PC vs Mac: Which is Better for a Student?

With the growing number of students bringing Macs to campus (over 60% of the Fall 2021 freshman class), it is likely that there are more students (and parents) debating whether to buy a PC or a Mac. The very short answer is that Lehigh fully supports both Windows and Mac platforms; and, as stated previously, it is always recommended that you purchase the computer that fits your wants/needs for personal use as long as the hardware specifications fit Lehigh's minimum requirements (which new computers do). In order to help you make your final purchase decision, LTS has compared the following major points between both platforms. Be aware that you may have other considerations specific to your wants/needs; however, the following major comparison points should give you a solid starting point.

Considerations based on College/Major

- College of Business - Strongly recommends that students bring Windows laptops, especially for Finance majors. This is because Windows is the industry standard and their curriculum is designed around that platform.
- College of Education - Has no recommendations or preferences for its students
- College of Arts & Sciences - Has no recommendations or preferences for its students
- College of Engineering - Has no recommendations or preferences for its students
- College of Health - Has no recommendations or preferences for its students

Viruses / Malware / Spyware

**PC**
This has been and continues to be a major concern for Windows users. While the latest versions of Windows are much more secure than previous versions and Microsoft continues to make great strides in terms of security and protection, the Windows platform is still the target of the majority of viruses, malware, and spyware on the Internet.

**Mac**
Macs typically experience fewer virus/malware/spyware-related problems. Regardless of platform, no system is totally immune from threats and Lehigh still recommends that users take appropriate steps to protect their computer from virus/malware/spyware threats.

Coursework-related Software

(both platforms)
Most coursework across various majors can be completed using software available to both Windows and Mac platforms (i.e. Microsoft Office Suite for Windows and Mac).

However, there are certain courses that do make use of Windows-only software as part of the coursework. In these cases students with Macs may be able to run the software from LUapps or access it from a public computer lab on campus.

Warranty Considerations

**PC**
Most PC manufacturers - especially those Lehigh recommends purchasing from - offer standard and extended warranty coverage that cover both parts and labor for manufacturer defects. Lehigh also strongly recommends purchasing accidental damage protection which covers accidents like liquid spills, drops, etc.

**Mac**
Apple offers a 1yr warranty on all newly purchased computers. Lehigh strongly recommends purchasing the AppleCare+ extended warranty. AppleCare+ extends the warranty for 3yrs and adds up to two incidents of accidental damage coverage. Deductible fees apply for accidental damage, details are on the Apple support website.

Initial Cost vs. Longevity

(both platforms)
The concept of “You get what you pay for” is very much true with regards to the PC market. You may find a fabulous deal on a computer at discount retail store, but find yourself looking for a new computer only a year later. If you purchase one of the Lehigh-recommended brands/models (PC or Mac), your computer should last throughout your academic career.

Other Notable Advantages

**PC**
*Selection/Custom Configuration*
Because there are so many different PC manufacturers, consumers have a huge variety of options across manufacturers, models, and configurations.

**Mac**
*Simplified Selection*
Apple very clearly lists the models they sell and offers ways to customize your selected model such as upgrading the hard drive, memory, video card, processor, etc.