




Technology Services & Support for New Faculty

What's the Same at TU? What's Different?

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 =Shortcut  =Advice  =Caution

Introduction

The following are the "essentials" to get started as a new faculty member. Technology will be a vital and ever-present part of your life at Towson University. We're here to help you make the best use of it in your teaching, research, and day-to-day work.

- General Support
- Support Limitations
- Smart Classrooms and Computer Labs
- Accounts and Passwords
- File Storage, Collaboration, Wireless Services
- Computer Systems
- Hardware and Software Purchases
- Security and Safety
- Information Technology Safety Tips

General Support

1. A Distributed Support Approach

Towson University's Office of Technology Services is the central IT department that provides enterprise-wide services to the campus. This is only one aspect of support available to faculty and staff. Many individual departments and colleges have their own technology providers or coordinators; check with your department head or administrative assistant for information on locally provided services. Procedures vary.

2. OTS Faculty/Staff Help Center

Satisfaction ratings for our Faculty/Staff Help Center are consistently 3.5 and above on a 4.0 scale. Telephone is by far the best way to get help: 410-704-5151, 2+2+2 on the voice menu. You can also complete a support request from the website. Due to the loose nature of e-mail and the back-and-forth that's often needed, even for simple issues, we prefer you telephone us. See <http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/ots/support/facultystaff/index.asp> for more information. Tip: always get the name of the person you speak with.

3. Business Hours and After-Hours Assistance

The Faculty/Staff Help Center is staffed by fulltime professionals and student workers Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. When closed, listen for the telephone number to our after-hours nights and weekend support partner.

4. Types of Support Offered

Typical telephone support is provided, but we also use Remote Control a lot to connect to people's office computers and, with your consent, take command to fix common issues that would otherwise require a field visit. Walk-in service is also available during business hours.

5. Self-Help Resources

Hundreds of self-help documents, quick sheets, movies, and other resources are available 24/7. See the OTS Web site.

6. Technical Support for Computers in Faculty/Staff Offices

Technicians are available for office visits by appointment when necessary. We maintain three campus precinct offices; help is close by and services are provided quickly. All work is coordinated by the Faculty/Staff Help Center using a central dispatch model and formal triage guidelines. Call 410-704-5151, 2+2+2 on the voice menu to arrange for support.

Support Limitations

1. Support for Personally Owned Devices (Home Computer Systems, Laptops, etc.)

As a state university, service is limited to university-owned computer and networking equipment, printers, and other devices. Help for personally owned devices is limited to configuration of mail and networking settings. A person should generally find a computer service person or company when additional service is needed.

2. E-Mail Enabled Phones (Smart Phones)

Support for e-mail-enabled phones (iPhone, BlackBerry, Windows Mobile, Android, etc.) is limited to providing configuration settings that you or your cellular provider can use in setting up your device. Support should be obtained through your carrier's customer service telephone number, website, or through your device manual. See this link: <http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/ots/support/facultystaff/configuringsmartphones.asp> for configuration settings.

3. Dial-Up Networking using Standard Telephone Line Service

TU no longer offers dial-up modem service; the bandwidth requirements of today's applications have made this type of connection impractical. Faculty and staff rely on an Internet Service Provider (ISP) such as Comcast (XFINITY) or Verizon (FiOS) for broadband, high-speed services.

4. Home Networking Equipment

Your ISP is the best point of support for home networking. They will help you set up routers, wireless devices, and computers—as well as troubleshoot problems. Since these providers have a wide range of experience with a host of consumer-level networking devices—as well as diagnostic capabilities that allow them to check signal paths to your home—they are your solution of choice.

Smart Classrooms and Computer Labs

1. Technical Support for Computers in Classrooms; the Virtual Tour

At TU, support for the 250+ smart classrooms is often handled by departments and colleges, so check with your chairperson or administrative assistant before the semester starts. You can also check the instructor's workstation in the classroom for an instruction sheet or placard. If not otherwise instructed, call Media Resource Services, a division of Cook Library, at 410-704-8765.

2. Computer Labs

OTS maintains a lab in Cook Library for general student use: <http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/ots/support/scs/> All other campus labs are staffed and supported by individual departments or colleges. See your department head or administrative assistant for information on computer labs associated with your area.

