

University of the District of Columbia

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Class of 2011
FR: Lewis Perry, Network Administrator
RE: Mandatory laptop requirement

As you may already know, all students are required to have a laptop computer to support their studies at the School of Law. In addition to basic word processing functions, the computer will be needed in order to perform various tasks related to legal research, law clinic work, as well as for e-mail and discussion group purposes.

The School of Law does not specify what particular equipment you should purchase, but rather we provide you with a minimum set of standards to which equipment should adhere. Most of the software that you will need to perform legal related research will be provided to you by the School of Law. **We do not provide you with a typical office suite of applications.** This should be purchased along with the computer (unless you already own such software) so that it can be pre-loaded for you by the computer manufacturer.

A word about data integrity: You will be creating many time consuming and important documents during your tenure at the School of Law. Consequently, we feel strongly that you have a backup medium on which to save this critical data. Therefore, we require that the laptop that you purchase have a built-in CDRW (or DVD / CDRW combo) drive. For those of you who will be bringing older laptops to school that do not have CD writing capabilities, we strongly recommend that you purchase a "USB memory stick". These devices are sold under many different names (jump drives, flash

drives, cruze drives), but they are essentially RAM memory of varying sizes (from 256 MB up through 4GB). You can save files to these lipstick sized devices just like you would to the hard disk of your computer. They typically cost from \$25 to \$75 depending on the capacity of the memory stick. **Backing up your law school documents is of critical importance. You are solely responsible for the integrity of the files on your computer.**

Your Laptop does not require a specific operating system per se: If you are going to purchase a Windows based machine we recommend that you get either the Windows XP Pro, or Vista Home Premium operating system. Windows Vista requires much more memory to run than does Windows XP. If you are in the market for a budget PC, you might want to consider models that still ship with Windows XP. If you are buying a Mac, the computer will ship with OS X Leopard.

A second necessity is the purchase of a wireless network card for your computer. We have a wireless LAN (local area network) at the School of Law that encompasses the Law Library and classroom areas. You will not be able to access the Internet or print documents without a wireless network card. ***The wireless LAN card needs to comply with the 802.11g standard (you cannot use a 802.11a wireless adapter at the School of Law).*** Most notebooks now ship with wireless cards that comply with the 802.11g standard. Most of the wireless cards shipped in today's computers comply with multiple standards (A, B, G, and N); ***so long as your card meets the G standard***, you will be fine.

For those students who plan to use their laptops extensively, especially with the wireless LAN, you might want to consider purchasing a spare battery so that you will always have backup power available when needed.

A note about laptop displays:

We consider a 14-inch screen to be the minimum acceptable screen size (MacBooks excluded since they ship with a 13" screen). If eyestrain is an issue, you might consider looking at notebooks with a 15, or even a 17-inch, display. The larger screen will add a couple of hundred dollars to the price of a typical notebook. Some models now ship with a glass or hard plastic overlay that protects the screen. Many student notebooks exhibit scratched or damaged screens caused by the keyboard keys rubbing against the LCD panel. This is usually the result of having the computer constantly wedged into book bags or having heavy objects placed upon the computer. Unless you plan on carrying your books and computer in separate bags, you might want to seriously consider models with these screen coverings. Lastly, there are now notebooks that use LED backlit LCD screens. This technology offers a brighter, sharper image as well as using less power than traditional backlit technologies.

Ergonomics:

Lastly, unlike a desktop machine, notebooks come with different keyboard and pointer layouts (for example, IBM uses a eraser style pointer while many other manufacturers use a small touchpad). It would be wise to try out the various styles, to see which you prefer, before you make your purchase.

Reliability and Tech support:

These days, most computers are manufactured on one of several assembly lines in Asia. Consequently, reliability measures are very similar across manufacturers – the best and the worst are separated by only a couple of percentage points. There is however, a much greater gap between customer's opinions of the tech support offered by various manufacturers. In the latest Consumer Reports survey, Apple came out on top by a noticeable margin. Among PC manufacturers, Lenovo (IBM) ranked first, followed by Dell - these were the only two PC manufacturers that got above average ratings. Toshiba was rated as average, Gateway & Sony slightly below average, and HP slightly below these two.

Lastly, we suggest that you consider purchasing a three-year extended warranty on your computer. The cost of extended warranties will range from \$150 - \$275 depending on whether you want on-site or mail-in warranty service. I strongly urge you to get a warranty with next day service. **We do not have a loaner laptop program;** so you may be without a computer for an extended period if you have a warranty that requires you to ship your machine off to the manufacturer for servicing. Your 1st year loan package includes \$2,500 for the purchase of a computer. This amount should more than cover the cost of a computer and an extended warranty

The following are our minimum guidelines for notebook computers:

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| Processor: | 1.6 GHz (Intel Pentium IV or Celeron; AMD Duron) |
| Display: | 14" active matrix |
| RAM: | 1 GB (2 GB if using Vista) |
| Video Card: | 128 MB of on-board video memory (also called graphics memory) |
| Hard Drive: | 60 GB |
| DVD Rom: | DVD-RW drive (can burn CDs & DVDs) |
| O/S: | Microsoft Windows XP Pro or Vista Home Premium |
| Office Suite | Microsoft Office 2003 or Office 2007 (Standard editions) Corel WordPerfect Office 12 |

Below is a listing of major manufacturer's notebooks that meet the abovementioned standards. This is by no means a comprehensive list of laptops that meet our specifications; but rather a selection of budget and modestly priced models that scored well in independent tests and that can be purchased with an integrated wireless LAN card. Actual prices will vary depending upon the specific configuration and optional software that you choose.

Acer: Aspire 4000 & 5000 series
Apple: MacBook / MacBook Air / MacBook Pro 15"
Compaq: Presario C700 / V6700 series
Dell: Inspiron 1400 / 1500 series; XPS 1400 / 1500 series
Fujitsu: Lifebook A3210 / A6120 / E8410
Gateway: M & P series
HP: Pavilion DV2700 / DV6700 series
Lenovo\IBM: Thinkpad T61, R61 series; IdeaPad Y510
Sony: Vaio VGN-FZ & VGN-CR series
Toshiba: Satellite M300 / A200 / A300 series; Satellite Pro M300 / L300 series

Models with 17" screens:

Acer: Aspire 7000 series
Apple: MacBook Pro
Gateway: P series
HP: Pavillion DV9700 series
Sony: VGN-AR series
Dell: Inspiron 1700 series; XPS 1700 series
Fujitsu: Lifebook N6470
Toshiba: Satellite P300 series; Satellite Pro L350 series

Most manufacturers will offer a range of processor speeds within each notebook line. **You are always better off saving money by specifying a slightly slower processor (1.3 GHz instead of 1.6 GHz) and then purchasing more RAM (2 GB instead of 1 GB).** Given the number of memory intensive applications in the market today; and the fact that you will likely have multiple applications open simultaneously, I would personally not buy a machine with less than 1 GB of RAM (and I would recommend installing 2 GB of RAM in a new notebook).