

# Act may reduce P2P use

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The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 was signed into law on Aug. 12.

The law aims to make college more affordable and accessible by changing things like more transparent loan practices, increased ease of applying for financial aid, an increase to Pell Grant maximums.

There is one portion of the new law that is considered by many to be a misnomer.

Universities will now be held responsible to inform students about peer-to-peer distribution of intellectual property, and make students aware of alternatives to illegal downloading.

The Motion Picture Association (MPAA) began to lobby for these changes as early as 2002. They began to target college networks after a study showed 44 percent of peer-to-peer distribution of copyrighted material was due to college students.

The MPAA went so far as to determine the top 19 'offending schools,' (none of which are in the state of Minnesota).

Later, the study was revised to show that a maximum of 15 percent of revenue lost to piracy was due to college students, only 3 percent being illegally downloaded using college networks.

Nevertheless, the MPAA continued to persuade lawmakers to include the requirement for universities to inform students of illegal downloading issues.

The MnSCU system already warns "Minnesota State Colleges and Universities may permanently deny use of system information technology by any individual determined to be a repeat violator of copyright laws governing Internet use."

SCSU clearly explains in the student technology handbook, "peer-to-peer file sharing network programs like Kazaa, Ares, iMesh, and LimeWire are popular ways to share music and movie files online, but they create legal risks and security concerns that can result in

serious trouble for you- including lawsuits and fines.

Under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, it is illegal to download and distribute copyrighted music and movies.

The Recording Industry Association of America and Motion Picture Association of America have filed cases against students who have violated this law.

In addition to legal issues, many P2P applications also include spyware. Deleting P2P programs from personal computers will help users avoid these potential problems."

The new law is considered too general to determine if the effects of the peer-to-peer illegal downloading will cause universities to make dramatic or simple changes to policy or programs on each individual campus.

Overall, the law requires three things for schools to continue to receive government funding: schools must find and prevent illegal distribution of copyrighted material within campus networks, encourage alternatives to peer-to-peer illegal distribution (such as iTunes), and inform students that peer-to-peer file sharing opens them up to all sorts of trouble- like civil or criminal charges.

Most schools do have policies in place to prevent these problems, but the section of the Higher Education

Opportunity act that addresses illegal downloading and distribution of copyrighted material was decided upon in hopes that it will unify the safeguards against it.