

*UT Southwestern Medical Center*

**Frequently Asked Questions:  
The Laptop Requirement  
for Medical Students**

February 23, 2017

Dear UT Southwestern Student,

It is time to start thinking about the options for obtaining the laptop you will be using during school. All incoming medical students are required to bring a laptop. Now, the biggest decision confronting you is whether you wish to purchase a laptop from the University Store, purchase a laptop elsewhere, or use a laptop you already own.

Since these are important decisions, we have composed a list of answers to "Frequently Asked Questions" to help. The questions are divided into three sections: 1) What should I buy? 2) Can I use financial aid to buy it? 3) What can I expect?

Sincerely,

[David Price, Student Computer Support](#)

[Chris Faulkner, PhD, Manager of Educational Technology](#)

[Jim Wagner, MD, Associate Dean for Student Affairs](#)

## Part 1: What should I buy?

Based on the technologic requirements of the curriculum reform process, incoming medical students will need to have either an **Apple** or **Microsoft Windows laptop** that meets the **Requirements** section below.

You will use this laptop in several key functions as a student. You will take exams, utilize a virtual microscope, access UT Southwestern's electronic medical record, collaborate with peers in our student learning space, and participate in several other key activities that have specific laptop requirements. Because of the use of computers during examinations, all student-owned laptops will be required to be affixed with a privacy screen. The privacy screen may be removed for non-secured activities, but will be required for all exams and quizzes (among other secured activities).

The UT Southwestern University Store is offering several competitively priced machines, including an Apple Macbook Pro, Windows laptop (Dell Latitude), and Microsoft Surface Pro, all that meet the necessary requirements. The order process for any of these machines is outlined below, as well as information on using Financial Aid to pay for your laptop. The UT Southwestern laptops purchased through the University Store will be available for the same, if not a lower cost, than what an equally equipped laptop available in the marketplace. If you choose to use an existing laptop or purchase a new laptop from someplace other than the UTSW University Store, then your laptop will need to go through the Laptop Verification Process (outlined below).

### Overall Requirements

The Requirements listed below were designed with the many activities you will face over the course of the next 4 years. In many situations, you may have over and above what is required, which is acceptable as well. These are the requirements for both a Windows and Apple laptop for students who wish to purchase your personal laptop in a place other than the UTSW University Store.

### Requirements for a Windows Laptop

While tablets (including a Galaxy Tab...etc.), netbooks (computers with an Intel Atom or equivalent), chromebooks, and Windows/Android phones are quality learning devices, they are not solely sufficient for the expected needs and do not meet the minimum requirements. Tablets, netbooks, chromebooks, and phones are not prohibited, but a laptop, as described below, is required. The Microsoft Surface Pro 3 & 4, as well as the Microsoft Surface Book, are acceptable provided they meet the requirements outlined below.

#### *Minimum Requirements*

- **Operating System:** Windows 8.1 or Windows 10 Professional or Premium
- **Memory:** 4GB RAM (8GB or higher is strongly recommended)
- **Wireless:** 802.11AC or 802.11N
- **Hard drive:** 500 GB hard drive (or 128 GB for SSD hard drive)

- **Connections:** 1 USB ports, 1 Ethernet port/adapter
- **Minimum Resolution:** 1024x768
- **Software:** Adobe Reader 11 (or newer) & Antivirus software (Sophos is recommended)
- **Security:** Privacy Screen

## Requirements for an Apple Laptop

While tablets (including iPads, large iPhones...etc.) are quality learning devices, they are not solely sufficient for the expected needs and do not meet the minimum requirements.

Tablets and phones are not prohibited, but a laptop, as described below, is required. It should be noted that the iPad Pro is **NOT** an approved device.

