

Colleges Team With Online Music Stores To Cut Down On Piracy

by Vanessa Voltolina, Monday, Aug 22, 2005 6:00 AM EST

THE LONG LIST OF QUESTIONS that plague the minds of all college administrators--what to spend money on, how to improve dormitory conditions, university academics, how to cut costs--has just grown longer. The latest query: how to prevent students from illegally jamming.

In the last year, some colleges have found an answer: give students access to online music stores. The online downloading companies, meanwhile, have made this option appealing by offering discounts to colleges and universities.

Now, online music companies including Cdigix, Napster, RealNetworks' Rhapsody, and Ruckus Network offer substantial price reductions to college students throughout the country.

For instance, Rhapsody costs as little as \$2 a month at the University of California, Berkeley compared to the typical \$9.95 monthly charge, while music downloads through Cdigix are available to University of Michigan students for just \$2.50 a monthly, compared to the usual \$3 a month charge.

The first deal between a college and downloading service dates back to January of 2004, when Pennsylvania State University started offering Napster on a free trial basis to students at one of its 24 campuses. Karen Zitomer, Penn State spokeswoman, said the school later expanded the offering to all 82,000 students. Cornell University is also offering free Napster downloading to its students.

Cdigix, the largest of the music downloading companies, with a digital library of 1.7 million tracks, now has contracts with 24 colleges, including Yale University, Duke University, and many California schools--up from three in 2004. Cdigix President Brett Goldberg said he expects still more colleges to sign on. "We believe the digital media movement on college campuses has the potential to become as pronounced as cable TV did on campuses in the early 1990s," he said.

David Walker, director of advanced technology for the University of California system, added that the school hopes that making downloads readily available will discourage piracy. "What we're really trying to do is foster a marketplace where these services can be provided legally," Walker said.