

# Top 10 Wired Colleges

*PC Mag teams up with  
The Princeton Review to  
find the most connected,  
plugged-in, and  
high-tech campuses  
in the country.*

BY ERIK RHEY

THOSE OF YOU WHO STUDIED COMPUTER SCIENCE IN COLLEGE back in the seventies probably remember turning in your senior thesis—trudging across campus with a box full of punch cards, hoping some errant bully or a crack in the sidewalk wouldn't send your meticulously arranged cards fluttering all over the quad. In the eighties, it was writing line after line of FORTRAN or BASIC code on a black screen with green text. Even thirtysomethings remember waiting forever outside the only computer lab to check out this new thing called "e-mail."

Although certain aspects of the college experience will probably never change—slob roommates, all-night cram sessions, painful Jägermeister-induced lessons—the 21<sup>st</sup> century campus is a very different place. Students can stay connected wirelessly anywhere on campus, post ride requests and bikes for sale on the virtual bulletin board, listen to lectures via podcast, and store their psych papers in their own online storage repository. What was ridiculed in *Revenge of the Nerds* is now the definition of cool.

Obviously, not all campuses are made equal. There are certain schools that strive to provide the best technology for students. We felt it was time to find out just which are the best in offering students a high-tech environment to prepare for the real world.

We partnered with The Princeton Review, the premier test-prep and educational services group, to devise and conduct a mas-

sive survey to uncover the most-wired colleges. The surveys were sent to every school in their best-selling book *The Best 361 Colleges*. We then crunched the survey results and came up with our list. (For more on how the survey was done, see the sidebar, "Top Wired Colleges: Methodology," page 123.)

Some of the names in the top 10 are no surprise: MIT, USC, Illinois, to name just a few. But there are no doubt some unexpected winners, such as Quinnipiac, Creighton, and Swarthmore. When it comes to high-tech campuses, bigger isn't always better. Some of the smaller schools offer more personalized services for their students and more individual attention from professors.

On the following pages, you'll find profiles of the top 10 wired colleges showing why they're among the tech elite. We also interview students about life at these schools and summarize the schools that ranked 11 to 20 on the list (page 124).

Wondering how your school did on the survey? Want more details? At PCMag.com, you'll find full profiles of all 20 schools, along with the results for the 240 schools that completed the survey. Our online tool allows you to build a real-time comparison chart of up to 8 colleges at a time. If you're scouting schools for yourself or your children, this feature should be in your arsenal for picking the right college.

# #1

## Villanova University



"Because everyone has the same computer, given to us by Villanova, if you have any problems, you know tech support here can fix it. You don't have to worry about calling Dell yourself and wondering where your call is going to end up."—Liz Patitucci, age 20, junior

### VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY

Villanova, Pennsylvania

- New laptops for all students distributed at the start of freshman year and at the end of sophomore year (included in tuition)
- Tech support calls with guaranteed 24-hour turnaround time
- State-of-the-art trading floor that doubles as a classroom for business students, who manage an actual mutual fund

#### TUITION

- \$28,760 per year

**T**WO HOURS FROM WALL STREET'S mayhem, in a quiet suburb of Philadelphia, some students are holed up in a room filled with stock tickers, LCDs, and Bloomberg workstations, biting their nails as they make trades with real bucks (over a hundred grand), in real time.

It's all in the name of education, and thanks to Villanova University's commitment to technology, these young brokers-in-training—both undergraduate and graduate finance majors—are cutting their teeth in a state-of-the-art trading floor that doubles as a classroom.

Villanova's famed finance lab gives students access to all the tools that a stock trader on Wall Street would use to manage an actual fund—thanks to a generous donor. "It's a socially conscious fund, and the returns are good," says Stephen Fugale, chief information officer at Villanova.

The finance lab is the first thing Villanova administrators and students mention when explaining why their school tops the list of Wired Colleges. But dig a little deeper and you'll find that the school's commitment to technology is intrinsic to academic and student life as a whole.

For starters, all entering freshmen receive Dell laptops, preloaded with standard software—such as security and productivity suites—plus any specific applications they'll need for their own areas of study. The laptops are wirelessly enabled, so students can log on to Villanova's wireless network, which covers more than 60 percent of its campus.

At the end of their sophomore year, students once again receive new laptops, which are theirs to take with them upon graduation. And the tech gear



doesn't end there: Nursing students each receive PDAs, and engineering students receive tablet PCs, all preloaded with the appropriate software.

Villanova believes that keeping the hardware and software uniform for all students makes it easier to service the equipment. That's one of the reasons the university can guarantee a 24-hour turnaround time on all tech-support calls.

As for course work, students can do all of the following online: register for their classes, access the library to receive reading assignments, download lectures or receive them via podcast, take exams, submit papers, and receive grades. If they need to contact a fellow student from one of their classes, they can call up an online album with photos and contact information for each student in that class.

"It's a lifesaver when it comes down to missing a day and not knowing where to get the notes," says Liz Patitucci, a junior.

Patitucci says she wasn't aware of Villanova's unique tech offerings when she applied to the school, but she discovered them soon after she enrolled.

"When I was a senior in high school, I told my friends that my laptop had arrived in the mail, and everyone was like, 'What are you talking about?'" she recalls. "I don't think any of my friends at other colleges has a program like this. I use the different online advantages here every day; it's really made life a lot easier."—Stephanie Chang

*In November, Villanova launched an online basketball ticket lottery system for students. Less than two days after the launch, the system had received 2,000 submissions.*

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VILLANOVA  
UNIVERSITY

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