Office for Everyone: 365 Everywhere

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Did you see a popup while checking your email last month? Every student’s inbox got a message from Microsoft, but if your finals were as busy as mine, you probably had no time to check it out. What was it about? Now that things have calmed down for the summer, I’ve put together the details.

The Office 365 offer attached to your student account has always included free access to Office in the browser and on your phone (both covered in this column a few months back). If you need a refresher: you can open and edit documents in your browser, and install the Office mobile apps on up to five smartphones and five tablets, more than enough to cover all your devices.

What you might have missed is the most recent upgrade: the Office desktop suite is now free for your personal computers, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote! That’s Office 2013 on a Windows PC, or Office 2011 on a Mac; both will be upgraded to Office 2016 when it comes out later this year. Plus, it’s the same five-device deal as tablets and phones, so if you really have five different computers you could put it on every single one.

“But I’ve already got Office,” I hear you say. “Why should I upgrade?” Well, the real killer app in Office 2013 is syncing school files to your personal computer. Any time you save a file in an Office program on a campus PC, you can save it in the OneDrive account attached to your student email. It’s got one terabyte of free space (that’s 10,000 times larger than the H: Drive), but until now you had to use your browser to download those files at home. Not anymore! Set up the new OneDrive for Business app included in the Office suite, and files saved through OneDrive on campus computers will appear seamlessly on your personal computer. (Unfortunately, this only works on Windows right now, but Microsoft has promised a Mac solution coming with Office 2016 this year.)

Installers can be a hassle, so I gave it a test run on my own laptop. Things were much simpler than in the past: it left my existing install of Office 2010 untouched, imported all my preferences, and opens all my documents with no trouble. If you need a bit more direction, the ITS department has put together a couple guides to help. Check the website at [www.metrostate.edu/ITS](http://www.metrostate.edu/ITS) and click “Microsoft Office 365” under the “I am new here” section. You can also ask for a copy in person at the ITS department in St. Paul, or at the Metro Library’s computer help desk. Free is a good deal, and it doesn’t expire until you leave Metro, so get your computer set up now for future classes!