

**From:** [Office of the MSU Provost](#)  
**Subject:** Protection of Intellectual Property Rights in Course Materials  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 03, 2021 1:07:25 PM  
**Attachments:** [image002.png](#)

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**MONTANA**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of the Provost

Dear Faculty Colleagues, Directors, Heads and Deans;

I write this letter to address potential concerns about the protection of intellectual property rights in syllabi and course materials for Montana State University courses and the integrity of the educational enterprise.

There is a growing national trend in which some university students are posting course materials to online platforms such as [Coursehero.com](#) without permission. These materials are then made available to other users of that platform.

We recognize that students may not realize that sharing materials without appropriate permission may be copyright infringement. Therefore, to protect the intellectual property of syllabi and course materials, among other materials, we recommend course instructors take the following actions:

1. Educate your students that syllabi and course materials you provide are intended for research and educational purposes only and are protected by U.S. copyright laws. This could be a good opportunity to have a discussion with students about ethical responsibilities and the legal principles concerning copyright.
2. Include a statement in your course syllabus to this effect. If you want to add a statement now (mid-semester) you will need to issue a revised syllabus and inform students of the change(s).
3. Add a copyright notice to course materials that you distribute or that students download from Brightspace.

The Center for Faculty Excellence has developed sample language that you can use. Examples are provided here and on the [CFE website](#):

**Language for syllabi:**

“This syllabus, course lectures and presentations, and any course materials provided throughout this term are protected by U.S. copyright laws. Students enrolled in the course may use them for their own research and educational purposes. However, reproducing, selling or otherwise distributing these materials without written permission of the copyright owner is expressly prohibited, including providing materials to commercial platforms such as Chegg or CourseHero. Doing so may constitute a violation of U.S. copyright law as well as MSU’s Code of Student Conduct.”

**Copyright notice for course materials:**

“These materials are protected pursuant to U.S. copyright laws. No part of these materials may be reproduced, displayed, or used in any manner or medium without prior written permission of the copyright owner.”

The Office of the Dean of Students is reviewing the Student Code of Conduct to ensure that it reflects the legal policies and consequences related to supplying MSU course materials to third parties.

Faculty concerned about course materials being distributed by commercial platforms without their permission can visit these commercial websites and search for the courses you have recently taught. If you find items that you do not want distributed, the websites have takedown procedures to request that the materials be removed; this is typically accomplished via an online form you complete.

If you have questions or seek additional information, I encourage you to review the [MSU faculty handbook policy on intellectual property](#) that governs the intellectual property rights of the university and its faculty, and incorporates the requirements of the various intellectual property policies of the Board of Regents.

Thank you for all you do to help our students achieve their educational and career aspirations.

Best regards,



**Dr. Robert L. Mokwa | Executive Vice President and Provost**  
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