Students were challenged with inadequate hardware, operating system compatibility issues, and juggling multiple applications to complete and turn in their work. Students relied on personal solutions for IT troubleshooting because they felt they could handle the issues on their own, they thought the issues would not be under the purview of available services, or they didn’t know what IT services could do for them.

HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE STRUGGLES

Students reported having internet access that is reliable enough to meet most or all of their needs as a student. Students reported that they always, very often, or sometimes struggled to find an internet connection that met their academic needs. Students didn’t know what IT services could do for them.

THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGES

In addition to the frustration we all face related to basic internet access and technical troubleshooting in the digital age, focus group participants experienced tech fatigue, oppressive course policies, and financial constraints.

Suggestions from students
- University-provided computers with preloaded software
- Available spaces to study, connect to the internet, and print
- University-provided computers with preloaded software
- Assistive devices such as blue light filters to reduce screen fatigue
- Flexible assignment design that encourages multimedia assignments
- Financial support and maintenance programs for technology

STUDENTS’ AWARENESS OF IT RESOURCES

Students relied on personal solutions for IT troubleshooting because they felt they could handle the issues on their own, they thought the issues would not be under the purview of available services, or they didn’t know what IT services could do for them.

How do students usually handle tech problems?

- 72% try to resolve the issue myself
- 13% go to a friend or family member to resolve the issue
- 8% I contact the manufacturer’s tech support

Suggestions from students
- Send students information via faculty and advisors
- Communicate more frequently, including email, text, and LMS messages

New resources at CSU

Learn more about the new CSUCCESS (California State University Connectivity Contributing to Equity and Student Success) program, one way the CSU is improving tech equity.

Steps CSU leaders took to reduce the impact of the pandemic

1. Distributed more than 21,000 new laptops and 10,000 mobile Wi-Fi hotspots to students (an investment of over $18 million)
2. Provided supplementary equipment such as webcams and headphones
3. Expanded outdoor Wi-Fi in areas such as parking lots
4. Subsidized low-cost internet for students at home
5. Virtualized software

Students’ thoughts on IT resources

> “My internet started cutting out, and I got scared because I had a presentation coming up. I thought, ‘What do I do?’”

> “My internet is super unreliable, and I always have to have a backup plan.”

> “Majority of my problems are with the internet company itself, not with [university’s network].”

> “At least I can just call [internet] company and have them deal with it.”

> “I also don’t really know what IT does for us, so I don’t know if I should really ask them for help when I have issues on it.”

> “I can’t really tell if something is really an issue, or if it’s just my own internet connection.”