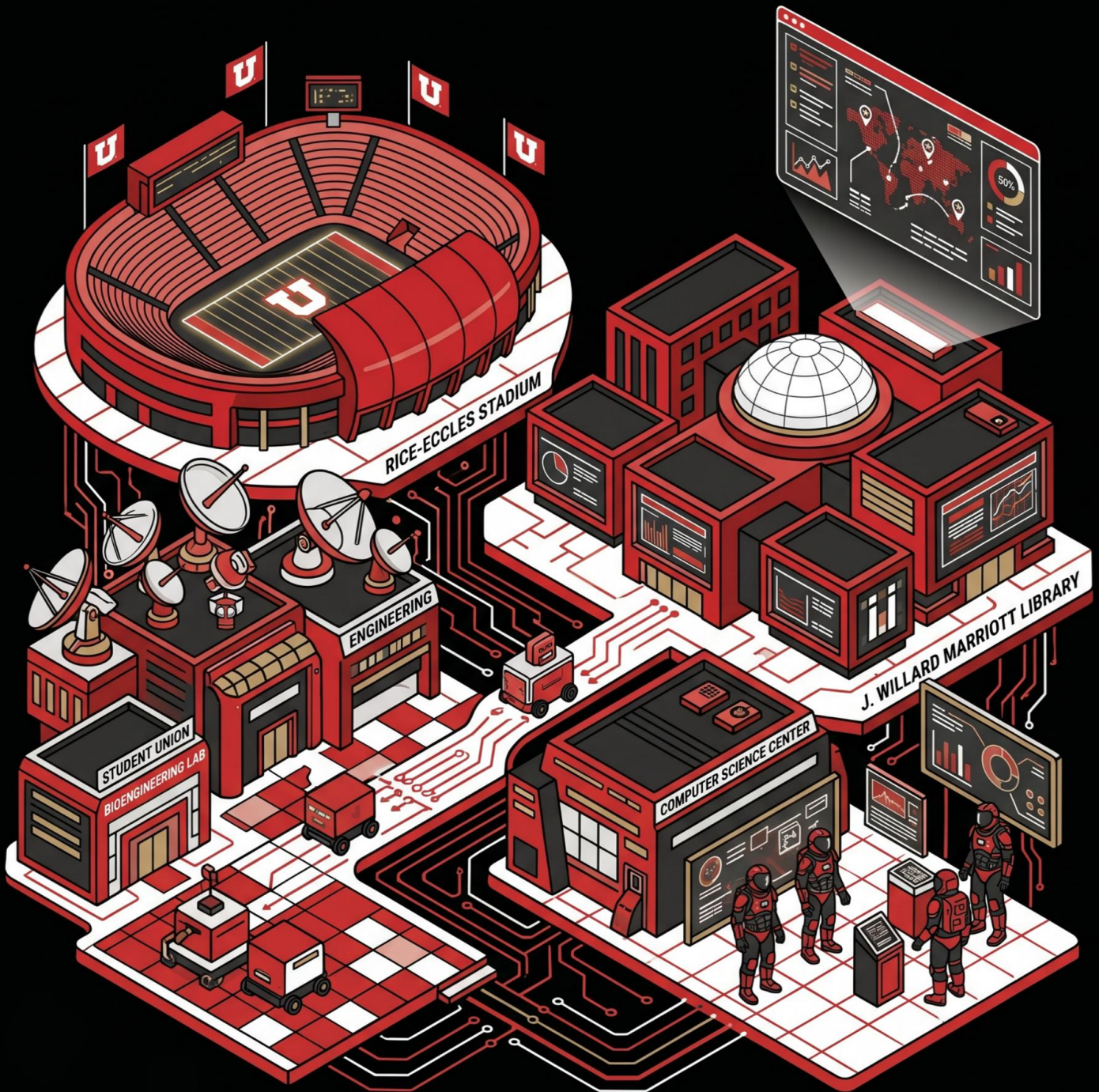


TECHNOLOGY BUYERS GUIDE

2026



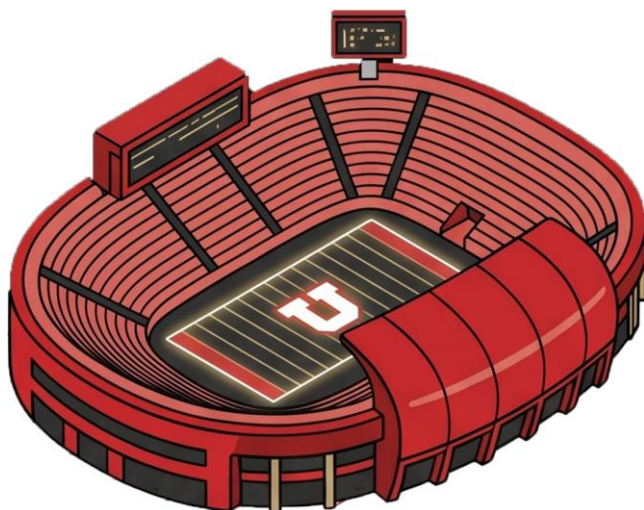
THE TECHNOLOGY PLANNING ENVIRONMENT HAS CHANGED

For University IT teams, planning and purchasing technology has become significantly more complicated over the last several months.

While the peak of the global chip shortage may have passed, its impact continues to shape procurement timelines, hardware availability, pricing, and refresh planning across higher education. At the same time, universities are being asked to support more users, more devices, more distributed environments, and more specialized workloads than ever before.

Today's IT leaders are balancing:

- Unpredictable procurement lead times
- Pressure to maximize fiscal-year budgets
- Growing cybersecurity and compliance expectations
- Expanding device ecosystems across departments and campuses
- Increasing demand for standardization and lifecycle management
- Hybrid learning and distributed workforce support



The challenge is no longer simply purchasing devices. The challenge is building a reliable operational strategy around deployment, support, inventory management, refresh cycles, and long-term sustainability.

