

COLLEGE CORNER

Wireless Networks Help Make The PC A College Must



(NAPSA)—Along with notebooks, backpacks and mounds of textbooks, there's one item on nearly every college student's must-have list: a personal computer. The percentage of college students who own PCs—currently 87 percent—has consistently increased from 75 percent three years ago, according to the semiannual STUDENT MONITOR survey.

"To succeed in college, students need every advantage, and PC ownership is one of the biggest," said Gina LaGuardia, editor in chief of *College Bound Teen Magazine*. "As a result, students rely on their PCs more than ever before, particularly now that wireless networks provide the freedom and flexibility to access information on campus in many more places."

According to a Campus Computing Project survey, 80 percent of colleges and universities now offer wireless local area networks (LANs), which allow students to submit assignments electronically, send e-mail messages or do online research when they are away from a wired Internet connection. Moreover, many retail stores frequented by college students, including Starbucks coffee shops and McDonald's restaurants, offer Wi-Fi wireless access to the Internet.

Laptops with Microsoft Windows XP Professional and the newer Tablet PC Edition help provide reliability, security and performance as well as built-in support for wireless computing capabilities such as the following:

- "Sniffing out" hot spots. Computers with Windows XP Professional can sniff out available

"hot spots"—locations that offer wireless Web access—and notify the user when one is available.

- Easy setup. Windows XP Professional makes it easy to move from hot spot to hot spot with minimal setup of a laptop's internal settings

- Security. Windows XP Professional will indicate whether a wireless network is security-enhanced. It includes built-in support for Wired Equivalent Privacy, which encrypts data on wireless networks.

Wi-Fi is already well-established on many campuses. At Stanford University in Palo Alto, Calif., more than two-thirds of students use laptops and consider increased wireless LAN access on campus an important or very important resource, according to the university's networks and system administrator.

Wireless computing is only one reason PCs are becoming increasingly vital for college students. At Stanford, students use their PCs an average of 20 hours a week to conduct online research, attend online study sessions, pay tuition electronically and perform other tasks. Some professors now let students take notes during class; doing so is particularly easy with the Tablet PC, which allows students to put handwritten text directly onto the computer's screen. When the academic day is done, many student PCs become entertainment centers in cramped dorm rooms and are used for watching DVDs, playing games, listening to music and creating custom CDs.