Q: Do I need my own computer?

A: Although a computer is not required, it’s very convenient to have your own computer, especially for reading email, writing papers and experimenting with technology. Most students have their own computers. No single computer will meet all of your needs in your Engineering classes, so you should plan to use Engineering labs for at least part of your course work. If you are interested in buying a computer, we can help. See below.

If you choose not to purchase your own computer, you may use one of the many computer labs on campus, including labs at the Engineering buildings and labs in the College Houses. Labs are open from early in the morning to late at night, and some stay open around the clock. We have plenty of computer resources for you to use even if you do not have a computer.

Buying a Computer

Q: I’m thinking about buying a computer. What do you suggest?

A: Penn’s Computer Connection, the campus computer store, offers computers at special educational prices, preloaded with software you’ll need to connect to the network at Penn. In June, they will be sending you a brochure with information for web-based ordering via http://campusexpress.upenn.edu, giving you plenty of options that work well with other Penn systems. If you are purchasing a new system, we strongly encourage choosing one from this brochure.

As an Engineering student, you’ll use much more Windows software than Mac software. To save space in your room and to connect to the SEAS wireless network, consider buying a laptop rather than a desktop. A CD burner or USB flash drive is useful for backing up your homework and projects. For your security, we advise you to purchase a lockdown kit.

Q: What about a printer? Should I buy one?

A: It’s not necessary, but it is convenient. Printing is available in College House labs for a small fee. Limited printing is available in the Engineering labs at no charge. Printers are also available from the Computer Connection.

Q: Can I connect my computer to the network in my College House?

A: Yes! The University provides Ethernet and wireless coverage to each College House room. All of the computers sold by the Computer Connection include built-in network access cards.

College House Network

Q: Can I bring my own computer to campus?

A: Yes! The University’s recommended minimum specifications are a Core 2 Duo P8400 (2.26 GHz) with Windows Vista SP1, or a Core 2 Duo T8300 (2.4 GHz) with Mac OS 10.5.x, with 2.0 - 4.0 GB RAM and 200 GB disk, or above. A CD burner or USB flash drive is very useful for backing up your homework and projects. For more information about connecting computers to the network, go to www.rescomp.upenn.edu.

Financing

Q: Does Penn offer financial arrangements to assist with the purchase of a computer?

A: SFS and the Computer Connection offer students a one time option, per academic year, to purchase up to $4,000 worth of computer equipment through the SFS revolving line of credit. These purchases are posted to your student billing account and will be included on your next monthly statement. If you have any questions, call SFS at 215-898-1988, or email sfsmail@sfs.upenn.edu.
Q: When will I get my Penn email account?

A: As soon as you receive your setup code! You should receive a Pennkey Setup Code in the mail at the end of May. With your setup code, you can log on to Campus Express Online and create your email account by going to: http://campusexpress.upenn.edu. If you have Internet access, we encourage you to sign up online for an account, as the school would like to begin communicating with you by email as soon as possible.

You can read email from anywhere by pointing your web browser to http://webmail.seas.upenn.edu. You can use the campus portal at www.upenn.edu/penn_portal. We also offer spam filtering and virus scanning of email. Once you have an account, visit the mail account configuration page at www.seas.upenn.edu/accounts to make changes to your account settings.

If you cannot create your email account online this summer, you may do so during New Student Orientation at the Campus Express Center September 3-8 at Houston Hall. Check Campus Express Online (http://campusexpress.upenn.edu) this summer for more information.

Q: How can I get help with computing if I need it?

A: Students who live on campus receive their computing support from teams of Information Technology Advisors (ITAs) who live in the house. The ITAs will help you connect your computer to the College House network, customize security settings and develop the computer skills necessary for your course work. Because support is given from one community member to another, it is localized, personalized and readily accessible. Watch for ITAs during move-in and in early September and get help from them throughout the year.

Q: What software do I need?

A. Most students use Microsoft Office for papers and presentations. Other software may be needed for specific courses, such as Maple and Matlab. Software is available for use in the CETS computer labs and also for purchase at the Computer Connection at substantial academic discounts to Penn students.

A PennConnect DVD is available at no cost to students when they arrive on campus. This DVD contains Penn’s recommended networking and anti-virus software, as well as directions on how to configure the software to connect to PennNet and the Internet. The software (web browser, email, anti-virus and more) is customized for use at Penn and bundled in a step-by-step interface that makes it easy to get started. The PennConnect DVD may be picked up at the Computer Connection, at the Computer Resource Center or at move-in to the College Houses. Windows computers ordered on-line over the summer from the Computer Connection and picked up in August will come with the PennConnect software pre-installed.

Q: Where can I get more information?

A: You can visit the Campus Express site at http://campusexpress.upenn.edu for options and information. You may also contact the Computer Connection for specific questions about purchasing at 215-573-2850 or ccxmail@pobox.upenn.edu. General advice about which system to purchase is available by emailing rescomp@pobox.upenn.edu. For more information, go to www.rescomp.upenn.edu.

See you in August!

Penn Engineering
Computing & Educational Technology Services (CETS)
215-898-4707