TO: Professor Teri Ray

FROM: Tony Oxx

DATE: April 26, 2011

SUBJECT: Students awareness and attitudes towards software piracy

**Abstract**

The purpose of this report is to determine whether the Computer Science Department at Murray State University should increase or decrease emphasis on software piracy in several computer courses offered to undergraduates. I have survey 100 students, all seniors at Murray State, to determine their current awareness of and attitudes toward software piracy.

**Introduction**

Background: The Computer Science Department at Murray State University has conducted a study of college seniors concerning their awareness of and attitudes toward software piracy.

Problem: The problem of this report was to determine whether to either increase or decrease emphasis on software piracy in several computer courses offered to undergraduates.

**Scope**

Overall, this project is designed to provide the Computer Science Department objective insight into the current knowledge and attitudes of Murray State seniors regarding software piracy.

**Procedures**

I have surveyed 100 students (all seniors; ranging in age from 21 to 34; average age 22) as a part of my project. These surveys were done through email questions and responses from September 1 to September 15, 2010.

**Findings**

**The first category of questions dealt with their knowledge of software piracy. The correct answer to each of these questions is “true”. Their responses to these four questions are as follows:**

1) Purchased software is covered by copyright law and generally allows for only a backup copy to be made by the purchaser.

84 true

16 false

2) Making copies of copyrighted software for distribution to others (software piracy) is a federal crime.

94 true

6 false

Figure : Responses from Study Participants

3) Making a copy of a software program owned by my company for use at home, unless expressly allowed, is a violation of copyright law.

82 true

18 false

4) Software piracy is punishable by both fine and imprisonment.

92 true

8 false

**The second category of questions dealt with specific situations. To each, students were instructed to give their *honest* responses and were assured that all responses would remain confidential.**

1) Your employer has purchased *Visual Communicator* for use on your computer at work. You have a computer at home and would like to have a copy of the program for you and your family’s personal use. You would

1. Make a copy of the disk for use at home and buy a manual at Amazon. (38 responses)
2. Make a copy of the disk and photocopy the manual for home use. (50 responses)
3. Wait until you could afford to purchase a copy for yourself. (12 responses)

2) You visit a local computer software store and see *Visual Communicator* with a price of $149. You would

1. Buy it now or if money is short, come back later to buy it. (100 responses)
2. Shoplift the software. (0 responses)

3) You obtain a copy of *Visual Communicator*. A friend asks you for a copy of it, you would

1. Give your friend a copy of the program. (58 responses)
2. Trade your friend a copy of *Visual Communicator* for a copy of *Adobe Photoshop*. (22 responses)
3. Sell your friend a copy for $25. (6 responses)
4. Tell your friend that he/she must purchase a copy. (14 responses)

Figure : Responses from Study Participants

**Analysis**

What the study determined was that even though an overwhelming number of participants know that software piracy is illegal, over half of those people would still give a friend an illegal copy of a copyrighted program. The second question of the survey asked participants if software piracy was a crime. 94 of the 100 responses were true –piracy is a crime. Question three, in the second category of questions, asked how the participants would respond if asked to illegally make a copy of a copyrighted program for a friend. 58 of the 100 participants stated they would give a copy of the program to a friend. By looking at the data from the survey, it is logical to conclude that even though the consequences of piracy are understood, a majority of participants would still pirate software.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

**Conclusions**: The following conclusions are made based on this study:

1. 94% of the study participants understand that software piracy is a federal crime.
2. 92% of the study participants understand that software piracy is punishable by both fine and imprisonment.
3. More broadly, it would be logical to conclude: Regardless of legality, students will still pirate software –for themselves and for friends.

**Recommendations**: The following recommendations are made based on the conclusions of this study:

1. Based off the findings from this study, The Computer Science Department at Murray State University should increase emphasis on software piracy for undergraduate computer courses.