For over 37 years, Universal Systems has been helping organizations simplify the increasingly complex world of IT procurement, deployment, and lifecycle management. As technology environments continue evolving and purchasing becomes more unpredictable, we created this guide to share the trends, challenges, and planning considerations we're seeing across higher education, and to help University of Utah IT teams make more informed decisions heading into the coming year.

TRENDS IN UNIVERSITY PURCHASING

As universities continue planning for the coming year, several purchasing and infrastructure trends are becoming increasingly clear.

Standardization Is Becoming More Important: Many IT teams are reducing complexity by standardizing around a smaller number of platforms and device configurations.

Standardization simplifies support, improves inventory planning, reduces troubleshooting complexity, and creates more predictable deployment workflows.

Lifecycle Planning Matters More Than Initial Purchase Price: Organizations are increasingly evaluating technology based on total lifecycle cost, not simply upfront hardware pricing.

Reliable platforms with longer support lifecycles, stronger manageability tools, and easier serviceability often create significant long-term operational savings.

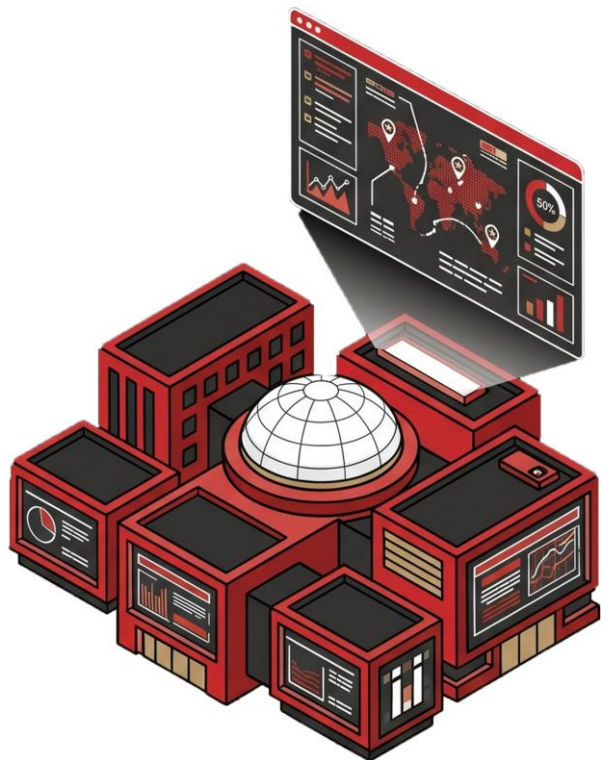
Flexibility and Inventory Access Matter: Procurement timelines remain inconsistent across portions of the industry. As a result, many organizations are prioritizing partners who can provide stronger inventory visibility, faster fulfillment coordination, and flexible configuration options.

