As exam time looms ahead of us at CLS, the stragglers amongst our student body’s Mac users trudge up to the IT Department on the 7th floor of Jerome Greene Hall to install Windows on their computers – total anathema to many Apple devotees. Nonetheless, in order to take exams on their computers, they are required to install SofTest, which operates only on a Windows platform. As briefly discussed in a recent Black Letter article, SofTest suffers from major technical limitations in that it runs only with major modifications to Mac hard drive partitions, and is entirely incompatible with Linux.

As the number of Mac users at CLS continues to increase (this year a majority in the 1L class), the demand for a more flexible exam software option becomes more and more pronounced. During their most recent meeting, the Student Senate discussed various possibilities for reforming our current system.

Complaints by Mac users point to the many problems encountered both during and after installing Windows on their computers. These include everything from a thorny setup process to hard drive failure and loss of valuable case notes. As such, some Mac users feel all but discriminated against by the currently mandatory Windows installation. Options discussed at the meeting included an honor code system, in which students would simply take exams on their own word processing software, as well as a few other testing software options that are currently Mac-compatible.

NYU Law is currently beta-testing one of the latter programs, which goes to show that many schools are struggling with rapid changes in their student bodies’ technological demographics. All of these options carry with them their own burdens, however. With the honor code system comes the obvious possibility of cheating, while some other testing programs lack reliability – clearly an essential feature in a high-pressure, stressful exam environment. Among the advantages of testing software is that these programs automatically backup student work and allow professors to grade each submission anonymously.

Coming away from the meeting, most pressing issue seemed to be the need to fully accommodate a rapidly growing Mac user base at CLS, without the requisite lengthy and problematic installation process that many feel compromises the reliability of their computers and consequently disadvantages them. It seems clear that although preventing cheating remains the highest priority in terms of exam procedure, there is an undeniable demand for more inclusive testing software.

Further, it was pointed out that whatever future system changes are made, they should be truly universally compatible in order to satisfy the maximum number of students, although currently the concerns of Mac users have become paramount, due to their increasing number. It seems unlikely, however, that any such change could be implemented within the academic year, or soon enough to accommodate Mac users concerned about their upcoming exams.

Is Apple Taking Over CLS?

Contact e-mail: senate@law.columbia.edu
This Week At CLS: November 17-23, 2008

Monday


Tuesday

- HRI Speaker Series: “Jeffrey Sachs: Human Rights and Development.” 4:30 - 6:00 PM; JG 104.
- DeVinimus: “Iberian Festival I: Sherry.” 8:00 - 10:00 PM; JG 106. RSVP for by Sunday, 11/16, at 8pm to devinimus@gmail.com. Guest fee required.

Wednesday

- Student Services Panel Discussion: Clerking on the Supreme Court. 12:10 PM; JG 107.
- Kernochan Center Brownbag Lunch: Information Session for Summer Internships in Art and Media Law. 12:10 - 1:00 PM; JG 103.
- CPS Lunch Roundtable: Parenting while at law school. 12:15 - 1:00 PM; WJW 600. Lunch served.
- Senate: Amateur Night at the Apollo Theatre. 6:45 PM: JG Lobby. RSVP for limited $5 tickets to kth2108@columbia.edu.
- DeVinimus: “Iberian Festival II: Port.” 8:00 - 10:00 PM; JG 104. RSVP for by Sunday, 11/16, at 8pm to devinimus@gmail.com. Guest fee required.

Thursday

- SCL: 1L Summer Job Search Panel. 12:10 - 1:00 PM; JG 103. Lunch served.
- ELS: Environmental Law Career Panel. 12:10 - 1:10; JG 105.
- CSPELA: 1L Firm-Job Hunting. 12:10 - 1:00 PM; JG 107. Lunch served.
- Senate: Ice Skating in Central Park. 6:30 - 8:00 PM; Wollman Ice Rink. Tickets available all week 12 - 1 PM in JG Lobby.

Event information is taken from the Advisor, a Student Services e-publication. To have your event listed, follow the link below and submit the on-line form. These must be submitted by 10am on Thursday, the week BEFORE your event. http://www.law.columbia.edu/current_student/studentorgs_abc/studentorgevent/eventform.
Amateur Night at the APOLLO THEATRE

The Senate Social Committee invites all law students to join us for Amateur Night at Harlem's world famous Apollo Theater on Wednesday, November 19. Be part of a Harlem tradition while watching some of New York's best aspiring performers. Curtain rises at 7:30 PM. A group will be leaving from Jerome Green Hall at 6:45 PM

Tickets are less than half-price, at $5. Interested parties must email their RSVP to Kathleen at kth2108@columbia.edu. Collect your ticket THIS WEEK at the Senate table in JG Hall from 12-1 PM.

ICE SKATING in CENTRAL PARK

Save the date! CLS students skate for free at Central Park's Wollman ice rink, Thursday, November 20 from 6:30-8pm. Followed by après-skate at a location TBA.

Collect your ticket THIS WEEK at the Senate table in JG Hall from 12-1 PM.

The next general meeting of the Student Senate will be on Monday, November 17 at 9:15 p.m. in JG 105.