

Peer-to-Peer File Sharing and Copyright Infringement

Copyright is a form of legal protection that protects an owner's right to control the reproduction, distribution, performance, display and transmission of a copyrighted work.

Peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing is a term that describes software programs that allow computer users, utilizing the same P2P software, to connect to each other and directly access digital files from one another's hard drives.

The unauthorized distribution of copyrighted material by one student to another is prohibited by law, and sanctions for violation of the law may include both civil and criminal liabilities. In general, anyone found liable for civil copyright infringement may be ordered to pay either actual damages or statutory damages affixed at not less than \$750 and not more than \$30,000 per work infringement. For willful infringement, a court may award up to \$150,000 per work infringement. A court can, in its discretion, also assess costs and attorneys' fees. Willful copyright infringement can also result in criminal penalties, including imprisonment of up to five years and fines up to \$250,000 per offense.

South Coast College takes this law very seriously, and any student found sharing or distributing copyrighted material will face disciplinary action and may be subject to censure, probation, suspension, or dismissal. The level of disciplinary action will be based on the seriousness of the situation.

For more information go to the US Copyright Office website at www.copyright.gov