

As many have read recently in the news, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) has increased its efforts to litigate copyright infringement claims against university students nationwide. This includes suing students, faculty and staff that have not responded to previous RIAA efforts to stop illegal online file sharing.

On February 28, 2007, LSU received a letter from the American Council on Education stating that the RIAA was initiating legal action against individuals who engage in illegal file sharing of copyrighted materials using peer-to-peer systems.

As part of the crackdown, the RIAA has sent pre-litigation letters to 13 universities, including North Carolina State, Syracuse University, and the University of Tennessee among others. The RIAA is requesting that universities forward these letters to any appropriate network user. Under this approach, a student (or other network user) can monetarily settle any record company claims against him or her at a discounted rate before a lawsuit is filed.

LSU has not been served with any pre-litigation letters to date. Our Office of Information Technology Security & Policy is aware of the actions being taken by the RIAA nationally, and has been closely monitoring this situation.

The RIAA plans to send additional pre-litigation letters in the next 12 months, and has said its new deterrence initiative will focus heavily on Gnutella-based networks such as LimeWire.

LSU strives to protect the privacy of our students, faculty and staff, however, as chancellor, I must stress that downloading and sharing copyrighted material online without permission is unethical and illegal. University faculty, staff, and students who illegally possess or share copyrighted materials, may be denied access to computing resources, be subject to disciplinary actions, and possibly face civil and/or criminal legal proceedings and sanctions.

I know many college students struggle to make ends meet, but imagine adding a criminal record to that burden. The money you spend legally purchasing songs and movies online is far less than you may have to endure in the long run by doing it illegally.

Sincerely,

Sean O'Keefe
Chancellor