



## **Penn State Registers Multiple “XXX” Domain Names**

In a strange sign of the times, U.S. universities and colleges have been making a mad dash to secure registrations for the newly-available “.xxx” domain names. The most sought after names incorporate the schools’ names, well-known uniform color combinations, and even school mascots so as to head off potential infringement by unauthorized registrants seeking to turn a profit based on pornographic websites.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) oversees the registration of new domain names and in March approved the use of the new “.xxx” extension. Originally, the intention was to encourage adult-themed Websites to use the extension as a means of segregating themselves from the much more common “.com” and “.net.” However, as with many things found on the Internet, there was a substantial risk of misuse by third parties. Recognizing the obvious sensitivity of the issue, ICANN took the unusual step of allowing schools and other educational organizations to use an early registration period during which they could secure the rights to potentially offensive or abusive misuse of school names.



The effort was made all the more urgent when news of the Penn State and Syracuse child abuse scandals broke earlier this year and school officials became concerned that enterprising entrepreneurs would take advantage of the sudden media exposure and scoop up names associated with these schools. Not surprisingly, the movement spread to many other

schools who decided it was prudent to take the precautionary step of registering their own names with the “.xxx” extension to prevent others from doing so.

The grace period expired on December 6, but before it did, quite a number of US schools and educational institutions took advantage of the relatively-inexpensive opportunity to protect their cyber identities. For example, Penn State registered the names Penn State, PSU, Nittany Lions and The Pennsylvania State University with the .xxx extension. At a cost of \$200 per registration, the university considers it an affordable way to prevent opportunistic businesses from using those names in conjunction with possible pornographic offerings such as pennstategirls.xxx or nittanylionsbabes.xxx.

[“PENN STATE” and the Nittany Lion profile are trademarks of the State University of Pennsylvania.]

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