

# Northern Arizona University

## Interior Design – Laptop Suggestions

### **1. We encourage students to use PC laptops for our program. Why?**

- a. Our computer lab uses PC Laptops. Sometimes fatal errors can occur when transferring work from Macs to PCs.
- b. 80% of the interior design/architectural field uses PC computers. It's important to learn the same systems you will be using in the real world.
- c. Design software looks differently between PC and Macs. Buttons are in different places, commands work differently. The instructor can't teach both versions as it takes too much valuable time during class to do so. We want everyone on the same system when learning how to use digital processes.
- d. Even though Mac laptops can run like a pc, it is not suggested with design software. In my experience, students who run design software under pc settings on a mac tend to get 2-10x more errors on their work than others. Design software is finicky! Use at your own risk. Errors are not a valid excuse when meeting class deadlines.

### **2. When do you need to purchase a laptop?**

- a. Purchasing a laptop is encouraged the Fall semester of your sophomore year. Why?
  - i. You will start working with digital software in ID230 and ID224
  - ii. Many students prefer to do homework from home, instead of the open hours of our computer lab.
- b. Having a laptop during your junior year is essential. Why?
  - i. You will begin your studio courses during this year. You most likely won't have access to the computer lab because other classes are being taught in that room. You will be required to use design software during these classes.

### **3. What kind of laptop should I buy?**

- a. Buy the best you can afford! The stronger the computer, the longer it lasts!
  - i. Gaming computers are built for heavy use of software. The downside is they cost over \$1000. Not everyone can afford them.
  - ii. It's the processor you want to be the best – and i5 or i7 is currently the best processor. Design software is very taxing on laptops and the better processors will lessen the load and make your laptop last longer!
  - iii. The more running memory you have, the less your computer lags when using design software. I recommend at least 8GB Memory as a minimum – but go higher if you can!
  - iv. Storage is also important as design software files get large very quickly! 1TB Storage seems to be standard these days and is more than enough for what is needed during your time at NAU.
- b. When in doubt – tell the salesperson what programs you plan to add to your laptop. They are usually very knowledgeable and can help you find the balance between laptop needs and budget needs.
- c. You can usually find suggested laptop minimum requirements on each software's website. I suggest more than the minimum if you want your laptop to last for more than 2 years.

### **4. What software will we use?**

- a. The latest versions of AutoCAD, Revit, Adobe Creative Suite, and SketchUp

### **5. What else do you suggest?**

- a. Flash Drives – You will need to print your work at school. If you use a laptop, you will need to transfer your work to one of our computers to do so.
- b. Google Drive and/or portable hard drives – saving your work is super important. But saving your work to more than one place is even more important. What happens if the only copy of your giant project gets an error on it? You will need to start all over! But if you saved multiple copies of that project in different places, like email, a flash drive, Google Drive, or a portable hard drive would ensure your work is backed up and accessible should something detrimental happen!

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact me. Thanks for your time!

Jessica R MacKenzie

Assistant Professor of Practice – Interior Design

[Jessica.MacKenzie@nau.edu](mailto:Jessica.MacKenzie@nau.edu)