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Net neutrality creates equal access

By Dalton Carver
Staff reporter

The idea of the Internet and how information travels along its “roads” can appear abstract to many who are eager enough to imagine it. Add the regulations that are enforced upon those lanes and “abstract” can become “extremely difficult to fathom.”

Imagine that Netflix decided to start producing cars. Let’s say an adventurous consumer purchased a Netflix-mobile and wanted to take it for a spin on the highway. However, this highway is owned by Comcast, a company that recently produced a competitive model to the Netflix-mobile, the Xfinity-mobile.

Since Netflix’s original vehicle has been around since 1999, it can take up to 50 percent of the highway. Comcast is essentially paying for their highway to carry a vehicle that they don’t produce, own or make profit off of. To combat this, unless Netflix drivers pay a higher fee, they must drive 50 miles per hour slower than any Xfinity-mobile.

If you aren’t sure, Netflix and Xfinity are competitive video

streaming services. Xfinity is owned and operated by Comcast, an Internet Service Provider, while Netflix is its own company. This analogy is the basic idea behind net neutrality, a term coined in 2003 by Tim Wu, a Columbia University media law professor. It represents the guiding principle of the Internet, preserving users’ rights to communicate and travel online without inhibition.

The hierarchy of how the Internet is regulated is headed by the Federal Communications Commission, which originally decided how ISPs were allowed to deal with online traffic. In 2014, the FCC revealed a plan that allowed ISPs to dictate who would gain access to faster lanes of Internet. Providers such as Comcast, AT&T and Verizon favored the ruling that would force customers, like Netflix, to pay more for their content to be streamed or received at faster rates.

Although this practice would begin with companies like Netflix, it could have eventually been forced upon other popular websites. As a result, services that require subscriptions would function at a slower pace, costing

the subscriber more money in the long run.

As of Feb. 4, 2015, these loosely-interpreted regulations were scrapped and the rules that Comcast could enforce on its “highway” were banned. The FCC has announced a new proposal based upon Title II of the Communications Act. This change classifies ISPs as common carriers, which protects against the paid prioritization controversy. Comcast, AT&T and Verizon would all be considered telecommunications services, requiring stricter regulation by the FCC.

The new paragraph of the FCC rules states, “Because the record overwhelmingly supports adopting rules and demonstrates that three specific practices invariably harm the open Internet – blocking, throttling, and paid prioritization – this order bans each of them, applying the same rules to both fixed and mobile broadband Internet access service.”

Going back to the analogy, Comcast can’t refuse the Netflix-mobile on its road, or give itself a competitive advantage by enforcing slower speed limits strictly for the Netflix-mobile. As Netf-

lix drivers are no longer forced to travel slower, Comcast can’t capitalize on the opportunity by creating faster lanes that can only be used if extra was paid upon use of the highway. This is a welcome change, especially to businesses that don’t have the monetary resources that companies such as Netflix have. It makes the Internet level and fair for all who access it, and not just those who have money to speed by others. It helps to keep ISPs more honest, as they can be considered gatekeepers to the online world. It also offers opportunities for the Internet to grow and develop the next great idea, company or piece of technology. The open Internet allows for equally open opportunity.

However, one shouldn’t expect that controversy on net neutrality will disappear with this decision. The Internet is a living, growing entity that will continue to test the boundaries of law, ethics and how much money can be spent to own a piece of it.

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Title IX federal law protects students’ rights

By Maggie Dunning
Staff reporter

One hundred. That’s the number of colleges and universities now under investigation by the U.S. Department of Education for possible violations of federal law over the handling of sexual violence and harassment complaints at their schools as reported by the Washington Post. For more information go to: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2015/03/04/schools-facing-investigations-on-sexual-violence-now-more-than-100/>.

With so many colleges and universities under fire for mishandling sexual misconduct cases it’s important for students to know their rights regarding Title IX. Title IX is a comprehensive federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any feder-

ally funded education program or activity. Knowyourix.org broke down what that means for students in college.

1. The college has to provide a notice of nondiscrimination.
2. Have a Title IX coordinator.
3. Adopt and publish a grievance procedure outlining the complaint, investigation, and disciplinary process for addressing sex discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual violence occurring within educational programs.
4. Hearings on sexual violence cases must rule for or against the defendants based on whether the situation was more than likely to have happened.

For a more in depth explanation of what students should be keeping an eye out for when their school handles Title IX go to: <http://knowyourix.org/title-ix/>

title-ix-in-detail/

Educating students on Title IX begins at Builder Camp with breakout sessions, led by administrators and staff. In one session, men and women are separated. Presentations tailored to each gender are given. Several issues are covered in the presentations. What is consent? What is sexual misconduct? What to do if you see a potential sexual assault about to happen? Contact information and resources are also given.

The Clery Act is a federal law that requires colleges and universities around the country to disclose information about crime on and around their campus. The school publishes an annual safety report in compliance with the Clery Act. The safety report for years 2011-2013 is published at <http://www.sckans.edu/student-services/safety-and-security/annual-safety-report/>.

annual-safety-report/.

This report is required to give the previous three year’s information. The definitions of sexual misconduct are published with a page dedicated to providing students with a guide for what they should do if they are sexually assaulted. Contact information and resources are included.

Title IX can only go so far as the open investigations on 100 colleges and universities around the U.S. prove. Students who feel that their complaint or conduct cases are being mishandled should contact the Office of Civil Rights to file a complaint. Go here for their main page on the complaint process: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>.

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