

# INFORMATION REGULATION OF THE INTERNET

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## Introduction

The Internet is the single largest source of information in the world. Compared to other media, very few restrictions have ever been placed on it as a medium or on the content it contains. Recently, some legislators in the United States, as well as policymakers in international organizations, have tried to pass several different laws and treaties that are at the heart of this issue.

The first issue is the proposed United States House Bill called the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA). The goals of SOPA are to protect intellectual property and to protect against counterfeit medications. Critics of SOPA, however, argue that the bill is overreaching and infringes upon citizens' freedom of speech.

The second issue is the proposed United States Senate Bill called the Preventing Real Online Threats to Economic Creativity and Theft of Intellectual Property Act (PROTECT IP Act, or PIPA). The goals of PIPA are to halt distribution of illegally copied or counterfeited intellectual property. Critics of PIPA, however, argue that this legislation infringes on citizens' freedom of speech and negatively impacts the ability to find information on the internet.

This research would expand on differing viewpoints of students at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire surrounding this control of information on the Internet in relation these legal issues.

## Conclusion

Reflecting on our research project this semester we are overall pleased with the results and data that we have collected.

Our findings however were a bit surprising in the third trend of students not wanting more regulations on their personal creations especially in the realm of artistic students and their artistic creation. There are also a few different items we would like to see future researchers complete and discover about the student body.

- Comparisons between different points in history when internet regulation was brought into effect, what was the student bodies general opinions.

- Comparisons between different campus across Wisconsin and the Nation to see if location has an effect on overall results.

- Increase the amount of students represented throughout the campus.

If the above suggestions are made to any future research we will be able to further expand and have some really interesting trends to analyze that can show some data on how we have developed with the internet over the years.

## Methods

To collect our data set, we relied on a Qualtrics Survey.

### Statistics:

- Surveys sent out: 250
- Surveys completed: 73
- Completion Rate: 29.2%

The surveys were sent out to 250 UWEC students of varying ages, genders, political views, and majors. The recipients had a week to complete the survey, and each survey took less than 5 minutes to complete.

### Content:

The survey was scenario based that had participants rate what they thought of the scenario from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The types were defined as followed:

**Artistic:** Music, Movies, Digital Art

**Scholarly:** Research, Wikipedia, Scholarly publications.

**Personal:** Social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and other Social Media.

## Findings

After extensive analysis of the data collected through our survey we have identified 3 major trends within our data.

1. Based upon the demographic information we collected we looked for trends on who currently believes the internet is regulated and the majority of people do believe that the internet is currently regulated. As we see in Graph 1-1 indicated below we see a vast majority of the responses from all different grade levels saying they believe the internet is regulated. This however changes for junior and senior status where we see the introduction of "No" responses indicating they believe there is currently no regulation.

2. The trend we observed in our data is a large amount of variation in the no regulation demographic. This variation occurs when the students are answering questions pertaining to scholarly information this can be seen visually in Graph 1-2 Students overwhelmingly strongly agree with no regulation on scholarly information as compared to the other categories for the no regulation scenario.

3. The trend we have seen is in the data is the students do not need to ensure their area of expertise is more regulated as their creations are protected. Looking at Graph 1-3 we see a clear example of this showing that students within the College of Arts/Sciences have a large number of responses in strong agreement with no regulation on artistic information.

## Discussion

Trend – Upper level students (Junior, Senior) show the first evidence of increased perception of "No Regulation"

Reasons this could be happening:

- Freshman and Sophomore class status are more likely to be living on campus and therefore exposed to the University's internet regulations.
- Junior and Senior class status are more likely to be living off campus therefore internet usage restrictions are not as apparent.

Trend – Students overwhelmingly feel that scholarly information should not have any regulations.

Reason this could be happening:

- Students at a University are more involved with scholarly information on a daily basis and therefore want access to this information as easy as possible.

Trend – Students do not feel as heavily towards maximum regulation for their own creations, in fact they feel that they should be free of regulation.

