

“One Stop Shopping”

Getting Connected at Texas A&M University

Teresa Chipman
Computing & Information Services
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX 77843-3142
(979) 458-1301
chipman@tamu.edu

Dustin Long
Computing & Information Services
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX 77843-3142
(979) 458-1719
dlong@tamu.edu

ABSTRACT

The first few weeks of the fall semester are the busiest time of the year for Computing and Information Services. The entire help desk staff is focused on a single objective: introducing the computer resources available at Texas A&M to new students. Because the students have a lot going at the beginning of the semester, and setting up computer accounts can be complex, we wanted a way to streamline the process. We came up with a service where these students could get their computing resource accounts set up and their personal computers ready to connect to TAMU network.

Keywords

Setting up, new student, incoming freshman, networking software, computer resources, TAMU e-mail.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1999, the “One Stop Shopping” process was implemented. The students could come directly to Help Desk Central (HDC) located in the Teague Building on campus where Help Desk employees would help them set up or make changes to their BASIC computer account (Provides users access to the Open Access Labs account, as well as access to the UNIX system. These systems support e-mail, FTP, news and programming and web pages.) through the Computer Logon-ID & Account Information Manager (CLAIM) program and also activate their e-mail account. In order to meet the needs of the first time users, new student computer account classes are held every 30-minutes at our largest Open Access lab located next door to the Teague Bldg. Next to the HDC area is the Networking Help Desk (NHD) where the students could bring their computers in and get them prepared for Internet access.

2. SETTING UP COMPUTER RESOURCES

2.1 Easy as 1-2-3

Setting up computer resource accounts is as easy as 1-2-3. All registered students are given access to computer accounts and services through their Computing Access Fees.

The resource that allows access to Open Access Lab

computers, software and peripherals is called Computer Logon-ID & Account Information Manager or CLAIM (<http://cis.tamu.edu/help/handouts/general/TAMUCLAIM.html>). New student computer account classes are held Monday-Friday, every 30-minutes, one-week before the fall semester starts (Freshman Orientation Week) and one week following the beginning of classes. A Senior Support Staff member of HDC or an Open Access Lab Supervisor conducts these new student computer account classes. In these classes, students activate their “BASIC”(Labs and Unix) computer accounts and computer services such as modems (required resource for dialing into TAMU modems), VPN (useful for remote ((outside of the campus firewall)) users who need the same internet access to TAMU campus resources as if they were directly connected to the campus network), and Xprint. During these short classes, the students also activate their TAMU e-mail accounts. We have a new IMAP e-mail system that allows students to check their e-mail from any web browser. Since this is a new e-mail system that ALL students are required to use in order to receive “official” mail from the University, all **returning** students will need to activate their accounts. They can do this by opening either MS Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator and typing in <http://neo.tamu.edu/account>.

In order to accommodate the students that come directly to Help Desk Central for help, the Senior Support Staff reserve the classroom located in the Teague Bldg the first two weeks of the Fall semester and help these students set up their computer accounts. HDC student workers also man this classroom.

New student computer account classes for incoming freshman in the Corps of Cadets is also scheduled during Freshman Orientation Week (FOW). These classes are held on the second floor of the Student Computing Center Open Access Lab. Once again a Senior Support Staff from Help Desk Central helps coordinate these classes for the Corps.

If it is not convenient for the students to attend one of the above classes, then they can activate their “BASIC” computer account and TAMU e-mail account by going to any Open Access Lab on campus and asking a Help Desk employee for help. Handouts with step-by-step instructions are available in any of the Open Access labs located across campus.

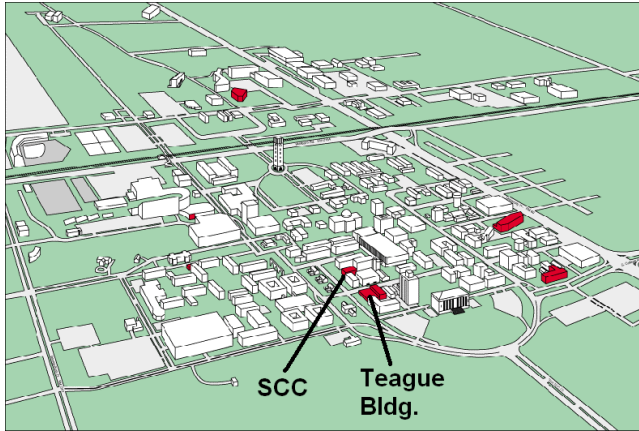


Figure 1: Texas A&M Campus Map

2.1 Preparing your computer for Internet access

Students who are bringing a computer in the fall can utilize the Networking Help Desk (NHD), located next door to the HDC, to get their computers ready. (NOTE: We do not sell Ethernet cards or CAT 5 twisted-pair Ethernet cables with RJ-45 connectors on campus. The student should purchase these items before they start school.)

