

UA campus Wi-Fi outages cause frequent homework disruptions, several students say.

Students have trouble completing work and submitting assignments when the campus Wi-Fi has outages. Students say they struggle to complete assignments, get access to online resources, and attend virtual classes when these outages occur.

Freshman student, Laura Grace Stafford, takes almost all online classes. “Even when there is not a complete outage,” Stafford said, “the Wi-Fi is frequently spotty and affects the time I can work on my assignments and meet online deadlines.”

UA’s Office of Information Technology, located in Gordon Palmer Hall, provides enterprise technology services for students, faculty, and staff.

The OIT provides networking services to academic buildings but works with Xfinity on providing a network for residential halls and Greek houses. This is the first year that UA has worked with Xfinity, and many outages did occur in the fall semester.

Sophomore student, Emilie Wakeman, takes only in-person classes. Wakeman said her internet connection affects her ability to do her work outside of class.

“First semester I had a lot more problems with Wi-Fi than I do now,” Wakeman said. “In the fall, I frequently had to reach out for help from Xfinity.” Wakeman received help from Xfinity directly but did not reach out to the OIT.

OIT Deputy Chief Information Officer Mike Shelton has received inquiries about the Wi-Fi, but not as often as other technical problems.

“Students reach out to our service desk daily for a myriad of issues,” Shelton said, “Only a small portion of those are network-related.”

Wakeman and Stafford both have not noticed a difference in Wi-Fi stability between residence halls and academic buildings.

“I have experienced problems in my dorm and in class, but studying in the library seems to have the best connection,” Stafford said.

Shelton said that although technology will fail, “we have built redundancy into the network to minimize the impact to our campus community when that does happen.”

The OIT rarely has problems reported by faculty. Professor Scott Miller is the academic advisor for News Media majors and teaches CIS 100. Miller has reported having trouble with the internet connection on campus.

“Although my internet connection in advising meetings was slow,” Miller said, “There was not much of a disturbance to my work other than appointments may have been slower than they could have been.”

Miller said that his Wi-Fi problems only occurred recently. “Until recently, our computers were hard-wired in but we made a recent technology change that requires the use of Wi-Fi to our computers,” Miller said.

Since the internet connection has not been a daily problem for Miller, Miller has not reached out to the OIT before.

Stafford and Wakeman have not asked for an extension to a deadline on an assignment because of the internet connection issues, but they both said it affects the time they have to get the assignment done.

“So far, I have not shifted deadlines because of Wi-Fi issues,” Miller said. “However, if a student reaches out to me in a timely fashion, I am typically more than happy to accommodate deadlines regardless of the situation.”

While Miller has not heard of other faculty reporting connection issues, he has heard complaints from students and has seen it firsthand in his office. Miller said he does recognize it must be a big issue due to the signs posted around his office in Reese Phifer Hall.

“There are signs posted across Reese Phifer that direct students to reach out to OIT with Wi-Fi issues and to include the room number in which the issue was experienced,” Miller said.

“If students are having problems, I would recommend they take this advice and give feedback to the OIT.”

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