

Monday, October 20, 2003

Wireless Networking Makes Strong Inroads on Campuses, Survey Shows

By [FLORENCE OLSEN](#)

Wireless networking ranks among the top five most important information-technology concerns on the agendas of higher-education chief information officers, according to the results of a survey to be released today.

The national survey, known as the Campus Computing Project, found that wireless networks continue to make inroads on college campuses. More than three-quarters, or 430, of the 559 institutions that participated in the survey reported having their own wireless networks. A smaller number of institutions -- 78, or 14 percent -- said they had complete wireless coverage on their campuses.

The Campus Computing Project, now in its 14th year, takes a broad look at computing and information-technology trends in American higher education. The 2003 study was conducted over the past four months.

As wireless use continues to expand on campuses, there is "a flip side," said Kenneth C. Green, the founding director of the survey. According to Mr. Green, stories abound of professors' annoyance at looking out onto a sea of computer screens that students have brought into classrooms. He said that more and more professors who find wireless connectivity to be a distraction are asking, "Can you turn it off in my classroom from 2 to 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday afternoons?"

Colleges and universities continue to lag behind commercial institutions by at least two years in offering electronic commerce, or online financial transactions, the new data show. But the number of institutions with Web sites that can process credit-card transactions is steadily increasing, Mr. Green said. The 2003 data show that 296, or 53 percent, of the institutions surveyed can handle credit-card transactions at their Web sites.

Budget-cutting, another trend, continues to affect spending on computer networks and information technology. At least a third, or 179, of the institutions surveyed reported experiencing midyear budget cuts. About 41 percent, or 229, of the participants reported budget cuts affecting academic computing, up from 32 percent in 2002 and 18 percent in 2001.

A similar number of institutions reported cuts in their budgets for administrative computing. Typically, budget cuts affected public institutions more than private colleges and universities.

Spending on security was an exception to the general downturn in spending, Mr. Green said. Nearly half, or 279, of the colleges and universities surveyed reported increases in money available for security. In some cases, those increases were being spent on making campus networks more secure, Mr. Green said. In other cases, the increased spending was for the salary of a security officer.

Colleges in the survey also reported offering more services on the Web. Online course registration, for example, is becoming the rule rather than the exception. More than three-fourths, or 430, of the colleges and universities in the study reported offering online registration, in which students are directed to a campus Web site to sign up for courses.

A question about illegal downloading was added to the survey this year to reflect the growing concern on college campuses about students who download copyrighted music and videos without paying for them. Two-thirds, or 369, of the institutions that took part in the survey said they had explicit policies designed to deter the downloading of music or videos in violation of copyright.

Most of the public universities surveyed had such policies, while only about half of the community colleges reported similar policies. Getting students and employees to comply with those policies is another matter, Mr. Green said.

Nearly all institutions, or 92 percent, said they had policies aimed at preventing the unauthorized copying of commercial software. And 486 institutions, or about 87 percent, said they had policies that explain the fair use of copyrighted material in books and articles.

Copies of the complete 2003 Campus Computing Report will be available for \$37 on December 10 and can be ordered at <http://www.campuscomputing.net>