

Welcome to the SeaComm Federal Credit Union podcast. Your guide to financial information and what's going on at your credit union.

### **College Student Scams to Watch Out For**

January started a brand new semester meaning thousands of students are going back to college, some of them starting the second half of their first year. It's important to let them know that there are scams targeting these young adults who might not have experience being on their own. The crooks and scammers are counting on that inexperience to take advantage of college students. Look out for these scams to make sure some of the best years of your life stay that way.

#### **Financial Aid/Scholarship Scams**

College is expensive, so financial aid and scholarships can be the difference between attending the school of your dreams, or not. Each year, high school seniors fill out applications for different scholarships and financial aid hoping to receive some assistance. One important thing to remember is that applying for these things is absolutely one hundred percent free. Whether it's Free Application for Federal Student Aid, also known as FAFSA, or a specific scholarship, there is no cost. If you see an ad for a scholarship and it costs to apply, it's fake. If a company says they'll fill out your financial aid paperwork for a processing fee, it's fake. What that company is actually doing is taking your money for filling out a free form. Another danger with that is the scammer might use false information on the form to get you more money, which could get you fined up to \$20,000 and possibly time in jail.

#### **Textbook Scams**

An expensive part of any college budget will be textbooks. Students typically purchase them at the school's bookstore, or from an online company that sells the books, but those options tend to be expensive. Finding less costly alternatives will be on top of mind for students, and scammers know this. They will use the ads on social media and create websites that look like they sell books. The goal is to get students to spend their money on books that never actually come. They'll make excuses and blame shipping issues, meanwhile, the money is long gone. It's very important to verify who you're purchasing your textbooks from. The Better Business Bureau is a great source to validate a company.

#### **Credit Card Scams**

College students have become one of the main demographics hit by credit card scams. A legitimate credit card company might reach out, but the terms and interest rates are not very good. If you haven't dealt with credit cards before you might not know to look at the fine print. Another scam involves a fake credit card company contacting you in order to commit identity theft. You shouldn't respond to any emails or text messages when it comes to credit cards. If you feel you need your own, think about a SeaComm Visa® Platinum. You can earn points and cash back with every dollar spent. The interest rates are low which benefit you in the long run! If you use it correctly, a credit card can be a great tool to improve your credit score, while scammers will only hurt it.

#### **Social Media Scams**

Experian states that 98 percent of college students are active on social media. While the ability to connect to friends and family so easily is great, it also leads them to be susceptible to scammers on whichever platform they use. Be careful of who you add as a friend and the different pages you "like." Scammers can easily create false profiles that look like your friends or family. They also start up pages that seem to be connected to the

school or campus organizations. These fake pages can be used to collect personal information and put your identity at risk. If you're on social media it might be a good idea to search yourself. This will allow you to see if there are any fake profiles that are supposed to be you. Report them and any fake profile or page you see as spam.

**Stay informed with SeaComm's Fraud Center.** As your credit union, we want to keep you and your finances safe. That's why we created our Fraud Center, which includes valuable resources to help educate and empower our members to protect their assets and identities. For more information on security and fraud visit [www.seacomm.org/securitycenter.html](http://www.seacomm.org/securitycenter.html) and click on Fraud Center.

That's it for this edition of the SeaComm Federal Credit Union podcast. Thanks for joining us!