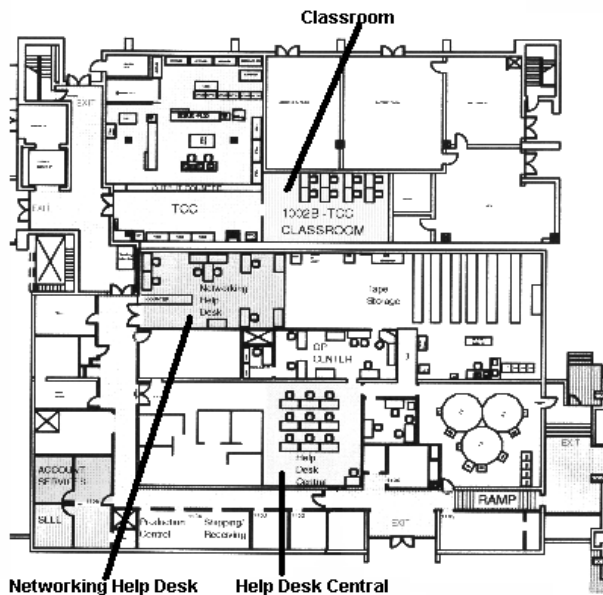


Figure 2: Floor Plan of West Side of Teague Building

The following services are offered by NHD:

1. Install Ethernet card for \$10.00
2. Install the Ethernet card along with TAMUNet7.0 software for \$30.00 (Explanation of TAMUNet 7.0 software is listed below.)

3. Install TAMUNet7.0 software at a cost of \$20/machine (\$10.00 is the cost of the TAMUNet 7.0 CD and \$10.00 is for installation.)

The students can bring their computers into the NHD office and leave them. Tickets are filled out when the computers are brought in that state what is needed to be installed and a phone number where we can reach the student. The students are contacted when their computer is ready. Since ResNet registration is a must before you can have Internet access here at Texas A&M, the students are asked to log into their computer and register their machines with ResNet at <http://www.resnet.tamu.edu/registration>. Once the student returns to their dorm rooms, all they have to do is plug their computer into the Ethernet line. The entire process normally takes about 30-45 minutes per machine. During the first few weeks of the fall we have a staff of six (6) student workers manning this area from 8am-6pm, Monday-Saturday.

2.1.1 On-campus users

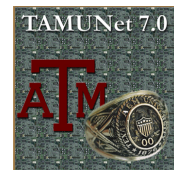
If the students are going to live on-campus, they will need to purchase and have installed an Ethernet card in their computer in order use the campus residential computing network (ResNet). These Ethernet cards should be a 10Base T or 10/100 Base T. The student will also need to purchase and bring a 20-25 foot, Category-5 (CAT5) twisted-pair Ethernet cable with RJ-45 connectors to connect their computer to the Ethernet wall connection.

2.1.2 Off-campus users

Off-campus users are able to dial into TAMU for access to the Internet and campus resources through a modem bank of over 2,000 56K V.90 modems. Computing and Information Services also supports high-speed access through DSL and cable modems.

3. TAMUNET7.0 SOFTWARE

TAMUNet7.0 is a compilation of Internet software programs designed for the convenience of the Texas A&M user (1). The web page for TAMUNet is located at <http://tamunet.tamu.edu>. Following are the different programs that are included in TAMUNet:



1. Netscape Communicator: World Wide Web Browser, including an E-mail reader, a newsgroup reader, and a Home Page (HTML) editor.
2. Tera Term Telnet: Text only program that allows you to connect to UNIX, ACS and other servers.
3. QWS3270 Telnet: The aTm screen (BONFIRE, PHONBOOK, NOTIS, CLAIM AND VM).
4. An FTP program for transferring files between your computer and another computer.
5. Free Agent: A Newsgroup Reader
6. Pegasus: Graphical E-mail program for sending and receiving E-mail on LABS, UNIX or ACS servers.

TAMUNet is not necessary in order to obtain Internet access with Texas A&M as your Internet provider. If you already have the programs listed above, there is no need for the TAMUNet

package. If at a later time you need TAMUNet, you may obtain it in one of the following manners:

1. By downloading the software from an on-campus computer, including lab computers, or from a computer connected to the Texas A&M modem bank.
2. By obtaining a TAMUNet CD from the Networking Help Desk in the Teague Building for a fee of \$10, or three of the five labs located across campus.
3. By borrowing the CD from another student, loading the software on your computer and returning it to the owner.

Instructions on how to install TAMUNet7.0 are also available at any of the Open Access Labs on campus; Help Desk Central; Networking Help Desk or from the handouts located at the following website: <http://cis.tamu.edu/help/handouts>.

4. CONCLUSION

This "One Stop Shopping" streamlined the entire process of getting connected at Texas A&M for new students and returning students. During this time of the year, Help Desk Central and Networking Help Desk employees become one big family with the same goal in mind - - to help the students get their computer accounts and computers set up properly with as little difficulty as

possible. This same service and goals are continued throughout the entire year.

Placing large posters in each of the Open Access Labs across campus is one way we advertise these services. Also, 8 ½ x 11 flyers that list all of the above services are distributed to each dorm room on campus.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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6. REFERENCES

- [1] <http://tamunet.tamu.edu/>
- [2] <http://neo.tamu.edu>
- [3] <http://neo.tamu.edu/account>
- [4] <http://cis.tamu.edu/help/handouts/general/TAMUCLAIM.html>