

Computing Services and Systems Development

Information technology has become an integral part of the academic and research mission of the University of Pittsburgh. Worldwide computing, networked information, online collaborations, and technology-delivered instruction are now daily experiences at the University's five campuses. Computing Services and Systems Development (CSSD) provides the infrastructure, resources, and support for these services, which are utilized by nearly every student, faculty, and staff member.

The University of Pittsburgh is showcased on the Internet at www.pitt.edu. CSSD maintains an information technology Web site at technology.pitt.edu.

Network and Telecommunications Environment

CSSD provides the network infrastructure and telecommunications backbone for the University community. The University's data network, PittNet, operates over a gigabit backbone that joins hundreds of local Ethernets into a large, geographically-distributed network and connects thousands of computers at all five University campuses to the Internet. High speed, reliable 100mbps Ethernet connections are the standard for University offices. The undergraduate residence halls are fully wired, with one Ethernet port per student. An extensive consulting and support program is available in the residence halls to support student computing. While off-campus, students, faculty, and staff have access to PittNet through a modem pool of nearly 800 modems. In addition, the Secure VPN Service (<https://sslvpn.pitt.edu>) provides students, faculty, and staff with a convenient way to access restricted online library journals, databases, and other University resources at any time and from any location.

CSSD also offers wireless network access for students in designated public areas on the Pittsburgh campus including Hillman Library, the Cathedral of Learning's Commons Room and lawn, the second floor of Posvar Hall, the Petersen Events Center's food court/study area, and the William Pitt Union's student lounge, café, front lawn, and patio. Any student with a laptop computer and the required wireless network card may use the service to access PittNet and the Internet from these convenient locations. CSSD's future plans are to offer the service to faculty and staff and to add new locations on campus.

The University's Web portal, my.pitt.edu, provides students, faculty, and staff with a single point of Web access to the information and applications that they use most at the University. The portal makes it possible to check e-mail, view grades and class schedules, pay tuition bills online, and read local news and weather from one convenient location. The portal interface can also be customized according to a user's preferences.

Extensive telecommunications support is provided to more than 26,000 telephones. Telephone service to the residence halls is also provided. Voice mail, cellular phones, calling cards, and audio conferencing are available as well.

Resource Environment

The Technology Help Desk is available 24 hours a day, seven days per week, by calling 412-624-HELP [4357] or by submitting a problem report online at technology.pitt.edu. The Technology Help Desk provides troubleshooting and problem resolution, and answers "how to" questions on a variety of information technology issues. Instructional documentation and an online Knowledgebase are also available at the technology.pitt.edu Web site.

Students have access to computing resources and services via six general-purpose computing labs and a productivity computing lab at the Pittsburgh campus. The labs offer students access to more than 600 computers running Windows, Macintosh, Linux, and Unix. Computers are equipped with more than 200 of the latest software applications and tools as well as CD writing capability and USB ports. Each lab features several media stations that offer CD duplications, scanning, and image processing capabilities. Printing services include high-speed print capability in all facilities and color laser print capability in the David Lawrence Hall computing lab. Lab hours and locations are available at technology.pitt.edu. In addition, more than 100 e-mail kiosks are distributed throughout the Pittsburgh campus, providing convenient locations for students to check their e-mail or to browse the Web between classes.

CSSD's spam and virus e-mail filtering service stops dangerous viruses and unwanted e-mail from reaching the @pitt.edu e-mail addresses of students, faculty, and staff. The service will soon be available for departmental e-mail addresses as well. Students, faculty and staff can also use the Pitt Software Update Service at updates.pitt.edu, to protect their Windows computers from viruses and security vulnerabilities. The Pitt Software Update Service downloads and installs the latest Microsoft security updates and service packs locally from the University's network.

The University's timesharing service consists of the UNIX, VMS, and MVS environments. Software applications include the database management systems, graphical analysis programs, mathematical and statistical programs, simulation packages, and tape/file transfer utilities that are supported by these systems.

CSSD has implemented a Central Directory that is the authoritative, centralized database of all individuals affiliated with the University. It includes information about students, faculty, and staff as well as various other classifications of individuals associated with the University. A unique feature of the Central Directory is the Finding People service which allows users to conduct a search for individuals at Pitt, using their last name or University Computer Account username.

Support Environment

Computing Services and Systems Development offers a consulting and evaluation service to University departments on a contract basis. Through the contract program, systems analysts and technical professionals can be hired, from one to five days per week, to provide dedicated, high-level, on-site consulting. CSSD has also established the Expert Partners program to provide departmental technical staff with access to CSSD resources and liaison and training services. This program is designed to assist the departmental staff analyst in delivering high-quality support within his or her own department, coordinated with the overall direction of services provided by CSSD.

Students are provided an extensive array of free software applications and utilities. The Microsoft Campus Software for Students program provides Microsoft applications and operating systems to Pitt students free of charge. Students can receive software upgrades while enrolled at the University and may retain the software when they graduate. CSSD also offers mathematics, statistics, utility, and Internet software products that are either provided without charge or at a greatly reduced cost.

In addition, CSSD provides the University with an Electronic Software Distribution service (software.pitt.edu) that permits students, faculty, and staff to install software that is available free of charge according to the University's enterprise and site license agreements.