

Recognize and Avoid Student Job Scams

There is a growing trend in job (and internship) scams targeting college students. Fake job postings abound in unsolicited emails and in online job listing sites especially on social media. These unsolicited emails typically come in the form of [phishing](#) attacks or SPAM. Fake jobs can be attempts to steal your personal information or steal money. Job scams can also get you entangled in criminal activity, so be very cautious. Jobs that sound too good to be true should raise a red flag for anyone. Some job scams are easy to spot while others appear to be legitimate especially if they seem to be coming from a [fredonia.edu](#) email address. Unfortunately, scammers are able to “spoof” email addresses so that their emails “appear” to be coming from a legitimate University email ([fredonia.edu](#)) account when they are actually coming from the scammer’s email account.

So how do you know whom to trust and what to do should you fall for one of these scams? You can start with these basic guidelines to avoid a potential scam.

Guidelines to recognize and avoid job scams

- Never respond to a job or internship offer from an employer claiming to be working with or for the University without checking first with the Career Development Office (CDO) at careers@fredonia.edu or (716) 673-3327. The Career Development Office (CDO) screens all organizations and companies that post internships and job opportunities for Fredonia students.
- Never give out your personally identifiable information, such as your social security or bank account number over email or phone.
- Never take cashier’s checks or money orders as a form of payment. Fake checks are common and the bank where you cash it will hold you accountable.
- Never cash a check that comes with “extra” money. Scammers send checks that require you to deposit a check at your bank, withdraw the “extra” money as cash, and then deposit that cash elsewhere. The check will bounce and you will be held accountable.
- Never wire funds via Western Union, MoneyGram, or any other service to a prospective employer unless you screen them thoroughly.
- Never apply for jobs listed by someone far away or in another country unless you screen them thoroughly.
- Never agree to a background check unless you have thoroughly screen the prospective employer.
- Never apply for a job that is emailed to you out of the blue unless you have thoroughly screened the prospective employer.
- Be cautious of exaggerated claims of possible earnings or profits.
- Beware when money is required up front for a job (e.g., application fee).
- Be leery when the job posting claims “no experience necessary.”
- Research the employer to ensure they are authentic. Do they have a reputable website or professional references? Is the job listing you want to apply for also on their main career page? Contact the [Better Business Bureau](#) to determine the legitimacy of the company.
- Meet face-to-face with a potential employer if possible. An in-person interview or informal chat over coffee will help you determine the employer’s intentions.
 - Be sure to choose a public place to meet, tell someone where you are going, and bring your cell phone, just in case.
- Be skeptical if the job posting does not indicate the company name, comes from an email address that doesn’t match the company name, does not give the employer contact information—title of person sending the email, company address, phone number, etc., offers to pay a large amount for almost no work, offers you a job without ever interacting with you, or asks you to pay an application fee.
- No legitimate employer will send payment in advance and ask the employee to send a portion of it back.
- Often job and organizational descriptions that are scams have typos in them. Check to see that the email domain provided matches the email domain of the hiring organization (e.g., [@fredonia.edu](#) is correct though not necessarily legitimate, but [@fradonia.edu](#) or [@fredonia.com](#) would clearly be fakes).
- Trust your instincts. If a job sounds too good to be true, it is likely a scam.

Common job scams targeting college students

- Mystery shoppers
- Working from home
- Repackaging or shipping from home
- Issuing checks/check processing from home
- Model/talent agencies
- [Pyramid sales schemes](#)
- Assembling crafts/products
- A variety of scams where a student is asked to pay for certification, training materials, or equipment with promise of reimbursement

Example of a job scam scenario

A student applies for an online job posted by a scammer from out-of-state or out-of-country. When payday comes around, the scammer tells the student they will receive a cashier’s check, however, the value of the check will be more than what the student has earned. The scammer offers to “trust” the student and asks that they repay the difference with a wire transfer. The student cashes the cashier’s check and then wires the scammer the balance. Even though the bank cashes the check, it is later discovered to be a fake and does not clear. The student now owes the bank the full value of the check.

Report suspicious employment opportunities

If you have concerns about the legitimacy of a job or internship posting, please contact the [Fredonia Career Development Office](#) at (716) 673-3327 or careers@fredonia.edu. You can also utilize the Better Business Bureau or the Federal Trade Commission to see if any complaints have been lodged against the company.

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 Career Development Office so they can potentially notify the campus community as needed.
3. [File a complaint](#) online with the Federal Trade Commission. Also, check out their video on [how to report scam](#) and more [ways to avoid fraud and a voiding job scams](#).
4. File a complaint online with the FBI’s [Internet Crime Complaint Center](#).
5. Depending on the nature of the scam, check your personal accounts for any suspicious activity (e.g., identity theft).

NOTE: Faculty and staff should forward all suspected student employment and internship opportunities to the Career Development Office (email careers@fredonia) so that they can screen them appropriately.
For more information, please contact the Career Development Office (716) 673-3327, Information Security Office (716) 673-4725 or University Police Department (716) 673-3333.

References:

Federal Trade Commission (FTC): <https://www.ftc.gov/>

Internet Crime Complaint Center: <https://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx>

Better Business Bureaus (BBB): <https://www.bbb.org/en/us>

University of Colorado Boulder (Office of Student Financial Aid): <https://www.colorado.edu/studentemployment/resources/recognize-avoid-job-scams>

Case Western Reserve University: <http://thedaily.case.edu/utech-provides-tips-help-students-avoid-falling-fake-student-job-scams/>



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