

AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY ***POLICE DEPARTMENT***



Fraud Awareness for International Students

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UNDERSTANDING SCAMS

A scam is a fraudulent or deceptive act used for financial gain or to obtain personal information. There are many scams that target international students and immigrants. Scams often begin with a phone call, text message, or e-mail, all of which can be faked to appear legitimate. Most often the scam will involve a problem the scammer claims was caused by the intended victim and will have harsh consequences unless they pay the scammer. A key component of most scams is the scammer creating a sense of urgency. The scammer wants the victim to pay without thinking.

Tip: If someone requests payment in the form of Money Orders, Wire Transfers, Cashier's Checks, Pre-Paid Debt Cards, or Codes from Gift Cards (ex. Apple Store, Amazon, Google Play) they are a scammer.



COMMON SCAMS

There are several scams that target international students. Here are some of the various scams and tips on avoiding them.

Tip: If you receive an unsolicited call. Don't give any of your personal information to the caller, you don't know who you could actually be talking to.



IMMIGRATION SCAMS

An immigration scam is a fraudulent act that targets international students and immigrants involving their visa or immigration status.

Immigration scams are a form of “Imposter Scams”. The scam always begin with the scammer impersonating an official from a government organization; such as The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Counter Terrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit (CTCEU), United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS), the Student & Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), SEVIS, Customs & Border Protection (CBP), the U.S. Department of State (aka, the State Department or DOS).

The most common immigration scam involves the scammers making claims that the victim violated an immigration regulation or failed to pay an immigration fee. The scammer will threaten to revoke the victim's immigration status and have them deported unless they make an immediate payment to scammer.

The scammer might claim that the victim has a warrant out for their arrest, from either a U.S. agency or their country of origin. The scammer will threaten to have local police arrest the victim unless they pay them to get rid of the warrant. In some instances the scammer will threaten to have the victim's family members arrested unless they pay the scammer.

Another version of an immigration scam involves claims that the victim's visa has expired, or that the victim failed to pay a fee and their visa is being revoked. Much like other scams, the scammer will demand immediate payment.

IMMIGRATION SCAM PREVENTION

If you are contacted by someone claiming to be from a government agency, get the caller's name and contact information. Do not give them any of your personal information. If the caller is making any claims that you owe money to a government agency, advise the caller that you will contact the government agency directly and hang up. Look up information on the government agency and call them directly, do not use any contact information that was provided by the caller as it could be false. If you have questions about maintaining your immigration status, contact the **AU International and Postdoctoral Services Office** (IPSO) at ipso@augusta.edu or **706-721-0670**.

Tip: If you are contacted by someone claiming to be from a U.S. Government Agency but are unsure if they are legitimate, do not communicate with them. Instead go to www.usa.gov/federal-agencies and contact the agency directly to find out if there is an issue.

AFFINITY SCAMS

An affinity scam is a fraudulent act that targets victims of the same ethnic group as the scammer.

An affinity scam involves the scammer using their similar ethnic group to make the victim feel secure in dealing with them. These scammers often talk about how they emigrated from the same country of origin as the victim, and offer advice on how the victim can make easy money in the U.S. Once the scammer thinks victim is comfortable with them, the scammer will ask for money with the promise of investing it in stocks or a business opportunity. The scammer will attempt to keep the victim investing and paying as much as possible with promises of big returns on their money, but will leave with everything the victim gave them once they know the victim will not pay anymore.

The “Virtual Kidnapping” affinity scam is becoming more prevalent in the international community. The scammer will impersonate a figure of authority from the victim’s country of origin to intimidate the victim. The scammer might threaten harm to the victim or their family if they don’t make a video of themselves, confessing to being in trouble. The scammer will show that video to the victim’s family and the scammer will threaten harm to the victim if their family doesn’t pay.

AFFINITY SCAM PREVENTION

If you are contacted by someone with a similar ethnicity and a plan to get rich quick, it is a scam. Affinity Scammers will often repeatedly talk about how similar they are to you, which is how they try to gain your trust. Do not give them any of your personal information.

