when you register for class and each year you are enrolled thereafter.

When will I learn my login ID and password?

You will be sent your UT Southwestern ID and password in June. With this information, you will have access to the GroupWise email system as well as the full complement of resources available to UT Southwestern medical students, including the Web Curriculum (curriculum.swmed.edu) and proprietary programs.

How do I get help when I need support?

The University staff will be easily accessible for problems.. You will be responsible for obtaining hardware warranty services from the manufacturer. **UT Southwestern strongly recommends a warranty for as long as you plan to keep the computer..** UT Southwestern has a staff member hired specifically to be the computer help contact for students. Computer support will be free-of-charge for students. UT Southwestern is an official Apple and Dell Service Center (and soon to be a Levono Service Center as well).

What happens if my computer breaks when I am studying for an exam?

There will be computers available on campus at the Main Campus Library, the North Campus Library, and L2/L3 lab areas.

What about other devices?

UT Southwestern does not support smartphones, but devices that support "wpa2 enterprise" should work on our campus network.

Where can I get more information?

Please visit the [Student and Postdoc web site](#) for more information on the computing environment at UT Southwestern. For security reasons, you will not be able to access some pages such as software downloads until you have started classes.

For questions regarding computer support, please contact the IR Call Center at 214/648-7600 or ircallcenter@utsouthwestern.edu. For questions regarding use of financial aid in purchasing computer, please contact the Financial Aid Office at 214/648-3611. For questions regarding purchasing computers through the University Store and software discounts, please contact the University Store at 214/648-9024 or randy.blankenship@utsouthwestern.edu.

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