Cable comes to campus

By

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Beginning May 1, Northeastern will bring "Sex and the City," "The Sopranos" and "The Daily Show" right to students' on-campus apartments.

"HuskyCable," the university's first campus-wide cable service, will be provided to all on-campus residence halls and the YMCA by Information Services and the Resident Student Association (RSA).

Vice President for Information Services Bob Weir said students had expressed dissatisfaction with the current cable arrangement. Although the new program will still be provided by Comcast, students will receive a specific Northeastern service package.

Laura Kappel, a freshman chemical engineering major, said she welcomes the change.

"That's a good idea, as long as I don't have to deal with Comcast," Kappel said.

HuskyCable will first be installed in all university-owned housing open for the Summer I session, roughly 20 percent of all residence halls. Gradually, it will be implemented campus-wide throughout the summer to be ready for the fall. Since Comcast contracts end May 1, the transition should be smooth, Weir said.

Caitlin Smith, a sophomore international affairs and economics major, said she is excited about the plan.

"That's fantastic," Smith said. "Especially if it's good cable, not five channels."

Students will have access to 79 stations, in addition to seven HBOs and five local channels, simply by plugging their TV cord into an outlet.

The cable ports are always active, and there is no cable box or sign-up required. The simplicity of the program is what makes it so beneficial to students, Weir said.

All students will receive the same channels. Weir said this makes the program inexpensive. There will be no additional fees for HuskyCable, which will be included in base housing costs.

"[The cost is] less than $40 per student per year," he said. "It's a nominal part of the rent increase."

For students living in off-campus and leased housing, Northeastern has set up the Comcast Affinity program, which includes a $25 rebate, but none of the other benefits of HuskyCable.

Weir stressed that the school will not provide Comcast any of students' personal information.

One major advantage of the new network is that maintenance support is easily accessible. Any problems can be addressed directly through the ResNet help desk.

Students will also be able to use the myNEU portal as another way to view a few channels, in addition to NUTV.

NUTV doesn't currently run enough content to fill an entire channel, Weir said, but eventually students will have access to an NUTV station through cable as well.

Additional extensions include the Open Student Television Network, the first nationwide student-produced TV channel.
Planning for a campus-wide cable service has been three years in the making.

Bob Whelan, Director of Network and Telecommunications Services, said his department observed other colleges, including MIT and Boston University, where similar programs have been successful.

"[It] helped us frame how we're going to fashion this service," he said.

Last spring, RSA and Information Services organized a roundtable discussion with a small cross-section of students to gauge their opinions about HuskyCable and ensure that their expectations were met, said Christina O'Sullivan, RSA vice president of housing services.

"Overall, I feel it's a complete benefit to students," she said. "I think it's going to be a great thing that's widely accepted. I'm happy with it."