

Computer Purchase Recommendations

LLM

Fall 2009

Dear Incoming Chicago-Kent Student:

Congratulations and welcome to Chicago-Kent College of Law and the Center for Law and Computers (CLC)! The staff of the CLC is delighted to be able to assist you in using computer technology to support your study of law at Chicago-Kent. We cannot emphasize enough the need for you to become familiar with your computer now instead of waiting until mid-August. Once school starts, your focus will have to shift to reading cases, preparing for class and impending legal writing assignments. Therefore, it is very important that you learn as much as you possibly can about your computer before classes start.

Chicago-Kent College of Law has undertaken as its ongoing mission an effort to integrate technology with a law school education. This mission is twofold: 1) using technology in the three to four years of law school itself to help learn legal concepts and complete school projects; and 2) familiarizing students with the technology that they will be faced with in the practice of law in the 21st century. For these reasons, Chicago-Kent requires all law students to own a computer to complete their law school education.

Your life as a law school student is much easier when you have ready access to information using your own computer. You will be expected to check your email account daily since this is the main method of communication throughout the law school community. More and more professors are making their class materials available to their classes over the Internet and expect students to refer to them online. You will complete much of your legal research via computer using the online legal databases, LexisNexis and Westlaw, both from the school and at home.

There is a lot of information to share with you in this letter so do your best not to feel overwhelmed, either with a computer purchase or with other impending law school tasks. Rest assured, it can all be done – we have many graduates each year! There is some extra work at the beginning of the first year, but the time you put in now learning to understand how everything works will pay off later this fall and every semester thereafter.

This letter contains two sets of computer specifications. First is a set of minimum computer requirements. This outlines the specifications that are necessary if you already own a computer and would like to continue to use it for law school. Second, this letter includes a list of recommended computer specifications. These are guidelines of what you should purchase if you do not already own a computer.

Notebook vs. Desktop

In purchasing a new computer, the first decision is whether to purchase a notebook (laptop/portable) or a desktop computer. Whether to purchase a notebook or desktop computer is entirely up to you. Each type has its own benefits. Notebook computers are usually configured with an Ethernet network card to connect to the network while in the school. The school has over 1,800 network ports where you can log into the network and access email, the Internet, on-line legal databases and network directories. Chicago-Kent also has wireless access points located in areas that are not hard wired. Notebooks also can be used in the most of the classrooms to take notes during class. Many students find typing notes to be faster than handwriting and ultimately easier to organize at the end of the semester. Network connectivity is available in all classrooms via hardwired or wireless.

On the other hand, desktop computers frequently cost less than notebook computers. For the same money as a notebook, you can usually get a more robust desktop and possibly some extras.

A Word About Specifications

The “minimum required computer specifications” give you information that will allow you to evaluate the adequacy of the computer you already own. The minimum specifications will enable you to use a word processor effectively and dial-in to an Internet Service Provider (for email) as well as to LexisNexis and Westlaw, the on-line legal databases. You will be able to complete the most basic functions adequately, but most likely you won’t be able to upgrade to the newest versions of software over the next three to four years.

If you do not currently own a computer, we strongly urge you to purchase a computer that meets our recommended specifications. We designed these keeping in mind that you will be using this computer for the next three to four years and believe that these components will be sufficient.

Please be aware that Chicago-Kent does not Support Windows 95, Windows 98, Windows 2000, or Linux operating systems.

Please also be aware that while wireless networking is installed in many locations on campus, it is primarily intended to supplement areas which do not have hard wired network jacks available for use. The wireless network is only accessible if your computer meets the specifications set forth in this letter and is fully configured for access to our network.

If you are considering the purchase or use of an Apple Mac computer at Chicago-Kent, there are specific limitations which you should make yourself aware of. The Center for Law and Computers has created a document outlining these limitations which we encourage you to read if you are considering use of an Apple Mac as your primary computer at Chicago-Kent. The document may be found on the Center for Law and Computer’s web site at: http://www.kentlaw.edu/clc/tech_info/AppleMac.pdf .

