

Computer and Software Ownership Recommendation for Entering Visual Communication Students

General Information Regarding Computer Ownership

Entering Visual Communication students are **strongly recommended** to own an **Apple MacBook laptop computer.**

This will greatly increase your productivity during your study, as well as help you in learning this primary tool of a graphic designer.

Any of the systems noted below, and their variations as offered by Apple, will be more than adequate for your project work through the years you may be in the Visual Communication program. Prices quoted are Apple education prices and are for the current models at the time of this letter.

Adobe Creative Cloud is strongly recommended.

This includes the following software: InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop, Dreamweaver, and Acrobat Professional. These programs form the core of what will be used in the Vis Com program. Education pricing is \$30 per month.

<http://www.adobe.com/products/creativecloud/tools-and-services.edu.html>

The Adobe Font Folio Education Essentials is strongly recommended.

Quality design requires quality typography and access to a professional type library. This font folio from Adobe provides a wide range of type which will be used in all your projects, and at a substantial discount.

<http://www.adobe.com/products/fontfolio-education-essentials.edu.html>

A back up external hard drive is strongly recommended.

This will provide storage to back up your project work, in case of computer failure, loss or damage. The Mac OS incorporates back up software (called TimeMachine) which automates backup functions to an external hard drive.

If you have any questions regarding computer ownership, purchasing, or related issues, please contact Professor Steve Quinn, at squinn@niu.edu, or phone 630 566 9122.

What to Buy

Specifications and prices current as of July 2, 2013

Good Laptop

Apple MacBook Pro 13 inch
2.9GHz Intel Core i7
13inch LCD
8 Gig Ram
750 Gig drive
\$1299
Adobe Creative Cloud
\$30 per month
Adobe Font Folio Education Essentials
\$149
External Hard Drive
\$80

Recommended Laptop

Apple MacBook Pro 15 inch
2.3GHz Intel Core i7
15inch LCD
8 Gig Ram
500 Gig drive
\$1789
Adobe Creative Cloud
\$30 per month
Adobe Font Folio Education Essentials
\$149
External Hard Drive
\$80

Best Laptop

Apple MacBook Pro Retina
2.4GHz Intel Core i7
15inch LCD
8 Gig Ram
256 Gig Solid State Drive
\$1999
Adobe Creative Cloud
\$30 per month
Adobe Font Folio Education Essentials
\$149
External Hard Drive
\$80

Where to Buy

Direct From Apple

Apple computers may be purchased directly from Apple at apple.com, or Apple Retail Stores. If purchasing from Apple online, be sure to select the "Education" link once in the online Apple store. Prices there are discounted for students.

Apple Retail Stores are located in Naperville, Michigan Avenue, Oak Brook Mall, Woodfield Mall and Old Orchard Mall. Visit apple.com/retail/ for details regarding locations.

All Apple products are on display and available for purchase. Education discounts are offered here.

Bring a student ID. Very knowledgeable sales staff can help you with your purchase.

Best Buy

Best Buy stores offer most Apple laptop computers. In this store do not expect a great deal of knowledge of Apple products. If you know what you want, however, the number of stores in the region would make this an option. bestbuy.com for store locations. No education discounts are offered, however.

Online Retailers

In addition, online retailers sell Apple computers and may offer incentive packages such as free memory or printers, etc. when purchased from them. These retailers may not charge sales tax, which can be a substantial saving, even over the Apple education discount, since Apple does charge sales tax.

Online retailers include:

amazon.com

macconnection.com

macmall.com

When to Buy

It is best to wait until mid-August to purchase a laptop to ensure you are getting the best computer for the money, and the most recent version. You are to have your laptop the first day of class.

Frequently Asked Questions**What if I already own a Windows based PC Laptop?**

Apple Macs are the professional standard in graphic design. However, it is possible for you to work with a PC in the Vis Com program, but you will not have the support offered by the faculty and other students. Becoming familiar with the Mac now will assist you in preparing for professional employment. It really is in your best interest *not* to use a PC in a graphic design environment, however; having a PC laptop is better than not having any laptop at all.

What if I can't afford a new laptop?

Apple offers refurbished laptops at reduced prices with full warranties. These are available on the Apple online store, with a link near the bottom of the main store page. The offerings vary over time.

Used Mac laptops are also acceptable. Many Mac laptops are available used, especially at ebay.com, the internet auction site. If you are uncomfortable with the auction environment, there are also online retailers, such as powermax.com that sell used Mac equipment. If buying used, newer MacBooks are good. In general, the faster the processor and the more memory you can get the better. Though most computers can have their memory upgraded after purchase.

What if I don't pass review?

A personal computer is a valuable educational tool regardless of your major. As a university student, you can use a computer for research, writing papers, internet access, email, listening to music, viewing digital photography, and many other general computing tasks. It would be a beneficial investment regardless of your educational direction.

Are there lab computers available for me to use if I don't have a laptop?

While the Vis Com area does have a computer lab, only three computers are available here, and the lab has limited hours. The lab is intended as a resource for printing and scanning, and is not be considered a primary computer resource. If you do not own a laptop you may find it very difficult, if not impossible, to rely on this resource for completing your class projects. Therefore, you should own a laptop. In the Vis Com program, ALL students currently have their own laptops, as they all realize a laptop is essential for their project work.

Resources**Information about Apple products**

apple.com
apple.com/macbook-pro
store.apple.com

Other Online Apple Resellers

amazon.com
macconnection.com
macmall.com

Questions

Contact Steve Quinn,
squinn@niu.edu
630 566 9122

**Purchasing Adobe
Creative Suite 6 Design and Web
Premium and Adobe Font Folio
Essentials Software**

adobe.com
journeyed.com