

# AGGIELIFE

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THE BATTALION

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## Taking note of online services Students turn to Websites for assistance

BY JULIA RECINDUS  
The Battalion

Every college student suffers from the occasional bad morning, hectic test schedule or overloaded brain as the result of leading a sleep-deprived lifestyle.

For any one of these reasons, a student might miss a class, or may not be able to give his or her full attention to the day's lecture. Fortunately for that student, tools that can be used to improve one's education and ease studying are becoming available.

By simply typing in a specific class at an online note taking company's Website, students can obtain notes from that particular class and use them to his or her benefit.

John Borcharding, a campus operations manager for Verity.com on Texas A&M's campus and a sophomore business major, said he became a note taker for two of his classes after noticing an ad in the newspaper last semester. He said it seemed like a great opportunity to make money and help others at the same time.

Borcharding said professors are encouraged to look at the notes and let them know of any mistakes.

"The majority of the professors like our notes," he said. "We see it as a resource, like any other electronic library. The idea is to make quality notes. These notes are not a substitute for going to class. In no way does the company encourage students not to go to class," Borcharding said.

Dr. Marlene Bradford, a history professor, said her biggest concern is that the availability of online notes will cause class attendance to decrease.

"Students in classes where attendance is not required might quit going to class and rely on the student who is taking the notes to make judgments about what in the professor's lecture is significant," she said. "Someone may say that the direction of education is online learning. That may be true, but there is a big difference between a course that may be put online and the notes someone else may put online. My words are first-hand knowledge of what is required for the class, while the note taker's knowledge at best is second hand or even an assumption," she said.

Mary Maloney, a freshman international studies major, said she almost always attends class but occasionally turns to online services.

"I don't rely on them too much. When I don't go to class

because I have another test to study for I look at them, or I look to see if it has anything different from what I've taken. Sometimes it's easier because it's very organized, sometimes more so than my notes," she said.

The online companies say their notes are there for just that reason -- to fill in gaps and clarify points. Some major companies include Study24-7.com, StudentU.com and Verity.com. Verity.com employs students from over 150 campuses across America. The students who are hired go through extensive screening and training procedures and are paid between \$8 and \$12 per lecture.

The employees are students who take notes for classes in which they are enrolled. The purpose of the employing students already enrolled in the course is to help other students understand the information through the perspective of fellow students.

Within 24 hours after the notes are posted on the Web, the note taker will be notified of any inaccuracies and is required to correct them, and the sites encourage student input.

Visitors to the site can comment on the information and services provided or point out any conflicting interpretations of the material. Students enrolled in the class can interact not only with each other but also with students enrolled at other universities across the nation through the site.

Some professors, however, feel the posting of notes taken from their lecture by students is a violation of their intellectual property rights. A policy enforced by Verity.com states that the use of video or tape recorders by the student employee is prohibited.

All notes taken from the class lecture are from the student's perspective and can only state that which is public knowledge.

Online note-taking sites also offer students other resources than just notes. Some allow students to ask experts questions and provide links to sites relevant to the student's topic of research. Others offer diagnostic tests designed to correspond with popular textbooks used at colleges and study guides that target a student's particular area of difficulty.

Some Websites also offer discussion boards and chat rooms that allow students to post questions, ask advice and share information.

"During Bonfire time, [the Verity.com Website] helped out a lot of people. It's a big help in circumstances like that," Borcharding said.



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