Financial Aid and a Computer Purchase

You will be able to include the purchase of a computer as part of the cost of attendance at Chicago-Kent when calculating your financial aid package. This cost is automatically included in the financial aid package for all first-year students. However, due to federal regulations governing the disbursement of financial aid loan checks, you will not be able to pick up your loan checks prior to your arrival at Chicago-Kent. Therefore, if you purchase your computer prior to the first day of classes, you must pay for your computer or upgrades with your own funds or credit card. Additionally, your academic year federal and/or private loans will be disbursed in two installments (one-half each semester). Therefore, when your loan checks arrive at Chicago-Kent, they will be credited to your tuition account (one-half each semester) and you can request a refund of the amount in excess of your tuition each semester through the Bursar’s Office. The combined fall and spring semester refunds may be used to reimburse you for your computer purchase or upgrade.

Minimum Required Computer Specifications:

Pentium IV or Pentium M processor
Available PC Card/Card Bus Slot: network card (notebook only)
2 GB RAM
80GB or larger Hard Drive
CD-ROM Drive
10/100 Ethernet Card or Integrated Ethernet connection (notebook only)
802.11b or 802.11g Wireless Network Adapter (802.11n pending)
Windows XP Professional <i>*Note: Windows XP Home Edition will <u>not</u> work with our network and is <u>not</u> supported.</i>
Sound Card to support playback of media files & streaming media
15" or 17" monitor

Recommended Computer Specifications:

Core2 Duo or Core2 Quad processor
Card Bus or Express Card Slot: network card (notebook only)
4 GB RAM
160GB or larger Hard Drive
CD-ROM or DVD-ROM Drive (DVD required for Windows Vista)
10/100 Ethernet Card or Integrated Ethernet connection (notebook only)
802.11b or 802.11g Wireless Network Adapter (802.11n pending)
Windows XP Professional, Windows Vista Ultimate or Windows Vista Business <i>*Note: Windows XP Home Edition and Windows Vista Home Editions will <u>not</u> work with our network and is <u>not</u> supported.</i>
Sound Card to support playback of media files & streaming media
17" or 19" monitor (desktop only)
14" or greater display (notebook only)

If you have a computer that nearly meets the minimum requirements and is extremely costly to upgrade, please call the Center for Law and Computers at (312) 906-5300 or email us at helpdesk@kentlaw.edu, so that we can assist you in determining the best solution for both your short and long-term needs.

A Word About Microsoft Operating Systems

It is important to realize that Microsoft's **Home Editions** of Windows are targeted at the consumer market and not designed to exist in a corporate network environment like that at Chicago-Kent. In fact, the "consumer" version of **Windows XP Home Edition or Windows Vista Home Edition does not include any capability to connect to corporate networks.**

So where does this leave you? At the time of writing these specifications, the Center for Law and Computers **recommends Windows XP Professional, Windows Vista Ultimate, or Windows Vista Business** as the best all-around operating system for new notebook computer purchases. For students who already own a notebook, any edition of XP **Professional**, Vista **Business**, or Vista **Ultimate** can be configured to connect to the Chicago-Kent network. Desktop users are encouraged to remain with the operating system that is presently on their PC.

A word of caution, make sure that you purchase Windows XP Professional, Windows Vista Ultimate or Windows Vista Business because **Windows XP Home Edition, Windows Vista Home Edition, and Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005 will NOT** allow you the ability to access the Chicago-Kent's network resources.

In summary, **do not purchase Windows XP Home Edition, Windows XP Media Center Edition, or either of the Windows Vista Home Editions.** They will not allow you to connect to Chicago-Kent's network resources. Only **Windows XP Professional, Windows Vista Ultimate, or Windows Vista Business** are fully supported.

Microsoft Office 2007

As a new student at Chicago-Kent College of Law you are given a copy of Microsoft Office Professional 2007 at no charge. If you are buying a new computer, please do not purchase the Microsoft Office Professional 2007 software.

If you have any questions regarding these computer specifications or anything about computers at Chicago-Kent College of Law, please do not hesitate to contact the Center for Law and Computers by calling (312) 906-5300 or emailing helpdesk@kentlaw.edu.

Center for Law and Computers (CLC)

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