

# Computing & Technology @ UMass Amherst

## F.A.Q. for Parents

On behalf of the Office of Information Technologies (OIT), welcome to UMass Amherst! We hope the information we've provided here will answer some of your questions about computing and technology on campus.

### What technology resources are available to students?

Students have a rich array of technologies and services at their disposal. From high-speed wired and wireless Internet, email, and telephone service to free and low-cost software, access to public computers, and technology support - it all becomes available when students activate their OIT Account. An OIT Account also provides access to SPARK, OIT's Web-based virtual classroom, and SPIRE, the online student information system, where students register for classes and manage their University finances. For a complete list of OIT services, see

[www.oit.umass.edu/accounts/services.html](http://www.oit.umass.edu/accounts/services.html)

### Are students required to bring their own computer?

UMass Amherst students are **not required** to own a computer, but many students choose to purchase their own. Before bringing a computer to campus or buying a new one, please check OIT's minimum and recommended computer configurations. These are general guidelines about the configurations that work best in the UMass Amherst computing environment. [www.oit.umass.edu/hardware/min-rec/](http://www.oit.umass.edu/hardware/min-rec/)

### Do students get any discounts on hardware or software?

- **Computers & Peripherals.** For competitive rates on desktops, laptops, and peripherals, check U\$ave, a volume purchasing program available to students at all UMass campuses. <http://usave.umassp.edu>
- **Software.** Students receive significant discounts on Microsoft Office and Adobe software via the Microsoft Select and Adobe Select programs, and free copies of Windows operating systems and other Microsoft software via the MSDN-AA program. Anti-virus software, browsers, and email clients are also available at no charge from the OIT Web site. [www.oit.umass.edu/software/](http://www.oit.umass.edu/software/)
- **Cell phones.** AT&T offers exclusive savings on cell phones, plans, and accessories to all UMass Amherst students. <http://telecom.oit.umass.edu/students/>

### Where can students access the Internet on campus?

Students living in residence halls access the Internet via high-speed Ethernet jacks. Wireless connectivity is also available in an ever-growing number of buildings and outdoor spaces. **Note:** Please make sure your student does not bring a wireless router to campus. Interfering wireless access points pose a security risk and slow down the campus network. [www.oit.umass.edu/network/](http://www.oit.umass.edu/network/)

### Are there any public computers?

OIT maintains 10 Windows and Macintosh classrooms across campus and 130 computers in the Learning Commons, a collaborative space that brings together library, technology, and other campus services in the lower level of the W.E.B. Du Bois Library. We encourage you to explore the software available in our classrooms. Students need to purchase any additional software they may need. [www.oit.umass.edu/classrooms/](http://www.oit.umass.edu/classrooms/)



## How can parents get access to a student's University bill, Financial Aid information, or grades?

In compliance with FERPA (Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act), the University must have students' written permission to share information from their records with anyone, even parents. Here are few options you can discuss with your student:

- The **FERPA Privacy Waiver** enables students to make their financial and housing information available to others. Once you are set up as a designee in SPIRE, you can contact the Bursar, Financial Aid, and UCard offices, and Housing and Residence Life on your student's behalf. The waiver does not cover academic records, such as grades. [www.oit.umass.edu/spire/for\\_students/ferpa\\_waiver/](http://www.oit.umass.edu/spire/for_students/ferpa_waiver/)
- **Unofficial transcripts** are an easy way to share academic information. Ask your student to run and print a transcript in SPIRE. [www.oit.umass.edu/spire/for\\_students/academics/transcript.html](http://www.oit.umass.edu/spire/for_students/academics/transcript.html)

## What do students need to know about copyright infringement?

In 2008, UMass Amherst received over 1,000 copyright violation notices from copyright holders or their representatives. Each notice carried the potential for fines, University sanctions, even criminal charges. Out-of-court settlements, typically paid by students' families, ranged between \$3,000 and \$7,500. We strongly recommend that students uninstall peer-to-peer applications (e.g., KaZaA, BitTorrent) and stay informed about copyright issues. [www.oit.umass.edu/copyright/](http://www.oit.umass.edu/copyright/)

## How does the University communicate with the campus about emergencies?

Students can subscribe to Campus Alerts text messages to receive notifications about emergency situations directly to their cell phones. In addition to text messaging, the University uses email, the UMass Web site, and other standard procedures to communicate emergency information. **Note:** Students' families are not eligible to subscribe. A U.S.-based carrier and cell phone are required for this service. There is no subscription charge, but text messaging fees may apply.

[www.umass.edu/campusalerts/](http://www.umass.edu/campusalerts/)

## What should students do to keep their online identity safe?

Many students on college campuses become victims of cyber-harassment or identity theft. OIT advises students to avoid posting personal details on Facebook and elsewhere on the Web, and to question any email requesting sensitive personal information. Any reputable institution, including the University, will never ask for sensitive personal information via email.

[www.oit.umass.edu/security/](http://www.oit.umass.edu/security/)

## What can students do to protect their computers?

The most important steps students can take to secure their computers are to keep their operating system updated, use anti-virus software on a regular basis, and change their passwords every semester.

[www.oit.umass.edu/security/protect/](http://www.oit.umass.edu/security/protect/)

## Where can students get help with technology?

OIT Help Desk consultants are available in person, online, and over the phone to help with any computing problem. Students can fill out an online help request, call the Help Desk at 545-9400, or stop by A109 LGRC

(Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.). [www.oit.umass.edu/help.html](http://www.oit.umass.edu/help.html)

Students are also encouraged to:

- Check the **OIT Web site** for news and information about campus technologies. [www.oit.umass.edu](http://www.oit.umass.edu)
- Use **Atomic Learning**, a comprehensive collection of video tutorials and resources, to learn new software. [www.oit.umass.edu/workshops/atomic\\_learning.html](http://www.oit.umass.edu/workshops/atomic_learning.html)
- Refer to the **Library's e-book collections** for in-depth technology information. [www.library.umass.edu/ndl/view/type/ebookcollections/](http://www.library.umass.edu/ndl/view/type/ebookcollections/)