If the person contacting you claims to be from your country of origin get the caller’s name and contact information. Do not give them any of your personal information. If the caller is making any claims that you owe money to a government agency, advise the caller that you will contact the government agency directly and hang up. Look up information on the government agency and call them directly, do not use any contact information that was provided by the caller as it could be false. If the caller is making any claims that your family will be harmed unless you pay or perform an action, hang up. Call your family and inform them of the scammer.

OVERPAYMENT SCAMS

An overpayment scam is a form of money laundering in which the scammer defrauds the victim with a fraudulent check. The scammer contacts the victim claiming they want to pay the victim for something. Examples include, to purchase something the victim has for sale, to pay the victim for a contest they won, to pay the victim for an inheritance, or refund an overpayment the victim made.

The scammer will then arrange to send the victim a check. Before the victim receives the check, the scammer will contact them and claim that the scammer sent them too much money. The scammer will request that the victim take what they are owed or more, and send a money order or gift card codes to the scammer to pay back the extra.

When the victim deposits the check it will appear to be legitimate, the bank may take several days to identify the check as fraudulent. The bank will remove the deposit from the victim's account. This leads to the victim getting nothing and paying the scammer for the "difference".

OVERPAYMENT SCAM PREVENTION

If you receive an unexpected check or an unexpected call about paying you for something you knew nothing about, it is most likely a scam. Remember that these scammers rely on you sending them reimbursement for what they claim is an overpayment. Do not accept anything from them, and do not give them anything.



Tip: Never deposit checks or money orders from people you don't know into your bank account. Never share your debit card or bank information with people you don't know.

VISA/CITIZENSHIP EXPEDITION SCAMS

An expedition scam is a scam designed around the slow process for getting a visa or citizenship. The scam involves the scammer contacting the victim and making claims that they know shortcuts to the immigration process or have contacts with the United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS), or the Student & Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). The scammer will offer to have the victim's visa or citizenship expedited, for a fee.

VISA/CITIZENSHIP EXPEDITION SCAM PREVENTION

Anyone contacting you about expediting the visa or citizenship process “for a fee” is a scammer. Be sure that any contact you have with government agencies regarding your visa or citizenship status is handled through official, verified, channels. If you have questions about maintaining your immigration status, contact the **AU International and Postdoctoral Services Office** (IPSO) at ipso@augusta.edu or **706-721-0670**.

GENERAL SCAM PREVENTION

The most important step is to stop and think. A scammer wants you to believe that you have an immediate deadline to pay them. Don't provide any payment, account information, or any of your personal information to people that contact you. Gather information about the caller and who they claim to represent. Research the legitimate information for the organization the caller claimed to represent. If you believe that you have been scammed, call **AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY POLICE DEPARTMENT** at **706-721-2911** and file a report.

TIP: STOP and THINK.

Legitimate companies and Law Enforcement Agencies never ask for payment by gift cards, pre-paid debt cards, or wire transfers.



RESOURCES

Augusta University Police Department (AUPD)

<https://www.augusta.edu/police/>

706-721-2911

AU International and Postdoctoral Services Office (IPSO)

<https://www.augusta.edu/ipso/about.php>

ipso@augusta.edu or 706-721-0670.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

<https://www.dhs.gov/how-do-i/for-the-public>

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

<https://www.ice.gov/>

Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)

<https://www.ice.gov/about-ice/homeland-security-investigations>

Counter Terrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit (CTCEU)

<https://www.ice.gov/investigations/counterterrorism-and-criminal-exploitation-unit>

United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS)

<https://www.uscis.gov/> <https://www.uscis.gov/scams-fraud-and-misconduct/report-fraud>

The Student & Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)

<https://www.ice.gov/sevis>

Customs & Border Protection (CBP)

<https://www.cbp.gov/>

The U.S. Department of State (aka, the State Department or DOS)

<https://www.state.gov/>