

# Faculty Wary of Security, Schools Opt for Web Degrees Accuracy on Versity.com

The concerns prompted Yale University to ask that all of its class notes be removed from the company's site.

By GAVIN OFF  
Staff Writer

While the rapid growth of the Internet offers endless resources for students, it has also raised concerns among college professors seeking to protect their intellectual property rights.

Professors at colleges and universities nationwide are divided over allowing their lecture notes to be published over the Internet, specifically at versity.com.

But versity.com officials say their Web site benefits students by supplementing their own notes.

Don Loeb, philosophy professor at the University of Vermont, said he did not personally endorse the Web site but told his students how to find it.

"I'm probably more sympathetic to the students," Loeb said. "It's all very new and people get nervous about it."

But he said publishing class notes over the Internet raised several red flags.

He said professors had to be watchful of notes that were grossly inaccurate and those that were copied word for word, violating a professor's property rights.

Likewise, professors at Yale

University have recently expressed concern with the inaccuracy of notes posted at versity.com, prompting them to request all of Yale's notes be removed from the Web site.

Jean Richardson, president of the University of Vermont Faculty Senate, said it was these concerns that prompted her to request that her notes be taken off versity.com.

She said notes posted from her class were very inaccurate. "I don't feel

angry," Richardson said. "I have an enormous legal concern. I do research on cutting edge environmental science, and I share my findings with the students before they are published."

She said last semester students were posting notes without their professors' consents in 70 classes. But Richardson said that this semester professors made their own decisions on whether or not to allow their notes to be copied.

Richardson also said students did not push themselves with their classwork when the notes were simply handed to them. "I'm a very good professor, and my experience is when students rely too much on notes, they don't perform as

well," Richardson said.

But Jennifer Keesler, manager of campus relations at versity.com, said notes on the Internet were intended to be supplemental notes to help students.

She said unknown inaccuracies in the notes would not affect students if they were used in conjunction with others.

"The best judge of the quality of notes is the professors themselves," Keesler said. "I would encourage the professor to contact us (concerning inaccuracies)."

She also said most universities had a pleasant relationship with versity.com.

"The great majority of our contact with professors at universities is positive," Keesler said. "In the few cases

where there is some concern, we are open to speaking with and working with the university and professor."

But Richardson said the fear of stolen intellectual work was too great for her to allow her class notes to be posted. "For a professor, it suppresses the very thing we're hired to do, which is share our scholarship with the students."

The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.

The Internet degree trend keeps growing, but UNC-CH has no immediate plans to offer totally online degrees.

By ALICIA GADDY  
Staff Writer

The University of Oregon has become the latest college in the nation to allow students to complete entire degree programs over the World Wide Web.

And while UNC-system schools and N.C. community colleges house such programs, UNC-Chapel Hill has yet to hop on the Internet degree bandwagon.

Oregon's master's degree in applied information management will become solely Web-based in the fall semester.

Academic program manager Linda Ettinger said the program would be a huge step for Oregon's Learning Anywhere, Anytime Program. "The University of Oregon hasn't offered any fully online degrees before," Ettinger said.

She said the school would accept only 15 people into the program for its trial run so it could be closely monitored. "This is a relatively new approach to learning," she said. "So we're considering that we're still learning, too."

But Ettinger said Web-based degrees were common. "There are a lot of them that already exist across the nation."

And some of these programs are within the UNC-system.

Jim Sadler, General Administration assistant vice president for planning,

said UNC-system schools offered Web degrees, though none were at UNC-CH. "We have six completely online degree programs," he said.

He said the programs originated at East Carolina University and had since spread to Western Carolina University, Winston-Salem State University and N.C. State University.

Sadler said the programs were popular with nontraditional students, like middle-aged parents. "They're generally getting positive student ratings and have received positive ratings from outside evaluations."

Although UNC-CH does not have e-degrees, Sadler said they were a possibility in the future.

"It certainly is within the power of any school at Chapel Hill to develop a completely online program," he said.

He said such initiatives would be welcomed by administrators.

"Developing complete degree programs for distance education would certainly be a priority for us," Sadler said.

Though all existing UNC-system Web degrees are masters programs, he said ECU would extend this in the fall.

"East Carolina is planning to start an undergraduate baccalaureate program in industrial technology," he said.

And officials at N.C. technical schools said they had degree programs which used mainly Internet classes.

Karen Kornegay, Wake Technical Community College representative, said the school did not offer totally Internet-based degrees, but the popularity of some courses could soon yield e-degrees in those areas. "In some curricula, it's possible to take a majority of courses online," Kornegay said.

She said North Carolina's 58 community colleges would soon consolidate their online classes.

"The N.C. community college system as a whole has developed a distance learning community," she said.

She said 10 classes would be offered in the Virtual Learning Community this fall.

Kornegay said North Carolina's community colleges had been working with Web classes for the last few years, with more than 10,000 taking courses in 1998-1999.

"The community colleges have offered over 250 courses from 68 different subject areas," she said.

June Blackwelder, Friday Center representative, said Carolina Courses Online offered 17 Internet classes that were open to undergraduates. She said Web masters programs could start soon at UNC-CH. "But there's nothing close to being available for undergraduates."

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University of Vermont Faculty Senate

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LINDA ETTINGER  
University of Oregon Official

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