Free ain't what it used to be. It costs a lot of money.

Keeping content free can be very expensive. Just look at the decision process that Hulu is going through. On one hand, the site is an unquestionable success measured in visitors. People want the content. On the other hand, it doesn't generate a consistent, predictable revenue stream. It has all the risks associated with any advertising supported content business. To make matters far worse, their best and most popular content is the key to the largest and most consistent revenue stream that content licensees have, subscription fees from your local cable/sat/telco TV provider.

So what about this as an interim solution for Hulu and other comparable sites. Take a page from the first years of Facebook. Limit free to people with qualified .edu emails that register.

Students make up a big chunk of the population most likely to make the time to steal content . So why not just recognize it ?

Sure, it may make some other people unhappy. Sure, its not foolproof. But its a starting point.

Im curious what readers think.