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## Outbreak averted

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## Outbreak averted

*But viruses will continue to threaten campus computers*

Many students arrived on college campuses this fall with more than a trunk load of clothes, posters, DVDs and other necessities.

Tucked away deep inside the hard drives of their computers were some nasty critters, among them Welchia, Blaster and the Nachia worm. These computer viruses wreaked havoc at many colleges as soon as students began plugging in and booting up.

Vanderbilt University found infections in the computers of roughly one-fourth of its 5,000 students. Stunned technicians shut off connections to nearly 1,200 computers, then gradually restored service over the next few days after each machine was cleaned.

Oberlin College in Ohio, which found infections in nine of every 10 computers running Windows software, threatened to fine students \$25 for spreading a virus. John Bucher, information technology director at Oberlin, told the Associated Press, "When you're drowning, you try to do something quick. We're really stressed by this."

Richard Nelson, director of computing and information services at Furman, heard these and other horror stories but says that he and his staff were "still pretty much in denial" when freshmen began arriving September 2. Yet when 90 percent of the computers owned by freshmen, who arrived a week before most upperclassmen, were found to be compromised or lacking in virus protection software, Nelson and his group began scrambling to concoct a plan to help the university avoid a virus outbreak.

On September 5, Furman's residential network was shut down while approximately 1,700 computers were scanned. Afterward, the C&IS staff loaded the computers with anti-virus software and security updates.

Between 30 and 40 percent of the computers owned by sophomores, juniors and seniors proved to have some kind of virus. For some computers, screening and updating took as long as two hours.

"We had to assume that all the computers were infected," says Nelson, who hopes students, faculty and staff will police themselves by regularly running a virus scan and installing security updates as warranted.

Quick planning and hard work saved Furman from gridlock this time. But Nelson is just waiting for the next big virus outbreak.

"It's like being a volunteer fireman," he says. "You can anticipate and try to be prepared, but you don't know what you're dealing with until it actually happens."

— John Roberts

*Opposite: Winners of the major alumni awards, from left: Jack Powers '56, Charles "Buddy" Turner '62 and Jason Deal '90; Magdalina and Blaine DeSantis '75 join Dollie and Melvin Younts '50 in breaking ground for the Younts Center and DeSantis Pavilion.*

*Left, from top: Shenese Showers '04 is queen for a day; Joshua Axmann, son of Todd Axmann '84, helps Richard Furman get into the spirit of Homecoming; Patricia Walters Laine '97 and daughter Sarah enjoy the Friday activities on Furman Mall. Above: Human bowling proved strikingly popular; Florez, a talented band of recent Furman graduates (from left, 2003 alumni Alex Florez, Dusty Emerick and Erik Huffman, plus '02 grad Dana Brewster), performed selections from "Find Yourself," their CD; Daric Carter's 57-yard kickoff return gave the Paladins a late spark in their 30-10 victory.*