3. Smart Classroom Virtual Tour

Check the Virtual Tour before your class begins to see what it has and what it looks like: <http://wwwnew.towson.edu/classroomtechnology/virtualtour/> The Help link will include custom instructions for a particular classroom if the department or college has published them.

4. More on Smart Classrooms

See <http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/OTS/instructionalsupport/classroomtechnology/index.asp>

Accounts and Passwords

1. Your NetID (Username)

Your primary username at TU is termed your NetID. Along with your password, your NetID lets you log into your office computer, use Blackboard and PeopleSoft, connect to the campus remotely, and more. The NetID "branding" is being phased in over the 2010-2011 academic year. Until all documentation and Internet sites are updated, you will hear a variety of other names for NetID.

2. Password Changes

By audit requirement, passwords must be changed at least every 90 days to help reduce the chances of identity exposure and account compromise. Plan to change your password at least every 90 days—and if you forget it or it expires, use our self-service tools along with your Security Question to reset it.

3. Password Tips

Never give out your password by e-mail, by phone, or in person. No reputable IT support provider needs it. Consider any attempt to obtain your password an attempt at identity theft. Also, avoid using the same password throughout your digital life. If you have other e-mail services, like Hotmail, or you create accounts for online shopping, use different passwords. That way if one gets compromised, they don't have access to everything.

4. Your Security Question: Forgotten or Expired Passwords

When you activated your NetID, you also set a Security Question; the answer you provided will be important when it comes time to change your password in case it expires or you forget it. Calling the Faculty/Staff Help Center for password resets is discouraged due to the potential for exposure by identity impersonation. You can manage your NetID and password at <http://www.towson.edu/accounts>

5. Keep Your Computer Locked When Unattended

When leaving your office computer unattended, even if it's just for a few minutes, lock it using the Windows L key combination or the Mac lock feature. This keeps curious and potentially malicious people out.

6. Don't Turn Off Your Computer: Restart It

At the end of the day, restart your computer—but don't turn it off. OTS sends out a number of updates and security patches overnight to minimize disruption during peak daytime periods. Choosing the "Restart" option helps flush out residual junk that accumulates in memory over time so it is preferred over simply logging off.

File Storage, Collaboration, and Wireless Services

1. Network Storage and Sharing Files: Personal and Departmental Shares

Store all your documents and files on your H: drive (for your personal access) and O: drive (for shared access for members of your department). You'll be able to get to them on your office computer—plus computers in classrooms and labs. Off campus, you can access them remotely by Virtual Workspace, Remote Desktop Gateway, or Outlook Web Access. Files are backed up daily, so if you lose or overwrite something, in an emergency, we can restore back to about 28 days.

2. Avoid Using USB Drives: They Are High-Risk Objects

USB drives (also known as thumb drives or flash drives) are easily lost, stolen, or damaged. People seldom bother to back them up—and they may contain vast amounts of information. Parting with one of these handy devices can be catastrophic and lead to exposure of confidential data, identity theft, and worse. Avoid the risk and use your network storage instead.

3. Transferring Big Files and Documents using the File Delivery Service

E-mail lets you send files up to 20 megabytes, but even that is too big for many recipients. At TU, we have a web-based option that allows you to send and receive huge files. Visit the File Delivery Services at <http://fds.towson.edu> and log in to explore the options and read the Help information. With this service, you can create temporary accounts for guests at other universities, professional collaborators, editors, etc. and use the FDS to send and receive files.

4. Collaboration: Custom Shares, SharePoint, and Blackboard Communities

Collaborating by e-mail is time consuming and can be frustrating if you have to share documents and other materials. OTS can create custom network shares that allow you to share files with university faculty, staff, and even students outside your own department—much like you can with your departmental O: drive. Microsoft SharePoint and Blackboard Communities are other collaboration options. Contact the Faculty/Staff Help Center for more information and to go over your specific needs.

5. Wireless Networking

Wireless is a supplement to the wired network. It is designed to cover the "open" areas of the campus. Although smart classrooms and computer labs may receive a wireless signal, they are not specifically designed for that. Neither are individual offices. Whenever possible, plug your computer into a network port; you'll get least 10 times faster speed. Many changes will be coming to wireless to comply with auditing and legislative requirements. Keep an eye on the Daily Digest for further information.

