

Technology Support Center Offers 24/7 Computer Help

University of Arizona
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It's the middle of the night and you're four cups of coffee deep, squinting at your computer screen and putting the finishing touches on a project that's due the next morning. Then, suddenly, the screen goes black. Your heart plummets into your stomach as you realize, with horror: You didn't back up your work. And you don't know who you can call to help resuscitate your crashed machine at this hour.

That's just the kind of nightmare scenario The University of Arizona's 24/7 IT Support Center was created to tackle. Located in the Martin Luther King Jr. Student Center, the center offers free technology support to UA students, staff and faculty at any hour of the day.

"Our goal is to be campus's one stop for any IT questions or problems," said Kate Rehkopf, assistant director of University Information Technology Services, who oversees the center. "People are often working on projects up until very close to the due date and there's a safety net of having us here if their computer crashes."

The support center will hold a ribbon cutting and grand opening celebration, with raffles, tours and information, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Feb. 13.

The center opened in August in response to student feedback, taken from a survey about technical services on campus, requesting a facility that would help them deal with computer crises 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Rehkopf said. Two existing help desks – one offered through UITS to faculty and staff and another offered to students through the Office of Student Computing Resources – were combined to create the 24/7 IT Support Center. Neither of those desks stayed open on weekends or overnight in the past, Rehkopf said.

The center's 10 full-time and 22 student employees – computer-savvy types from varying majors on campus – handle about 600 phone calls, 150 online queries and 175 walk-in requests a week for help with issues ranging from viruses to software installation to difficulties connecting to the University's wireless network, Rehkopf said.

While network connectivity and virus or spyware problems top the list of the most common complaints, they aren't the only emergencies that come through the door. Other tech traumas encountered by center staffers have included: computer coma induced by spilled liquid, mysterious machine malfunction after a computer has been lent to a friend, and the ever-popular Murphy's Law sagas, in which unexplained computer failure is merely the cherry on top of a day of mishaps, said Daniel Schneider, a computer science senior who works at the center.

In some cases, employees become counselors as much as support technicians to frantic customers, and a list of "Listening Do's" on the wall directs staff to always "assess the client's emotional state."

"People freak out, but we are usually able to help them out," Schneider said.

"It's really good. You're not going to go anywhere else and get this done for free," said junior Bethany Trowbridge on a recent visit to the center – her third trip there since it opened.

People can get help in one of three ways: through a walk-in visit, via telephone, or through a remote assistance and online chat program, in which staffers can work on a customer's computer without being in the room with it.

Those who bring their machines into the center must stay there until it is fixed; no drop-offs are permitted. Rehkopf said technicians work through the problems with computer owners so they can understand the process.

The center is busiest between about 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. during the week, and there can be as long as an hour wait for walk-ins, Schneider said.

And while employees say the center is usually pretty quiet overnight, there is always someone on call for those midnight meltdowns.

The center is closed on University holidays. For more information, visit the [24/7 Web site](#) ^[1] or call 626-TECH.

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[1] <http://the247.arizona.edu/>