During summer orientation 1999 about 1,140 freshmen entering Buffalo State responded to a series of questions about their computing backgrounds. While computer ownership/access is high for freshmen as a whole, usage rates are not. Also, there are important differences based upon gender and ethnicity.

Who owns/has access to a computer?

About three-quarters (74%) of all entering freshmen own a computer and nine out of ten (90%) have access to one.

- More men than women are likely to own a computer
  
  men 77%; women 73%

- Many more caucasian students than either African American or Hispanic students are likely to own a computer
  
  Caucasian 80%; African American 49%; Hispanic 54%

- More caucasian students than either African American or Hispanic students have access to a computer
  
  Caucasian 90%; African American 80%; Hispanic 74%

How do Buffalo State freshmen assess their computing skills?

Freshmen were asked to rate their computing skills compared to the average person of his/her age. Over one-quarter rated themselves above average (26%).

- More men rated themselves above average than women
  
  men 37%; women 18%

- More Hispanic students rated themselves above average than caucasians and African American students
  
  Hispanics 31%; caucasian 26%; African American 21%
What computer skills do Buffalo State freshmen have?

- Caucasians are most likely to use a personal computer frequently (57%) followed by African Americans (42%) and Hispanics (33%).

They used computers frequently for the following:

- The internet for research or homework. 53%
- Communicated via e-mail. 42%
- Other internet use. 35%
- Played computer games. 27%
- Participated in internet chat rooms. 25%

Ethnicity is an important factor relating to prior computing experiences. While all groups are most likely to report frequent computer use for internet research (homework), caucasians are most likely to do frequent e-mailing, African Americans are most likely to play computer games and Hispanics are most likely to frequently use chat rooms.

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