Local Support Reduces Operational

Downtime: When issues arise, proximity matters. Local support and repair capabilities can dramatically reduce turnaround times compared to national-only support models.

Specialized Computing Needs Are Growing:

Higher-ed environments are supporting a wider range of demanding workloads than ever before, from AI experimentation and engineering applications to simulation, visualization, and research computing. As a result, many IT teams are placing greater emphasis on scalable platforms that can meet specialized performance requirements while still aligning with broader standardization and support strategies.



Platforms seeing strong demand in higher education.

Across higher education, IT teams are increasingly prioritizing platforms that combine reliability, lifecycle stability, and deployment flexibility. Based on the purchasing trends we're seeing across our customer base, these are some of the solutions gaining the most traction right now.



ASUS NUC 15

Compact, powerful, and highly flexible, the ASUS NUC 15 continues to gain traction for labs, kiosks, administrative deployments, and space-constrained environments.

- Small footprint
- Enterprise-grade performance
- Flexible deployment options
- Ideal for labs and shared spaces

Lenovo ThinkPad

Lenovo ThinkPad notebooks remain one of the most trusted platforms in enterprise and higher-ed environments thanks to their reliability, manageability, and long lifecycle support.

- Enterprise deployment ready
- Strong security and management ecosystem
- Excellent durability and support lifecycle
- Preferred platform for many IT departments.



Custom Systems

Our custom workstation can be configured as small or as powerful as needed (Ultra 5 to Ultra 9), and we give the University a 3-year parts/labor warranty at no extra charge.

- Flexible configurations
- Strong thermal and airflow design
- Easy serviceability
- Ideal for specialized workloads



Universal Systems & The University of Utah

For more than three decades, Universal Systems has partnered with organizations across Utah to support technology purchasing, deployment, repair, and lifecycle management. That longstanding experience includes a wide range of work throughout the University of Utah ecosystem, where we've supported teams ranging from individual departments to larger operational initiatives.



Over the years, we've worked with organizations including the College of Electrical and Computer Engineering, the School of Dentistry, the School of Biomedical Engineering, and the Utech Campus Bookstore, helping provide everything from endpoint devices and workstations to deployment coordination, repair services, and ongoing operational support.



Our capabilities extend well beyond procurement alone. Universal Systems provides local build and staging services, device imaging and configuration, diagnostics and repair, deployment coordination, inventory support, and lifecycle planning designed to help IT teams reduce operational complexity and keep environments running smoothly. Because we're based right here in Salt Lake City, many university teams value the ability to work directly with our staff.

The Universal Network

In today's purchasing environment, strong vendor partnerships matter more than ever. As supply chain instability and chip shortages continue to impact inventory availability, lead times, and pricing, working with trusted manufacturers helps create a more stable and predictable procurement process. We maintain close relationships with leading manufacturers including Lenovo, ASUS, Intel, and Microsoft.

These partnerships help us provide:

- Preferred pricing opportunities
- Improved inventory access
- Faster fulfillment coordination
- Escalation support
- More flexible configuration options



The result is a more stable, more responsive purchasing and support experience for teams that need technology to simply work.

Planning for the upcoming year?

Whether your team is working through end-of-year purchasing or beginning to plan ahead for the next fiscal year, Universal Systems is here to help. Connect with our team to discuss:

- End-of-year purchasing strategy
- Upcoming refresh initiatives
- Standardization opportunities
- Inventory and procurement planning.



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