### *Minimum Requirements*

- **Operating System:** macOS 10.9 (Mavericks) or more recent (10.10 or 10.11)
- **Memory:** 4GB RAM (8GB or higher is strongly recommended)
- **Hard drive:** 500 GB hard drive (or 128 GB for SSD hard drive)
- **Wireless:** 802.11AC or 802.11N
- **Connections:** 1 USB 3.0 ports, 1 Ethernet port/adapter
- **Minimum Resolution:** 1024x768
- **Software:** Antivirus software (Sophos is recommended)
- **Security:** Privacy Screen

## Additional Information on Software for Windows and Apple Laptops

For the best experience, use Sophos (for antivirus) or Malwarebytes (for malware scanning). We have had poor experience with the antivirus applications listed below, as they negatively impact several crucial applications required in the first year. If you have the following antivirus software installed, please uninstall them before coming to campus.

- Avast
- Norton
- Kaspersky
- McAfee

It is strongly recommended that you do a scan of your machine for viruses (using Sophos) and malware (using Malwarebytes) before coming to campus. If the UTSW network detects a virus or malware on your system, your computer will be quarantined and you will not be able to access the Internet until your machine is cleaned.

### *Additional Information on Types of Laptops*

Through this past year, we have discovered some computers have more trouble than others on our campus. This doesn't mean these laptops won't work, just these brands have had more trouble and logged more service tickets:

- Acer
- Lenovo

- Sony VAIO
- Machines that are labeled Windows High DPI (these are rare machines and typically used in gaming laptops)

We have had the **least** amount of problems with Apple computers and Dell-branded laptops.

### **What are my options for meeting these requirements?**

Students may meet these requirements in any one of the following ways:

1. Purchase a laptop through the University Store (highly recommended)
2. Purchase a laptop elsewhere and complete the laptop verification process
3. Use an existing laptop and complete the laptop verification process

**To be sure all incoming students are prepared for the beginning of school, each must do one of the following by July 14, 2017:**

1. **Place an order in the University store for a laptop or**
2. **Submit a completed laptop verification form by either**
  - a. **Submitting it yourself**
  - b. **Getting help submitting it by making an appointment for a virtual laptop review.**

### **Where can I purchase a laptop that meets UT Southwestern requirements?**

You may purchase a laptop through two avenues: 1) through a consumer technology store (e.g. Best Buy, Apple Store...etc.) or, 2) directly from the UT Southwestern University Store. If you choose to purchase through a consumer technology store, it is crucial that **all** of the laptop requirements are met on the laptop. To ensure that your laptop meets requirements, you must complete the Laptop Verification Process.

### **What laptop can I purchase through the University Store?**

If you choose to purchase through the University Store, there is a pre-configured Apple Macbook Pro, Dell Latitude laptop, and Microsoft Surface Pro 4. These pre-configured machines were selected with the assistance of the University Store to ensure they meet all laptop requirements and provide you with a quality machine for several years.

The University Store has created two options for each pre-configured machine. Regardless of which machine you choose, all meet the requirements.

Technical Specs for these options for purchase through the University Store are listed on the online [Student Laptop Purchase Agreement Form](#).

*Allow up to 2 weeks from the time you place your order until you can pick up your computer at the University Store.*

### **Do I have to buy a new laptop or can I use a laptop I already own?**

If you have a laptop that meets **every** specification, then it can be used. However, you must complete one of the options in the Laptop Verification Process (outlined below). We recommend that you strongly consider purchasing a new laptop, as this machine must support your computing needs throughout medical school. Any laptop not purchased through the University Store must be carefully vetted (see Laptop Verification Process).

### **What is the Laptop Verification Process?**

**This process is for only laptops NOT purchased through the University Store.** If you have an **existing laptop** or **purchase a new laptop elsewhere**, then you **must** complete this process to ensure your laptop is ready.

To complete the Verification Process, you must select **one** of the **two** available options:

#### **Option 1: Submit your Laptop Verification Form yourself**

If you are confident that your laptop (purchased new outside the University Store or already existing) meets the specifications, initial each specification (on the form) and submit the form.

By submitting this form, you acknowledge your laptop meets all specifications and you are solely responsible if it is determined later that it does not meet all specifications. You also acknowledge that if it is determined later that your laptop is insufficient, you will need to upgrade your machine to meet the specifications or purchase a new laptop.

[You may complete and submit the Laptop Verification Form here.](#) (Link will open your browser.)