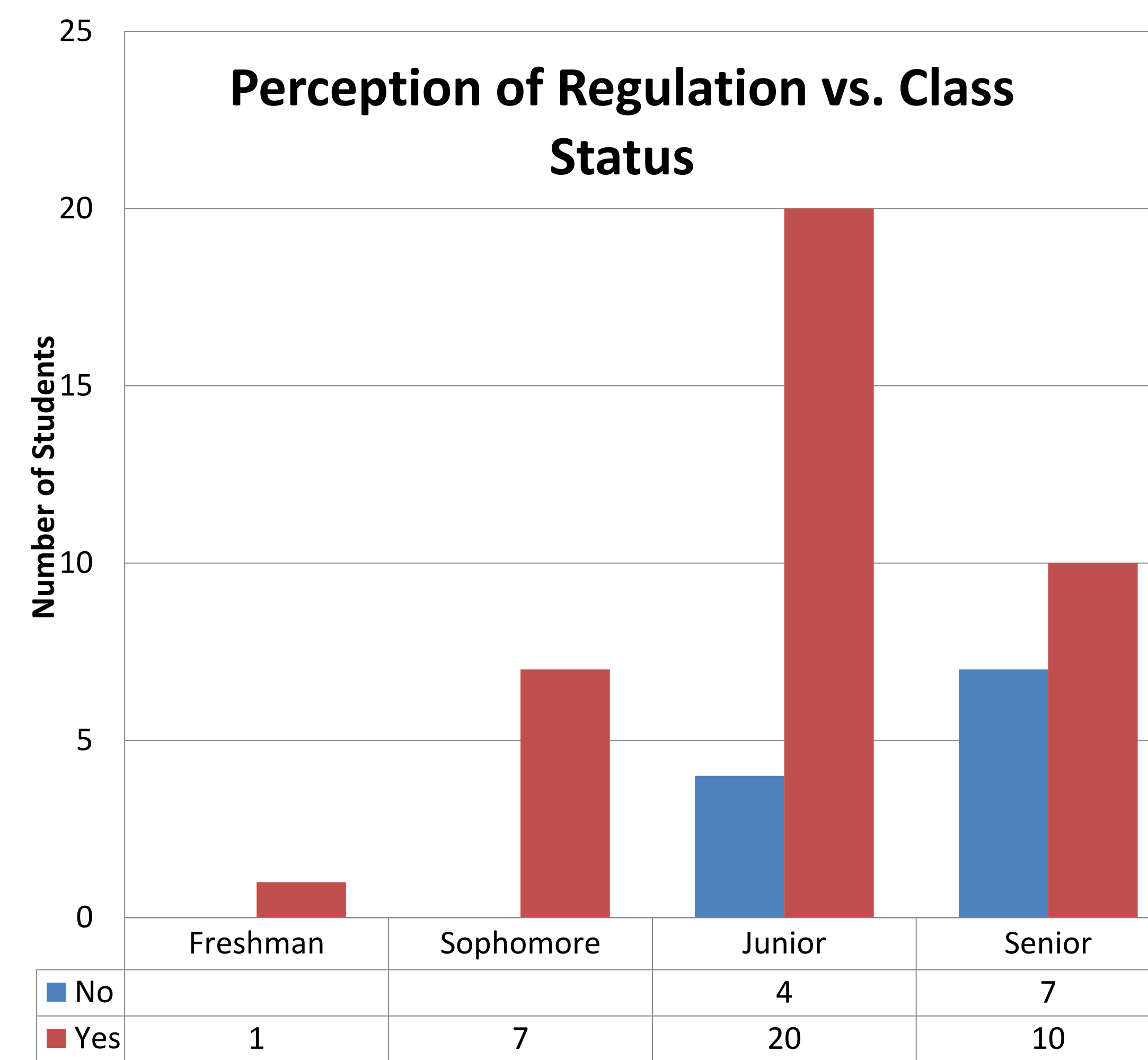
Reasons this could be happening:

- Students currently want to share their work without other motives than other to be recognized.
- Their income levels are low to the point where they wish to have all items currently found on the internet free of charge.
- They have adapted to a lifestyle where no regulation is appealing and they have developed other methods to receive recognition for their work

