To: Engineering Communications  
From: Patrick Austin (10-1)  
Date: April 7, 2017  
Subject: Core Capstone Defense – SLO #4 Rough Draft  
  
Patrick has received a broad education including a past degree in political science, and has had broad experiences ranging from IT work for the university, to grading papers and tutoring students, to work in Reno’s gaming industry.

Patrick has studied the problem of digital rights management, or DRM, in the software industry. By the account of one industry advocacy group, software piracy accounts for two out of every five software products installed on computers worldwide, greatly impacting industry profits. DRM is used to deter piracy, but studies of consumer behavior have suggested that flawed and onerous DRM schemes drive away more sales than they protect. Patrick has proposed an engineering solution: increased experimentation with and promulgation of DRM-free software.

On the global scale, piracy rates vary greatly from nation to nation, being generally higher in the developing world. For that reason, this solution might be a better fit for the developed world, where consumers have demonstrated some willingness to pay for the convenience of DRM-free software, and have less impact in the developing world, where rates of piracy are very high already. Economically, this solution could lead to increased profits via software sales, but it is untested in many software fields and therefore could present an economic risk to attempt. Environmentally, this solution would allow for the elimination of DRM authentication servers, reducing the global carbon footprint; however, increased promulgation of software could lead to more computer usage by consumers of software, which would have a mitigating effect. On a social level, DRM-free software could promote a culture of user-friendliness and consumer convenience in software design, but critics might fear that it would further promote the existing culture of piracy by making software easier to steal.