#### **Option 2: Submit your Laptop Verification Form with help from Student Support**

If you are unsure how to check your laptop for the correct specifications or you are not comfortable with Option 1, you may set up a virtual appointment with student support to check your laptop. For this appointment, a student support technician will log on to your laptop (once you grant the technician access) and check for your laptop configuration. You will be able to watch the entire process to ensure no data is accessed that shouldn't be.

To schedule an appointment, contact the IR Service Desk at 214/648-7600 or email them at [servicedesk@utsouthwestern.edu](mailto:servicedesk@utsouthwestern.edu). With the technician's help, complete and submit the Laptop Verification Form linked in Option 1.

### **Does an iPad, Microsoft Surface, netbook, or Chromebook meet the requirements?**

The Microsoft Surface Pro 3 and 4, as well as the Microsoft Surface Book, are acceptable provided they meet the requirements.

The following devices are not prohibited on-campus, however they are not solely sufficient to meet your expected educational needs and **do not meet the minimum requirements**. This includes all:

- Tablets (including an iPad, iPad Pro, Galaxy Tab...etc.)
- Netbooks (computers with an Intel Atom or equivalent)
- Chromebooks
- iPhones, Windows, or Android phones

### **Is a personal privacy screen required for my laptop?**

Yes. You are required to have a privacy screen for all examinations, quizzes, and other activities that require you to view sensitive material.

### **Is Linux supported?**

No. The laptop must either be an Apple or Microsoft Windows Machine.

### **Should I buy an Apple or Windows laptop?**

UT Southwestern supports both. For medical school purposes you will be fine either way.

It is important to note that often times the latest versions of software have not been fully tested within the university environment. These can have unexpected results when trying to access campus resources. We will always do our best provide functionality in those situations.

### **How much can I expect to spend on my laptop?**

There is a wide price range for laptops. The best thing to do is compare the prices offered by different manufactures and select a laptop that meets all listed requirements.

### **I have additional questions before I select one of these options. Who do I contact?**

You should contact David Price, our student support specialist at [David.Price@utsouthwestern.edu](mailto:David.Price@utsouthwestern.edu) and copy the help desk at [servicedesk@utsouthwestern.edu](mailto:servicedesk@utsouthwestern.edu). They will serve as the first contact with the ability to inquire deeper on your behalf.

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## **Part 2: Can I use financial aid to purchase a laptop?**

Yes. You will be eligible for the money regardless of where you purchase your laptop. As a matter of fact, an amount of \$2,500 is automatically included in the MS1 financial aid allocation for students receiving financial aid.

### **If I decide not to buy a laptop this year, is there anything I need to do regarding financial aid?**

Yes. You should decline \$2,500 of your financial aid award.

### **Do I have to purchase my laptop from the University Store if I am receiving financial aid?**

No. You will be eligible for the money regardless of where you purchase your laptop. HOWEVER, there are two advantages to purchasing your laptop from the University Store. First, federal regulations mandate that financial aid be awarded in two equal portions: at the beginning and in the middle of the academic year. The University Store has agreed to accept payment for your laptop directly from the student financial office with one half of the payment extracted from the initial disbursement and the remaining half from the mid-year disbursement. Of course, purchasing a laptop elsewhere will likely require payment in full at the time of delivery.

Second, financial aid money does not become available to the student until school starts. The University Store has agreed to facilitate the ordering of laptops from these starts with promised financial aid money starting June 1. To purchase through the University Store, one will need to complete the form, linked above.

### **Do I have to take the full \$2,500 even if my laptop costs less?**

Absolutely not. You can decline any amount of financial aid, and you are strongly encouraged to borrow only what you need.

### **Is there anything else I need to know about financial aid and the purchase of a laptop?**

Yes. You can only get financial aid to buy a laptop **once** during your enrollment at UT Southwestern. If you get the loan, buy the laptop because subsequent loans will not be possible. If you don't plan to buy a laptop, don't take the loan. Also, be aware the aid will come in the form of loans. The implication is that you will want to

borrow no more than the amount needed to cover whichever laptop purchase option you choose (buy UT Southwestern package, buy elsewhere, no purchase). This money will be available to you once during the pre-clerkship period. That is, don't borrow the money the first year and spend it on a trip to Hawaii instead of a laptop. When you realize later that you really DO need the laptop, the money is already spent.

