

Computer Suggestion for Fall 2009

Department of Architecture
University of Hartford

First year architecture students will not need the computer for architecture courses but it will be easier to have one for other courses. There are several labs around campus but it is easier to have their own. Although some students begin to explore the use of computers for building design, we direct them away from that for the first year, encouraging them to explore hand drawing and sketching as a necessary skill for design as well as the development of digital graphics.

The University and suppliers of architectural software lean heavily towards the PC. This is changing but for the next several years, the PC platform will be the best. These days, computers come with most everything the student will need from a hardware perspective. Make sure that you get plenty of RAM - recommend at least 4 GB (6GB better; 8GB good – graphics software is memory intensive). The hard drive should also be large (300 - 500 GB). Get a DVD/CD burner (standard).

Windows Vista operating system. Be sure to get Vista Professional or Vista Ultimate (not Vista Home).

Microsoft Office Professional or Office Small Business for suite of applications (Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Outlook, Publisher).

For monitors, 17" is good. The larger the screen, up to 17", the better. Beyond 17" (19" and 21") are OK but tend to be overkill. For space and ease of use, get an "Ultra Sharp Flat Panel" (or equal). Also, look for monitors that have USB ports built into them, usually on the sides. These are much more convenient than in the computer base. Recommend at least 4 USB ports. 6 is better. 8 is great! These will be used for mouse, thumb drives, printer, (future) scanner, etc.

Wireless mouse is good and convenient.

No need for floppy drive.

Network, both hardwire Ethernet and wireless port, are essential. You can check Information Technology Services for more information. They have a couple of sites: <http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/its/ITStandards.html> and <http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/its/services.htm>. Also, check information from Admissions.

Two flash/thumb drives. Each at least 4 GB (8 GB better). These are essential for creating backups of your files (create backups daily!!).

Laptop:

I recommend a laptop for full flexibility. Configuration comparable to above: min. 4GB RAM (6GB better), 300-500 GB hard drive, Windows Vista, 15" screen fine, DVD/CD burner, 4 to 6 USB ports (6 ports are hard to get. 4 is good. 2 is minimum. Multi-port adaptors are available.)

Also - take note - laptops are not as safe as desktops. I have not heard of any great issues with this as long as students are aware. Definitely get a security cable so the student can keep it locked when not "on the road". The studios are pretty safe. Most occurrences happen elsewhere. Not a huge worry, but everyone should be aware.

Software: Microsoft Office is essential - Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Outlook. Other software, such as modeling (SketchUp for example) and CAD (AutoCAD, Revit, etc), should wait until second year.

Printer: color inkjet, 8 1/2" x 14" capability fine. 11 x 17 better (but price jumps and won't need this size until second year). Also, there are printers and plotters (large format) in the architecture department for student use.