OSU Policy on Copying and Distributing Course Materials

Although faculty members generally are very careful about following University policies for preparation and distribution of course packets, several related questions have come up recently. The following guidance is a reminder of the University’s policies, which should be helpful to you as you begin to prepare materials for next year’s classes. Remember also that staff members at the Copyright Center in Printing and Mailing Services are happy to help you navigate the processes for preparing course packets.

Any course packets that include materials other than your original work (i.e., original work for which you have not assigned the copyright to a publisher) must be sent to Printing and Mailing for copyright clearance and copying. The University provides copyright clearance through University Printing and Mailing to protect the University, the faculty, the students and the copyright owner. Printing and Mailing will then deliver the materials to the OSU Bookstore for sale to students. You will find helpful information about this process at http://oregonstate.edu/admin/printing/copyright/copyright.htm

Because of concerns about the cost to students of purchasing course materials through the OSU Bookstore, some Departments would prefer to have individual faculty members secure their own copyright clearance, and then make a copy of course materials available for copying by students. Although we understand the desire to reduce costs to students, that practice is not consistent with the University’s legal obligations and policies. Requiring, or even allowing, individual faculty members to be responsible for copyright clearance creates serious legal risk for the University, the faculty member and students, and does not sufficiently protect the copyright owner. The risk to individual faculty members is particularly significant because if a faculty member bypasses the copyright clearance the University provides, and the faculty member is then sued for copyright violation, the state will not provide defense. It is important for our own protection that we use the processes the University has in place for this function. In addition, facilitating a student’s reproduction of material that does not have the proper copyright clearance may put the student at risk for copyright
infringement. If you are preparing course materials that include anything other than your own original work, you must clear the course packet through Printing and Mailing.

The only exception to this policy is for course materials that include only your own original work - for example notes that you have written - and for which you have not assigned the copyright to a publisher. In that case, where there is no question about the need for copyright clearance, it is permissible to make the notes available to students electronically, at no charge, and allow students to copy them at their own expense. Departments and faculty members may not charge even the cost of reproduction for materials provided to students by this means. The University’s sale of these materials would be inconsistent with the exclusive rights the OSU Bookstore has through its lease to sell course packets.

If you have questions about this policy, please contact the Printing and Mailing Services Copyright Center.

Becky Johnson

Rebecca Johnson

Interim Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and International Programs