### **Will I be able to lease a laptop?**

No.

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### **Part 3: What can I expect?**

#### **What will be available and what software will I need?**

Material from most courses is available and will be accessible using an internet browser. As with all internet connections, the speed of access to the network will influence the feasibility of access. For example, on-campus Ethernet connection will be quicker than wireless. The same material is accessible using Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer/Microsoft Edge, or Apple Safari, but there may be slight differences in appearance. Other software used at the University will be Microsoft Office, Outlook/Exchange E-mail, and Shared Folders (common areas of data storage that allow students to share data). Some proprietary software will be available on campus only. By using Virtual Private Networks (VPN), students may configure their laptops while off campus to be “virtually” on-campus, allowing access to most material restricted to on-campus computers.

#### **Will the laptop be safe and secure?**

Keep in mind the laptop you purchase is your property and is completely under your control. UT Southwestern has established standards to help you protect your equipment, but please be very cautious with your laptop on campus. Each student is responsible for ensuring that their laptop has current anti-virus (Sophos is the recommended anti-virus vendor, which will be provided free of charge to UT Southwestern students) and up-to-date operating system patches (automatic updates recommended).

While non-encrypted thumb drives are allowed for personal use (e.g. homework), it is encouraged that you consider using an encrypted thumb drive for all situations. Not only does it secure your personal documents, it also protects you if sensitive material accidentally gets saved to that thumb drive.

All students are pre-qualified to receive 1 encrypted 4GB USB thumb drive at no cost. They are available at the IR Data Hall, which is located on the first floor of the



Bass Building (BLA 120). Your UT Southwestern ID Badge and signature are required for pickup. You are allowed one device per user; replacements are available for \$30 if the device is lost or stolen.

Security also involves the use of laptops in the context of the curriculum network. Computing and networking resources at UT Southwestern are protected by information security legislation. These resources must be used for University business. **Education is considered the business of students, so e-mail fraud and browsing inappropriate web sites are among the activities listed in the "no-no" category.**

You will be asked to sign a computer use policy and an information security agreement (ISA) when you register for class and each year you are enrolled thereafter.

### **How do I get help when I need support?**

The University staff will be easily accessible for problems. You will be responsible for obtaining hardware warranty services from the manufacturer. Computer and laptop support can be reached 24/7 by calling the IR Service Desk at 214/648-7600 or emailing them at [servicedesk@utsouthwestern.edu](mailto:servicedesk@utsouthwestern.edu).

**UT Southwestern strongly recommends a warranty for as long as you plan to keep the laptop.** UT Southwestern is unable to provide any hardware repair.

### **What happens if my laptop breaks when I am studying for an exam?**

There will be desktop computers available on campus at the Main Campus Library, the North Campus Library, and L2/L3 lab areas.

### **What happens if my computer breaks during an exam?**

On-site technical personnel will be able to assist, and if it is determined the laptop cannot quickly be restored, a backup laptop will be available on a temporary basis for the immediate need.

### **What about other devices?**

UT Southwestern does not support smartphones, but devices that support “wpa2 enterprise” should work on our campus wireless network.

### **Where can I get more information?**

Please visit the Student and Postdoc web site for more information on the computing environment at UT Southwestern. For security reasons, you will not be able to access some pages such as software downloads until you have started classes. This

page is only accessible if you are on our network or logged in with VPN. The web address is <http://www.utsouthwestern.net/studentcomputing>.

For questions regarding computer support, please contact the IR Service Desk at 214/648-7600 or [servicedesk@utsouthwestern.edu](mailto:servicedesk@utsouthwestern.edu). For questions regarding use of financial aid in purchasing laptop, please contact the Financial Aid Office at 214/648-3611. For questions regarding purchasing laptops through the University Store and software discounts, please contact the University Store at 214/648-4599 or [Brittney.Chambers@UTSouthwestern.edu](mailto:Brittney.Chambers@UTSouthwestern.edu).