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Students are wired for life, study finds

By Leslie Brooks Suzukamo
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ST. PAUL, Minn. — Susan Bush and Jessica Armstrong were in pain. No Internet. No life.

When the 20-year-old students lived on campus at St. Paul's Macalester College, the school's high-speed computer network connections gave them autobahn-speedy access to cyberspace.

But when they moved off campus this fall, they electronically screeched to a halt.

"We don't have the Internet at the house yet, and I'm going through such withdrawal," Bush moaned one recent afternoon.

"We can't get e-mail at home, we can't get the Web, we can't download new music. I am going crazy," Armstrong said.

A recent national survey of how college students use the Internet suggests Bush and Armstrong are hardly unusual.

The Internet has become such a part of college students' lives that they can't fathom living without it any more than Americans can do without running water, says the Pew Internet and American Life Project's "The Internet Goes to College" study.

Students' online habits could have a profound impact on future online usage and may help kick the Internet economy out of its doldrums, the researchers believe. College students have long been in the vanguard of U.S. Internet users, and they've become its most pampered users. Colleges and universities nationwide have spent millions rewiring ivy-covered halls into 21st century information-technology nerve centers.

The University of Minnesota has just completed a \$63 million renovation of venerable Walter Library, part of which involved stuffing fiber-optic lines under floors and between walls to allow Internet access within 18 inches in any direction.

At Winona State University, in Winona, Minn., a policy

of "an Ethernet port per pillow" in the dorms is contributing to a housing crunch. Many students don't want to leave their high-speed access, says school spokesman Tom Grier.

And at St. John's University and the College of St. Benedict near St. Cloud, Minn., even computerless students can find Internet-connected machines in nearly every classroom, meeting room and residence hall.

"Students in their pajamas can use them 24 hours a day. They're ubiquitous here," says Jim Koenig, director of information technology services for the sister schools. The Internet has long been a college phenomenon, says Steve Jones, the Pew study's principal author and head of the Communications Department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Professors developed the technology for the early Net more than 30 years ago. In the 1990s, students dreamed up its most popular tools: the browser, the search engine, music-file swapping. Jones believes the online behavior of students now is a harbinger of things to come.

Researchers tracking the behavior of Chicago-area students at 10 campuses as part of the study saw a rush to embrace high-speed Internet access by recent graduates. "They were used to broadband in college and it was hard to let go afterwards," Jones says.

While it's hardly surprising that college students like the Internet, Jones was surprised how deeply students have absorbed it into their daily lives.

Nearly four-fifths of college students say Internet use has enhanced their education. Nearly half say e-mail lets them express ideas to a professor that they wouldn't have aired in class, Jones says.

College Internet users are twice as likely as all Internet users to download music, 60 percent versus 28 percent in the general population — and to use instant messaging. Nearly three-quarters of students depend on the Internet more than on their school libraries, leading library professionals to fret about plagiarism and sloppy research.

Bush and Armstrong, enjoying a recent summery day outside the Macalester Campus Center with friends, de-

scribed how the Net is woven into their lives.

They take exams online. Professors e-mail them and post assignments or schedules on Web pages. Some profs require students to e-mail papers or post them online instead of handing them in.

The Web has boosted college social life, too. Not only do students use e-mail and instant messaging to stay in touch with family and college friends, but also to form virtual study groups and to maintain long-distance relationships with high school chums, according to the Pew study.

Armstrong has even sent instant messages to roommates sitting a few feet away. "We kind of do it just to be funny," she says.

"It's like, 'You want to go to dinner now?' 'Yes.' 'Cool! It's the epitome of laziness," her friend Bush says.

The instinctive networking skills of to-day's college student could reshape the wired workplace of the future, the report suggests.

Multitasking, or running several programs at the same time on the same computer, also could drive adoption of technologies that blur the lines between work and home. A strong online-gaming subculture could lead to more demand for super-fast connections, eye-popping computer graphics and robust interactivity, the report adds. The new wired worker could turn out to be someone like David Chiu, a tech-loving Macalester senior. He started using the Internet in junior high before the Web made it easy to navigate.

His silvery, cigarette-lighter-size cell phone can connect a laptop computer to the Web wirelessly. He uses the Web for everyday tasks such as checking New York City subway and train schedules when he goes home to visit family. Online research and games are part of his life too.

"I think I do everything that everybody else does, but I do more," Chiu said.

Basketball coach's banquet joke criticized as offensive

by Becky Bartindale
Knight Ridder Newspapers
(KRT)

SAN JOSE, Calif. — An impromptu attempt at racial humor by San Jose City College's head basketball coach has prompted the chairman of a local Latino organization to call for an investigation of recruitment practices and a plan for "racial equity" in the basketball program.

Victor Garza, who heads La Raza Roundtable, said he was offended by remarks made by longtime coach Percy Carr during a presentation on the basketball program Aug. 13 at a meeting of San Jose/Evergreen Community College District trustees.

The remarks and their aftermath also have sparked debate over how Carr's employers should have handled the incident.

Among other things, Carr spoke about San Jose City College players who had gone on to four-year colleges and other successes. He introduced assistant coach James Giacomazzi, a former player, and told a story about how Giacomazzi came to join the team.

"I don't usually get white guys in my program, 'cause I don't like 'em. They can't play anyway," Carr said, drawing laughter from the room. "This guy called me one day and said that he was going to come to San Jose City College. And I just said, OK, I am going to meet him out there. But this guy isn't coming. All the white guys are going to West Valley."

Carr, who is black, was not available for comment, but earlier this month he wrote a letter of apology to the chancellor and board members.

His remarks, he said in the letter, were made in jest. He pledged to continue seeking diversity in his players and coaching staff.

"As a coach, a sense of humor is very important," the letter states. "I am much more comfortable on the basketball floor than with people in a public setting. When you work with a lot of coaches and players, the camaraderie that goes on back and forth between us creates a different environment. If my comments offended anyone, I sincerely apologize."

To Garza, who learned about Carr's remarks from someone who attended the meeting, humor is no excuse.

"The statement was made, and it doesn't matter in what context it was made," Garza said. "That should not be allowed, even in a joking manner. When we make a mistake, we have to pay for it, even if we don't mean it with malice."

Garza said Carr's remarks raise questions about whether the basketball program treats people of all races fairly.

San Jose City College President Chui Tsang said Garza's letter has been referred to the campus Office of Diversity. In the meantime, Tsang said, he has spoken both with Carr and the assistant coach, Giacomazzi, who thought nothing of the remarks.

"They joke around about this all the time in the department," Tsang said. "He said Percy is like a father to him."

Tsang said some former players who heard about the controversy have rallied to Carr's defense, including one white player who offered to fly in to make a statement on his behalf.

Carr "has a very good reputation on campus," Tsang said. "There has never been any complaint about Percy being biased against any person. The guy has contributed tremendously to the college."

During his long tenure at San Jose City College, Carr has taken the team to the playoffs 25 of 26 years and to eight state championships. His performance has gained him entry to the California Community College Basketball Coaches Association's Hall of Fame. He is known at the college for his work with student athletes to keep them in school and to encourage them to continue in college. The C.A.R.R. Program works with student athletes to develop study skills and provides tutoring and other educational assistance.

"If he hadn't made those remarks, he would be my hero for what he's doing with these kids," Garza said.

Garza also takes board members and college administrators to task for failing to rebuke Carr in public, during the meeting, for what he said.

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