## Hypothesis

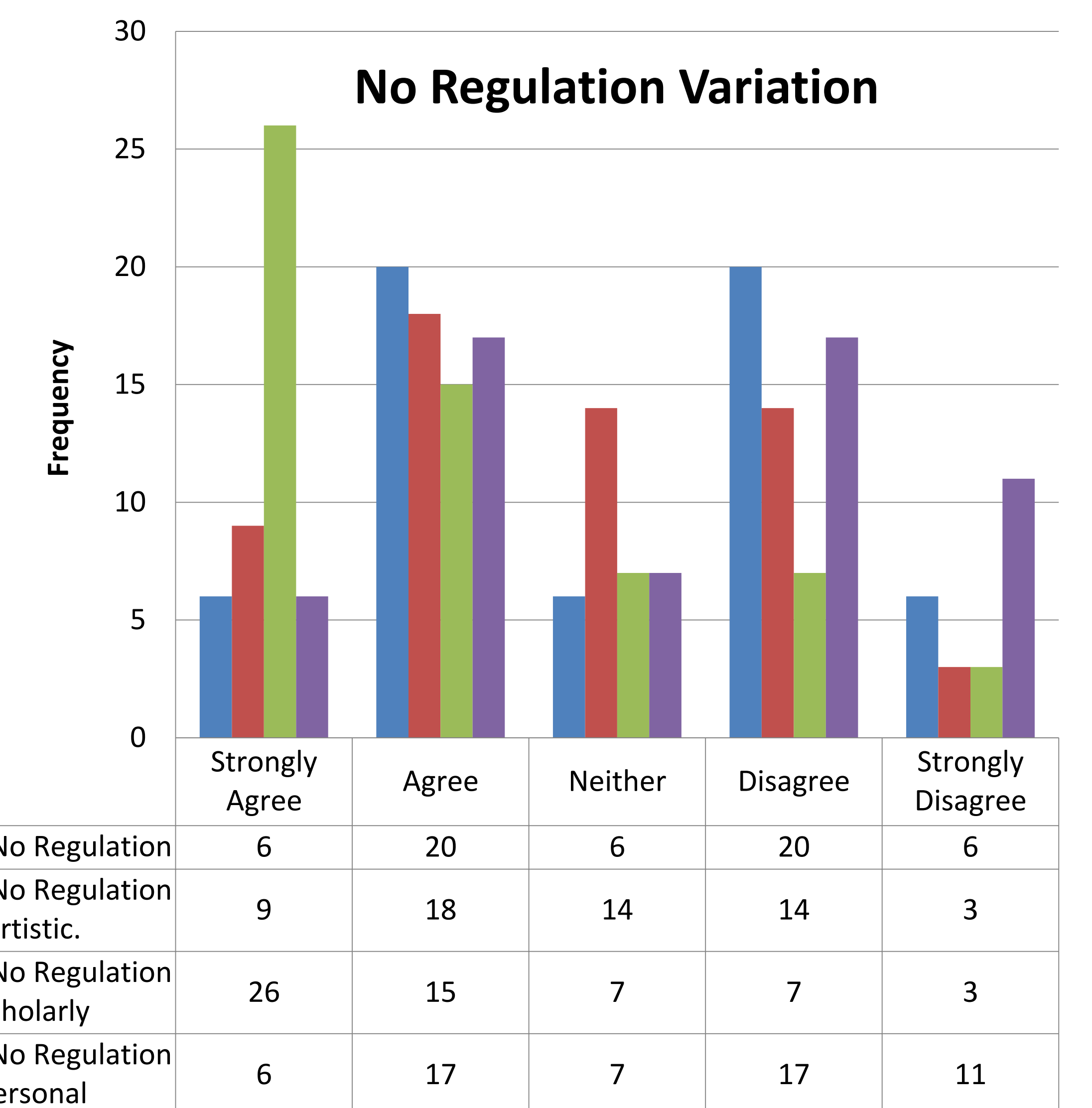
After looking through our background information, we came up with three major hypotheses.

- Students will have knowledge of the current regulations on the internet.
- Due to demographics, the sample will have a bias towards lower regulations.
- When asked about which types of information should be more regulated, students will want the information they create to be more regulated.



Graph 1-1 Above indicates the perception of regulation versus class status which responded to the survey. If the respondent believed there was currently regulation on the internet they responded with "Yes" if they did not believe there was they responded with "No"

Graph 1- 2 Below shows the responses for the scenario of a No Regulation environment. Indicated as a green bar, people strongly agree with no regulations on scholarly material more than any other category.



Graph 1-3 Below has data for the respondents in the College of Arts/Sciences general feeling towards maximum, some and no regulations in addition to their feelings towards artistic work. As we can see in a majority of students want no regulation in regards to artistic work. This is shown even more clearly by the increase in "strongly agree" responses in the artistic section when comparing to the general sense.

