



University of
New Haven

UIS Hot Topic

February 17, 2023



Today's Topic: Scams Targeting International Students

Over the years there has been an increase in certain illegal activities, like frauds and scams targeting international students. Sometimes these are financial scams by individuals who supposedly provide a service to pay the University on behalf of the student. Usually these scammers take the student's money but pay the University with stolen credit cards that don't clear with the University. In the end, the student loses the money and the University remains unpaid. The student gets a Bursars Hold, is unable to register for courses, and finally may lose their visa status because they were unable to continue full-time enrollment as required by the F-1 visa.

I don't know how scammers get cell phone numbers of international students, but every semester I hear of students who received scam calls or phishing calls. Typically, the caller identifies as an immigration official or other legal authority and strikes fear in the call recipient by threatening some sort of legal action or deportation if the recipient does not respond. Often, they ask for payment in the form of gift cards or google play cards, which can't be traced or stopped by the bank. Sometimes they try to extract your personal information, which is a type of identity theft. Worse yet, the phone numbers are spoofed to look like an actual government agency phone number.

IF YOU GET SUCH A CALL, HANG UP IMMEDIATELY. BLOCK THE NUMBER IF YOU CAN OR MARK IT A SPAM. IT IS A FAKE CALL AND THERE WILL BE NO REPERCUSSIONS BY THE SCAMMERS. Contact the UIS if you want to be sure it wasn't a real federal agency, but I can tell you that if there really were an issue with your immigration documents, they would contact me as the PDSO of the University rather than call and threaten you. Federal agencies NEVER demand payment on the phone.

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) shares these helps:

- NEVER divulge personal or financial information to unknown callers.
- SEVP officials will NEVER ask stakeholders to provide credit/debit card/gift card numbers, wire transfers, or bank routing numbers, or to make bitcoin deposits for any purpose.
- Report all suspicious calls to the HSI tip line and if you are unsure about the validity of a call from SEVP officials reach out to your designated SEVP field representative.

We also encourage you to report the call as an attempted theft, or an actual theft if the scammers took money from you. As a student, you can report the call to the University Police. If you live off-campus, you can also report the crime to the local police. If the callers identified themselves as some kind of immigration official and/or asked for your immigration information, SEVP encourages you to report the call to them and the HSI tip line at <https://www.ice.gov/webform/ice-tip-form>

Another common crime is that of "phishing" in which the caller extracts your personal information such as, immigration information, social security numbers, bank account information, etc. These ploys can be quite convincing. You think you are applying for a job, or agreeing to purchase a commodity, but the phishers are stealing your identity, and you will not receive any goods or services in exchange. Phishing expeditions may come by email from a spoofed address or fraudulently using the name of a real organization so you think they are real. University Office of Information Technology will often warn of such emails if they become aware of them. You will see an email like this come from IT:

From:Office of Information Technology <OfficeofInformationTechnology@newhaven.edu>
Sent:Friday, June 4, 2021 8:36 AM
Subject:FRAUDULENT EMAIL ALERT: BITCOIN JOB OPPORTUNITY

Good morning
The message below is fraudulent and should be deleted if received.
The compromised account has been remediated, no further notifications are necessary.
Thank you

The Office of Information Technology
University of New Haven
300 Boston Post Rd. West Haven, CT 06516

Generally, never give out your information if you did not initiate the call. You can call the actual company if you think it may have been a real call. For example, If you think the bank may be calling you about something, hang up, and then find the real phone number for the bank and call them to inquire if there is a problem with your account.
There is a scam and fraud guide on the Public Safety page in myCharger. You will find it helpful to read.

Stay safe and well!

Kathy Kautz de Arango

Disclaimer

What I share in UIS Hot Topics are my opinions and thoughts on particular issues relevant to international students. Please do not consider what I say to be actual legal advice because I am not an attorney and each case must be advised individually. If you have need of actual legal advice, you can find an immigration attorney near you at www.aialawyer.com. Nonetheless, I have been a P/DSO for over 20 years, so at least I surmise from an experienced perspective. Each person has a unique situation, and I would likely advise one student differently than another, but hopefully, this blog will be helpful to you in some way.



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