Computer Systems

1. Managed Computer Systems and a Standard Software Image

A standard software image ensures a reliable, secure, robust and supportable computing experience. With this managed experience, updates, patches, and security fixes are applied automatically to computers on our enterprise domain. Through managed services, we can also provide features like Remote Control Assistance and other services to get you help quickly. We urge you to limit changes to your computer to what's absolutely needed to do your work; anything more reduces the chances of our staff providing fast service.

2. Operating Systems Support

Windows XP, Windows Vista, and Windows 7 are the supported Windows platforms; Leopard and Snow Leopard are the Mac standards. OTS provides standard software images that have the correct settings and pre-installed software for university-owned computers, including Microsoft Office. Systems using Linux and other operating systems technically can be used but you would need to provide your own service and support.

3. Laptops, Netbooks

Comprehensive support is provided for university-owned devices. This includes assistance with purchasing, setup and configuration, ongoing troubleshooting, and coordination of warranty repairs. Call the Faculty/Staff Help Center for pre-purchase assistance. It's better to get good advice in advance than return something later that doesn't meet your expectations.

4. Computer Trade-Up Program

The university tries to replace a person's primary computer once every 3-5 years, depending on availability of funds; if a person has more than one, then additional computers are the responsibility of the department to replace. OTS administers the Trade-Up Program and will arrange for delivery and setup when the time comes. Information is communicated to deans, department heads, and technology coordinators.

5. Discounts for Purchases (Personally Owned Systems)

Both Dell and Mac offer discounts for faculty and staff. See the OTS website for links and check prices before considering other retail options. You may get a better deal.

Hardware and Software Purchases

1. Hardware: Ask Early, Choose Wisely

Please don't rush out and buy things before you know it will work in TU's environment and you can get the support you need. Regardless of whether the purchase will be covered through department or grant funds, first discuss your plans in advance with your department head, administrative assistant, and local IT person if your college or department has one. Calling the OTS Faculty/Staff Help Center should be your second step for purchases. Even if the Help Center staff can't answer your specific question, they'll get you in touch with someone who can. Non-standard hardware may or may not be supportable. Again, ask first.

2. Microsoft Office for \$15 for Home Computers and Laptops

You can purchase personal copies of the full Microsoft Office suite for \$15 from the University Store (<http://store.towson.edu>) and can install it on a home or laptop computer as part of the Microsoft Educational Enterprise Consortium (MEEC) Work-At-Home agreement.

3. Other Software Titles

See <http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/OTS/hardwaresoftware/facultystaff/index.asp> for further information on what OTS can offer. In addition, the University Store at <http://store.towson.edu> offers various software products (or can order them) at substantial discounts.

4. Hardware and Software for Research and Accommodating Unique Technology Needs

When preparing a research program or writing a grant, the sooner you start talking to your college or department IT coordinator and OTS, the better. We can provide valuable advice in what can—and can't—work in our campus environment. We can also explain technology options and help identify the things that will help make your work a success.

Security and Safety

1. Free Antivirus Software for Personally Owned Computers

Go to Software Downloads on the OTS website to McAfee VirusScan. It's available free for faculty, staff, and students to use on personally owned computers. This is a great bonus for those who haven't renewed their antivirus software. Instructions to install it are provided. Note that computers in offices, classrooms, and labs already have antivirus and antispyware protection installed—no need to add it.

2. Local Administrator Rights: Temporary and Permanent

You may request temporary rights to install software on your Windows computer by calling the Faculty/Staff Help Center during business hours. Rights are provided for up to three hours. This process helps protect your computer since many virus and malicious software rely on these rights to penetrate your computer. Try to think of this as an important means of protection rather than an annoyance. Permanent rights are also granted upon written request; your department head or supervisor will need to sign off and you must be willing to understand the consequences and accept responsibility.

3. Use University Computers, Software, and Network Resources for University Business

Computers and systems such as e-mail, printing, file storage services, and other network resources are funded by Maryland's citizens and our students. Please limit your use to that which directly supports your work, research, teaching, or scholarly activities.

