|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| /var/folders/1s/3kz_212d4fs9k63bzm3f0tjm0000gn/T/com.microsoft.Word/Content.MSO/CD169C2.tmp.  | **Memorandum*****From the offices of the…*****Science and ArtSci Caucuses** |
| **TO:**  | Members of the Student Representative Assembly  |
| **FROM:**  | Adeola Egbeyemi, SRA Arts and Science Caucus LeaderChristy Au-Yeung, SRA Science Co-Caucus LeaderSimran Dhindsa, SRA Science Caucus MemberSimranjeet Singh, SRA Science Co-Caucus Leader  |
| **SUBJECT:**  | Use of Respondus Proctoring Software and associated concerns regarding student privacy and rights |
| **DATE:**  | Sunday, February 21st,, 2021 |

The 2020-21 academic year has brought about a number of challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students’ mental health, motivation, ability to network, and the ability to gain a fruitful education have all been compromised, meaning support is even more vital than ever.

These changes are the direct result of the need for an online learning environment as in-person learning has not been possible due the COVID-19 pandemic. Faculties have had to adapt their curricula and testing methods to these circumstances, which has included calls for proctoring technology to ensure academic integrity.

To ensure academic integrity is maintained, McMaster University has entered a partnership with Respondus, a company which offers multiple, invasive services to monitor students. The technology, - which has been implemented by various faculty members, consists of a lockdown browser which may be paired with video and audio recording for the duration of an assessment. Students continue to bring forward their concerns regarding their privacy and equity, which is not adequately valued or respected with the use of the proctoring technology.

As per their Terms of Service, Respondus will collect and process student data to enhance and benefit the capability of their services. The exact use of the information collected by Respondus has not been communicated. The information that has been provided has been vague and unclear, leaving open the possibility that student data is being used by Respondus for the purpose of enhancing the company’s software and artificial intelligence. It is important to note that while Respondus will only keep the full audio and video recordings it collects for a period of one year, the information collected regarding the appearance of students, their voices, how they react and move, eye movement, facial expressions, and various other factors will be processed and will become a part of Respondus’ technology indefinitely.

While currently being used for academic integrity, future applicability of software includes use by law enforcement, for mass surveillance, for targeted advertising, and many other applications. Thus, the technology used today for something as seemingly mundane as flagging if a student might be cheating may be used to silence, dissent, or prevent due process from taking place. These possibilities may be extreme, but they are already employed by governments and other corporations in the modern day.

Without a clear understanding of how their information will be used, and with previous precedent of how other corporations have used data, students are unable to provide informed consent to use the software, which is an unacceptable state of affairs. The fact that students are unable to even opt out of the use of their data to develop Respondus’ software further exacerbates concerns.

As a result of the inadequate respect given to students’ privacy, their rights to the use of their own biometric and personal data, and the impacts on fairness which result, we call on the SRA to adopt the set of statements we have presented and function as a united front in support of students.

Best,

Simranjeet Singh, Simran Dhindsa, Christy Au-Yeung, and Adeola Egbeyemi

srasci@msu.mcmaster.ca

sraartsci@msu.mcmaster.ca