
Today's News

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When Web Sites Post Test Answers Online, Professors Worry

By [JEFFREY R. YOUNG](#)

Several Web sites have emerged in recent years that encourage students to upload old exams to build a bank of test questions and answers that can be consulted by other students. But some professors have objected, many of them demanding that their tests be removed.

Demir A. Oral, a Web designer living in San Diego, said he started his online test collection, PostYourTest.com, because he felt that such materials were already available to some students but not others. "I know that fraternities and a lot of organizations have test banks, and I just didn't think that was fair that some students got access to these things and some didn't," he said.

So far, Mr. Oral said, his site offers more than 500 tests, and about 400 to 500 students have registered to use it, he said. The site is free to students and is supported by advertising. Many of the tests are for courses at the University of California at San Diego, where Mr. Oral recently took a course and where he has promoted the site. (At one campus event, he gave out \$5 Starbucks gift cards to students who submitted a test.)

But some professors have raised concerns about the site, arguing that it could be used to cheat, especially if professors are not aware of the site, and reuse old tests.

"There's an academic-integrity concern," said James W. Posakony, chairman of the University of California at San Diego's Academic Senate. And he said that professors at the university hold the copyright to their exams, and that some professors feel they should have control of how they are distributed. The Academic Senate sent an e-mail message in May to all professors and instructors at the institution letting them know of the existence of the site, and others like it, and warning them that some students might use it, said Mr. Posakony.

More than 40 professors have contacted PostYourTest.com and insisted that their test materials be removed, and another 200 professors asked that they be added to a "ban list" so that their materials not be included in the future, said Mr. Oral. He said that he complied with all of the requests.

"I don't think the site encourages cheating," said Mr. Oral. "I think a cheater is going to be a cheater anyway." He said he would have used the site as a student to help study for tests by getting a feel for what kinds of questions the professors asked.

Not all professors are upset by the online test collection.

Stuart Brody, a biology professor at the University of California at San Diego, said that his teaching assistants had told him about PostYourTest.com, but that he did not know one of his genetics exams was on the site until he was told by a reporter.

He said that he already gives out the previous year's exams to students. And he said he changes the tests each year, and that he only recycles some questions, years later. "If they're going to look at all of those years' exams and

remember all of those answers, they're going to learn a lot," he said.

Donald L. McCabe, one of the founders of the Center for Academic Integrity at Clemson University and a professor of organization management at Rutgers University at Newark, said professors should already be aware that their past tests are likely to be redistributed by some students, whether they like it or not, and so they should keep their tests fresh.

"I'm not necessarily all that alarmed about this," he said. "I've long said that faculty members need to use unique assignments and unique testing" because it reduces the possibility that students can cheat.

The sites also raise legal questions. Are students authorized to publish exams created by their professors?

That depends, said Peter A. Jaszi, a law professor at American University.

"It's very situational—the analysis is going to be different from test to test," he said. For instance, at some colleges, it is not clear whether professors hold the copyright to their course materials or whether their employers do.

He said that in his own courses he assumes that students do have the right to share exams he hands back—and so he constantly changes his questions.

PostYourTest.com is just one of several test-bank sites. Another, Course Hero, promises study materials, including some exams, from "more than 200 active schools".

Another, Exams 101, sells itself as an alternative to fraternity collections. "You don't have to join a frat to access good study material!" the site says. "The Exams101.com test bank is FREE—no pledging required."

Administrators for those Web sites could not be reached for comment.

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