Information Technology Safety Tips (this section is also available as a bookmark)

1. E-Mail and Phishing

- An e-mail asking for your password or account information “so your records can be updated” or “to keep your account active” is probably a phishing attempt. OTS and other legitimate IT departments would never ask. Delete it.
- E-greeting cards are a new trick. An e-mail that sends you to a website for a holiday card from a loved one could give you a lovely virus.
- Never include your Social Security number, credit card information, or other sensitive data in an e-mail.
- Do not open an e-mail or attachment from people or organizations you don't know.
- An e-mail that says, “You won...” is most likely phishing, spam, or a vector for malware. Open it and you probably will lose instead.
- Typos and grammatical errors are often a sign that the sender is phishing in international waters. Hit delete. Do not open or reply.
- Always use your TU e-mail address to communicate with students, faculty, and staff about TU business. TU e-mail offers a degree of filtering protection other systems don't.

2. Fake Anti-Virus or Tune-Up Offers

- “Your computer is infected! Get help now!” These pop-ups will either try to sell you something or infect your computer. Close them with the X in the upper right of the title bar.
- An unsolicited offer to speed up your computer for free will probably try to install something that will do the opposite—or worse. You get what you pay for. Don't fall victim.

3. USB Drives

- USB drives offer convenience but at substantial risk. Malware or mechanical difficulties can wipe out everything—or hitch a ride from computer to computer. Use your H: and O: drive instead.

4. Spam

- 97.6% of all e-mail to TU is blocked by OTS as spam before it even enters the campus mail system. But we can't catch everything without risking false positives. For all the rest: hit the Delete key.
- Don't use your TU e-mail address for non-work purposes such as online shopping, social networking sites, etc. Get a free e-mail account instead, like Hotmail, Yahoo, or Gmail.
- Those fun-and-joke chain e-mails—delete them. They expose everyone's e-mail address in the TO and CC line and set you up for more spam. Get your laughs some other way.
- Consider writing to your elected officials and demand stronger anti-spam laws.

5. The Information Highway is a Dangerous Road

- TU offers free antivirus software. Use it, or get your own—either way, protect yourself.
- Don't let friends and family surf on your university-owned computer or laptop. Who knows what sites they'll visit and what they'll bring home.
- Make time to learn about computer and data security; like defensive driving, your digital life depends on it.

6. Passwords

- Never, ever share your password—including spouses, parents, roommates, or tech support staff. Keep passwords private.
- Make passwords strong and long: a combination of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, special characters helps prevent "brute-force" hacking.
- Use totally different passwords for different accounts; hackers love it when you use variations of a theme or the same password for multiple sites.

Companion Reading for E-Mail, Virtual Workspace, Remote Access

1. Faculty/Staff E-mail

A. Outlook Web Access: Orientation and Navigation (OWA27)

http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/ots/Training/documentation/OutlookWebAccess/OWA27_intro.pdf

B. E-Mail Essentials: Outlook 2007 (027-20)

http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/ots/Training/documentation/Outlook2007/O27-20_email.pdf

C. All Outlook Titles

<http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/ots/trainingdoc/shr14-outlook.asp>

- D. Which e-mail client is right for me: Outlook, Outlook Web Access, Entourage, or Outlook through the Virtual Workspace?
<http://mediasite2.towson.edu/mediasite/SilverlightPlayer/Default.aspx?peid=d4d7914fc40a41fda6143b7afa0bb1fc1d>

2. Virtual Workspace

- A. Virtual Workspace: Accessing Mail and Files from Anywhere (CIT2)
<http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/ots/Training/documentation/TowsonU%20From%20Home/CIT2VirtualWorkspace.pdf>
- B. Virtual Workspace Overview Movie
http://wwwnew.towson.edu/adminfinance/OTS/Training/documentation/TowsonU%20From%20Home/Virtual_Workspace/Virtual_Workspace_Overview.htm

3. Remote Access Gateway (only for those with an office computer on campus)

- A. Remote Access Gateway Address
<http://remotedesktop.towson.edu>
- B. Remote Access Gateway: Accessing Your Computer Remotely (RD5)
<http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/ots/Training/documentation/Remote%20Access/RemoteDesktopGatewayAccess.pdf>
- C. All Remote Access Titles
<http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/ots/trainingdoc/shr22-vw-remote.asp>

4. Other Important Getting Started Titles

- A. Faculty/Staff: Reset Expired or Forgotten Password (PS20)
http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/ots/Training/documentation/Account_Management/FacStaff_change_reset_password.pdf
- B. Accessing Your H and O Drives (Movie)
http://wwwnew.towson.edu/adminfinance/OTS/training/documentation/TowsonU%20From%20Home/H_O_Drives/H_O_NetworkDrives.htm