Northwest University's Student Magazine

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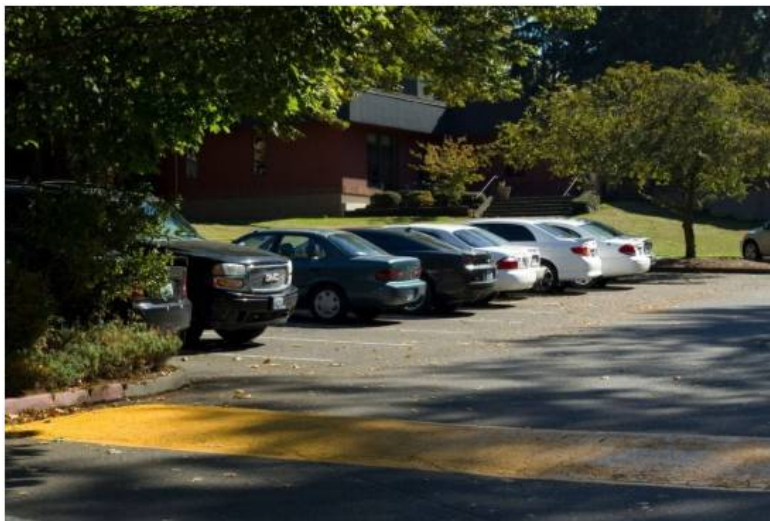
NU_WIRELESS: WHY NU'S WIFI CONTINUES TO STRUGGLE

Photo by: Abbagale LaVair

By Amanda Christopher

Fast internet is one of those things that you only pay attention to if it isn't working. The WiFi has been a common discussion topic as of late, with many students expressing frustration. WiFi has become one of this generation's hottest commodities – socially, it is pivotal for communicating with others, and it is vital for academic success. Save those with unlimited data, most students care whether the WiFi they're connected to is working.

Danny Mareco, blogger for SecurEdge Networks, a WiFi Network that services over one million users, explained in a post that university campuses rank among the more demanding wireless network environments in modern society. This makes sense: many college campuses are big, and many students bring two or three (and sometimes more) personal devices that all rely on WiFi to function. That adds up to a lot of wireless coverage. No one wants to make a big deal out of a few inconveniences. But the number of issues with campus WiFi is becoming difficult to ignore – especially after the recent tuition increase.

Emma Lochridge, a student worker for Northwest IT department, provided several insights into the challenging WiFi situation at NU. She explained how NU's IT department spent the summer installing new access points and switch ports, in order to sustain a larger bandwidth and faster speeds.

"Our bandwidth can't sustain the amount of devices on campus, and acquiring more bandwidth is expensive. IT doesn't have a big enough budget to get more bandwidth," Lochridge said.

Additionally, problems with good connection arise from older buildings not being designed with WiFi in mind. The physical structure of several buildings on campus, including the dorm-room walls in campus housing, are not WiFi friendly.

Students have expressed frustration with the lack of fast internet. Nick Navarro, a videographer and student, voiced his issues with the campus WiFi.

"It is very inconsistent. It's frustrating when trying to handle my business, very laggy," he said.

It is an enormous task to provide an entire university with adequate internet, especially if the ideal solutions are prohibited due to a lack of funding. Lochridge described the difficulties associated with trying to solve the WiFi problems, the long nights spent working on the network, and the team's persistence in finding long-term solutions. She also noted a potential fix for students living on campus.

"If you are experiencing bad connection, I would recommend getting an Ethernet cable. Each room in the residence halls has an

Ethernet port, and the connection is more reliable than wireless," she said.

IT continues to work hard on finding a long term solution for these issues, Lochridge said. "Let IT know [about connection problems] so that we can see if there is anything we can do to make the connection better," she said. "The IT department wants to thank everyone for their continued patience."