



Internet Bandwidth Usage Tiers and Fees

With a desire to provide consistent internet bandwidth to all of the University's various users, Information Technology and Student Affairs are collaborating on initiatives to help students use this limited campus resource wisely. As both an individual and a community issue, it is important for us to work together to learn more about appropriate and ethical uses of the internet, as well as to discuss the ways in which our personal habits can affect the campus as a whole.

In September of 2005, we introduced the concept of monitoring and limiting the use of internet bandwidth for our residential students. For this semester, we have developed usage guidelines and will be monitoring and making your usage statistics available to you, in order for you to be aware of your usage and to begin making adjustments before the transition is implemented in May.

Beginning May of 2006, we instituted tiers of bandwidth usage that each account holder at LeTourneau can upload/download from the Internet. For those that wish to use more than Tier 1 provides, higher tiers of service are available for a fee. The tier usage is based on calendar months. Individual usage will be tracked from the first day of the month until the end of the last day of the month. The higher tiers of service may only be purchased on a semester basis or for the remainder of the current semester. The following table shows the amount that must be paid during a particular month to increase your service tier for the rest of the semester.

Month	Monthly Usage Tiers				
	5 GB	10 GB	30 GB	50 GB	120 GB
January	Free	\$60	\$120	\$200	\$320
February	Free	\$45	\$90	\$150	\$240
March	Free	\$30	\$60	\$100	\$160
April	Free	\$15	\$30	\$50	\$80
May	Free	\$30	\$60	\$100	\$160
June	Free	\$30	\$60	\$100	\$160
July	Free	\$30	\$60	\$100	\$160
August	Free	\$15	\$30	\$50	\$80
September	Free	\$60	\$120	\$200	\$320
October	Free	\$45	\$90	\$150	\$240
November	Free	\$30	\$60	\$100	\$160
December	Free	\$15	\$30	\$50	\$80

The following section is designed to answer questions about the details of this program. Please direct any other questions to techsupport@letu.edu or call the Information Technology Helpdesk at 903-233-3500 (or extension 3500 from on campus).

Commonly Asked Questions

- **Why are we starting to charge to use the internet? Shouldn't this be part of going to a university?**

We are not charging for using the internet. All account holders have the privilege of transferring (uploading to and downloading from) up to 5 gigabytes (GB) of internet data each month without charge.

- **So, why will we begin charging for using more than 5 GB each month?**

The consumption of internet bandwidth at LeTourneau has dramatically increased each year since 1998, when the residence hall networks were activated. When we increase our capacity to the internet, we increase our monthly costs without any corresponding increase in revenue. It has been a struggle for the University to know how much internet bandwidth is reasonable for us to provide, since it is such a vital part of the educational experience. It has become clear that we cannot fund the insatiable appetite for internet bandwidth that a minority of our users have, and it is impossible to provide reasonable service for the rest of the users without limiting the heaviest users.

- **Other schools aren't charging for internet usage. Why is LeTourneau?**

Nearly every residential school has been struggling to manage the increased demand for internet usage, but as a matter of fact, many Universities currently *are* managing/limiting their students' bandwidth usage. Traditionally, the tools for managing individual internet usage have been very expensive and not available to any institutions smaller than the largest internet service providers. Now, many schools are putting in systems similar to ours to manage this demand. (See note at the end of this document showing LeTourneau's history for internet capacity.)

- **How did you come up with the numbers for internet usage limits and prices?**

We researched the policies of other colleges and universities, as well as internet service providers, to determine the general trends. We selected 5 GB per month as both a good representation of what other schools are providing as well as being an amount that we can sustain with our current bandwidth capacity. Though the higher levels of service may only be purchased for the remainder of the current semester, they are based on the monthly rates and limits in the chart below and are consistent with those used by local broadband internet providers (cable and DSL).

Internet usage limit	Monthly Fee
< 5 GB/month	Free
5 - 10 GB/month	\$15
10 - 30 GB/month	\$30
30 - 50 GB/month	\$50
50 - 120 GB/month	\$80

- **How can someone use that much internet bandwidth while not doing anything illegal or unethical? I thought the only way you could use that much was to download movies and music. Shouldn't we just turn off the illegal things?**

We will continue to put a high priority on the education of our users concerning ethical behavior on the internet, and providing higher limits to our students in no way condones any illegal behavior. At the same time, we recognize there are many legal ways to download music and videos, and there are many other media files that are legitimate for academic purposes. And the rate of growth of multimedia for academic use is increasing. We have tools in place to help us identify the most common methods for illicit activity, such as the common peer-to-peer file sharing sites. However, when a person is downloading a file from the internet, there is no way to automatically and accurately determine whether this file is legally owned by the user or not.

