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RIAA suing 11 USF students
Students illegally shared copyrighted materials,
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The Recording Industry Association of America announced Wednesday it has filed "John Doe" lawsuits against 11 students the RIAA claims illegally trafficked copyrighted materials using University networks.

Armed only with the IP addresses of the accused, the RIAA often files lawsuits under the pseudonym John Doe to force service providers – in this case the University – to hand over the names of those associated with the electronic information.

Once the RIAA has subpoenaed the information, it will contact those identified directly to discuss a settlement.

It is the University's policy to withhold student information, but according to Associate General Counsel Colin Mailloux, USF will comply with the subpoenas.

"It is important to note that this has nothing to do with the University, but is between the RIAA and the student," he said. "If we get a valid court order, we will comply."

In late February, the RIAA sent 400 pre-litigation letters to students at 13 universities, including 31 USF students. The University then forwarded the notices to the accused students.

The letters presented the students with an ultimatum: Either contact the RIAA within 20 days to settle matters outside the public eye at a reduced rate, or face litigation in open court.

The RIAA will not disclose the number of students who settled before the deadline, but according to an RIAA official, 119 students from the initial nationwide notification chose to do so.

The students facing litigation will still be able to settle out of court, an RIAA press release stated, but not for the reduced rate.

"We have no choice but to take the problem of campus music theft seriously," Executive Vice President and General Counsel for the RIAA Steven Marks said in a press release. "Our ability to invest in new bands and new music is seriously threatened by online theft – a problem that remains particularly acute on college campuses. We are now giving students the opportunity to settle the claims against them during a pre-litigation period. Yet students who do not take advantage of this new process should understand that lawsuits are sure to follow."

According to a recent survey by SurveyU.com, 98 percent of college students questioned admitted to owning at least one song that they didn't pay for, while 68 percent said they had no plans to change the way they acquire music.

"(Baby) Boomers started out seeking to redefine society by focusing on the injustices of their time: race relations, the Vietnam War and the role of women in society," SurveyU.com co-founder Dan Coats said in an email. "Two generations later, their children – the Millennials – are seeking to redefine society as well, but this time the injustices they perceive are digital in nature.

"The irony is that the generation that sought societal change is now 'the man' and they are defending digital rights with the same force that was used in the '60s to thwart their own efforts."

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