

College Corner

Helping Your Student Select A Computer That Gets Good Grades

(NAPSA)—No matter the time of year, students are always on the lookout for new computers that can keep pace with their rapidly changing digital world.

That's because computers are no longer a luxury for students; they are necessary to access the digital content replacing traditional classroom material and to enjoy their digital media and online activities.

While most colleges and universities don't require students to own personal computers, students use computers frequently for communications and academic activities. Students also make full use of their PCs after class, going online for their entertainment, communications and social-networking activities. Computer ownership enables students to benefit from in- and out-of-class activities and opportunities to the fullest extent.

Recently, Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) assessed technology recommendations of top colleges and universities and identified four key things to consider when purchasing a new computer.

• Not all processors are created equal.

Students use computers for both academic and entertainment activities. In order to stream video, skim through e-books and connect with peers across the world, students should look for systems with dual-core processors 2.0GHz or higher, such as AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 dual-core processors or AMD Turion™ X2 Dual-Core Mobile Technology.

The hard drive should have enough space to handle digital music, video and photos. Florida State University recommends a minimum of 250GB for desktop PCs and 80GB for notebooks. To get the best, problem-free perfor-



Computers are no longer a luxury for students. In addition to using them to study, students use computers for entertainment, communications and social networking.

mance from today's most popular and more demanding programs and Microsoft's latest operating system, Windows Vista, PCs should have more than 2GB of RAM and a discrete graphics card with 256MB of memory.

• More schools are calling for Windows Vista.

In order to have technology designed to last your college career, your best bet is to purchase a system that includes Windows Vista or is Windows Vista Capable. Windows Vista delivers great back-to-school features and provides students with a safe and easy-to-use experience that is more visual and entertaining.

Windows Vista Ultimate, the most complete version of Windows, is ideal for students, providing the productivity features that come with Windows Vista Enterprise edition and all of the multimedia features of Windows Vista Home Premium, including Windows Media Center. With a properly configured notebook computer, students can easily transform any dorm room into a high-definition movie theater.

• Notebook vs. Desktop.

This debate all boils down to personal choice. According to the University of Virginia's fall 2007

recommendations on computers, 94 percent of incoming freshmen selected to purchase a notebook over a desktop PC.

Notebooks provide students the freedom to take their PCs wherever they go without sacrificing performance and overall experience. Most "thin and light" notebook computers with 14- to 15-inch screens weigh only five to seven pounds and feature standard batteries that last four to five hours. External batteries that cost between \$50 and \$100 can double battery life for those who want or need it.

Most campuses have wireless connectivity in dorms and common areas. Since students will spend many hours on their computer, most of the time, a desktop's separate monitor and keyboard may be more comfortable to use. Desktops usually have larger hard drives and more memory than notebooks.

• Better systems tend to last longer.

All schools highly advocate buying the most capable system you can afford. Avoid purchasing low-end systems, as their academic life cycle is only one to two years. Systems with more memory, disk space and faster processors remain viable for a longer period of time. More advanced AMD-based systems will have life cycles of four to five years.

The University of Pennsylvania says it's safe to budget between \$1,300 and \$1,400 for desktops and \$1,700 to \$2,250 for notebooks, but also suggests buying properly equipped value desktop and notebook systems priced at \$850-\$1,050 and \$1,100-\$1,200, respectively. Additionally, protect your investment with a three-year warranty with same-day repair support. Most schools offer student discounts to help those on a tight budget get the best system possible.