- **Why not just limit people's usage rather than charge a fee for higher usage?**

Because of the many ethical activities that consume large amounts of bandwidth, we need to provide users that want to pursue this medium with the ability to access more bandwidth. Charging fees for heavy usage will allow each individual to make his or her own choices regarding internet usage while providing a mechanism to allow us to provide good service to all our users.

- **Why should I care if other users are downloading a lot from the internet? It doesn't affect me, does it?**

Yes, it does affect you. Think of our connection to the internet as a water pipe. It has a specific size (though that size has grown dramatically over the years; see the graph at the end of this document) and will only allow a certain amount of "water" to flow through it at one time. When some users dominate the usage by setting up a lot of water spigots, you may end up only being able to get a trickle of water when you need more. We have a large enough pipe now to provide a good stream to satisfy the demand of a high percentage of our users. If we expand that pipe, it needs to be because the minority of our users that have heavy demands are willing to pay for that expansion. In that way, we will be able to continue to provide a good flow to you, while letting them get the flow they desire and are willing to pay for.

- **What if no one pays for a higher level of service?**

We have the capacity to provide 5 GB per month to our residential students. If this system only causes users to limit their usage to 5 GB per month and does not generate any revenue for expanding our capacity, then it has succeeded.

- **I have no idea how much internet bandwidth I use. Am I going to end up paying a fee?**

The majority of our student residents do not reach 5 GB of internet usage in a month. Most are far below that number. You will be able to watch your usage throughout the month by visiting <http://netreg.letnet.net>. Only students who choose to purchase additional bandwidth will be charged a fee. There will be no automatic charges for reaching a limit.

- **If I choose to use more internet bandwidth than the school provides for free, how will I pay for it?**

Currently, there is no online way of paying for more bandwidth, so, you will need to make sure you make the decision to purchase more BEFORE you have reached your limit. Beginning in May, you may pay for a higher level of service by visiting the cashier's window in the Business Office and paying for the level of service you desire through the end of the current semester (see chart at top of this document). You then take the receipt from the Business Office to the Information Technology building (right behind Aeronautical Science 2) to have your level of service changed.

- **Can I put this fee on my student account?**

No, this fee must be paid at the cashier's window.

- **Why will I have to pay through the end of the semester?**

The fees that are being collected are intended to be used for increasing internet bandwidth and do not provide for additional labor to handle the overhead of this service. There are additional demands on both the Business Office and Information Technology that must be minimized while providing this service.

- **By "end of the semester," when exactly is that?**

For the Fall semester, you will pay through December. For the Spring semester, you will pay through April. So, if you want to start the semester at a higher level, you pay for four months (September to December or January to April). Each month, your usage counter starts over, so you probably won't reach your limit in August or May because of the short length of time that you're here. If you are staying for the summer term, you will only need to pay for two months (May and June), but your level of service will remain in place for the entire summer.

- **With a higher service level, am I guaranteed a specific download rate?**

No, the higher level only allows you to use up to a certain amount. It does not provide for an increased download rate above what any other user would get.

- **What will happen when I reach my usage limit? Am I cut off from the internet?**

Your computer will have limited bandwidth to the internet. The connection rate will be like a low speed dial-up connection to the internet. All internet services to which you normally have access should still be available, though there are no guarantees of service for those that have reached their limit. Internet services will function much more slowly than normal.

If you have specific questions that this has not addressed, please direct those questions to techsupport@letu.edu or call the Information Technology Helpdesk at 903-233-3500 (or extension 3500 from on campus).

LeTourneau Internet Bandwidth History

- 1998 – 1.5 Megabit/sec shared with 5 institutions, very unreliable
- 2000 – 1.5 Megabit/sec dedicated, commercial provider
- 2002 – 3.0 Megabit/sec dedicated, commercial provider
- August 2004 – 6.0 Megabit/sec dedicated, two commercial providers, Autonomous System Number (ASN) belongs to LeTourneau, Border Gateway Protocol (BGP) Routing to balance load between providers and provide fault tolerance
- March 2005 – 9.0 Megabit/sec dedicated, two commercial providers
- June 2005 – 21 Megabit/sec on a full SONET fiber ring both to the campus and on the campus, providing protection from fiber cuts, both on the campus and within Longview. 3 Megabit/sec with secondary provider for fault tolerance.
- January 2006 – Planned expansion to 40 Megabit/sec on the SONET ring.

