

Financial Aid Scams

When budgeting for college, money can be tight, financial aid scammers only worsen already stressful situations. Applying for loans, scholarships, and financial aid packages can be confusing for some, often times enough scammers will take advantage of this and prey on the vulnerable. Financial aid scammers are tied to identity theft, fraud, and illegitimate monetary charges for services that are otherwise free.

Financial scammers are known to use these strategies:

1. **High Pressure Seminars:** This scam usually comes in the form of a confident presenter using fear as a tactic to pressure students into believing they are the only way they'll be able to pay for college. They will make false statements about the difficulties of obtaining financial aid, and match the participants with an adviser in order to influence the students into paying large fees.
2. **Wrong Websites:** FAFSA forms are free to submit on <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>, however scammers can give prospective students wrong links that appear to be legitimate. These links often contain typos and applications are accompanied by fees. Remember, it doesn't cost anything to submit an application for financial aid.
3. **Fees for Free Services:** Mentioned above scammers will charge people under the guise of helping them to fill out and submit financial aid applications. They lie about it being too confusing and complex for the average person to do on their own.
4. **Phishing Attempts:** When scammers attempt to take advantage of people they can ask them for their information in order to "help" them fill out applications. These offers can seem legitimate; however, these thieves are after your personal information. Be suspicious when these organizations ask for social security numbers, bank account information, and driver's license numbers this can directly lead to identity theft.

Remember, the University will **never** ask for login information, financial, or personally identifiable information via email.

What to do if you are a victim of one of these scams

1. Contact your local police department, and file a report.
2. Contact the ITS Service Center (716) 673-3407 so they can potentially notify the campus community as needed.
3. Depending on the nature of the scam, check your personal accounts for any suspicious activity (e.g., identity theft).

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