

Resolution on Computer File Sharing

Submitted by the Columbia College Student Council and the Engineering Student Council

The Columbia College Student Council and the Engineering Student Council acknowledge that there is currently a serious problem in the United States with copyright infringement due to online file sharing, and that this behavior is especially pervasive on college and university campuses. In light of the controversy surrounding this issue we offer the following statement:

WHEREAS, according to The New York Times¹ there were over 11 million home computers in the United States actively sharing files in May of 2003;

WHEREAS, a New York Times/CBS News poll² taken in September, 2003 found that less than two-fifths of Americans considered file sharing to be “never acceptable;”

WHEREAS, many experts have questioned the efficacy of using legal prohibition alone as a means to alter group behavior when the intended intervention contradicts broad public sentiment³;

WHEREAS Pennsylvania State University has recently purchased a legal means of downloading music for its students through the newly revised Napster service⁴;

WHEREAS undergraduate students are typically in positions of financial and legal vulnerability;

WHEREAS it is the duty of a university to protect the interests of its students;

WHEREAS in April, 2003 the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) chose to prosecute four undergraduate students at three colleges, eventually forcing them to each render sums ranging from \$12,000 to \$17,000 over the course of three years, putting at least one student’s educational future in peril due to financial constraints⁵;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Columbia College Student Council and the Engineering Student Council urge University administrators to introduce legal alternatives to file sharing on Columbia’s campus such as the newly revised Napster service.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Columbia College Student Council and the Engineering Student Council urge the University to protect the rights of its students by ending its practice of transparency with regards to file sharing and its current relationship with the RIAA.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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¹ Harmon, Amy. “The Price of Music: The Overview; 261 Lawsuits Filed on Music Sharing.” New York Times. 9 September 2003. A:1.

² Schwartz, John. “Despite Suits Music File Sharers Shrug Off Guilt and Keep File Sharing.” New York Times. 19 September 2003. A:1.

³ Harmon, Amy. “The Price of Music: The Overview; 261 Lawsuits Filed on Music Sharing.” New York Times. 9 September 2003. A:1.

⁴ Harmon, Amy. “Penn State Will Pay to Allow Students to Download Music.” New York Times Late Edition. 7 November, 2003. A:1

⁵ Harmon, Amy. “Suit Settled for Students Downloading Music Online.” New York Times. 2 May 2003. A:22.