



OFFICE of PRIVATE SECTOR

ACADEMIA ENGAGEMENT REPORT (AER)

ACADEMIA

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Fraudulent Employment Scheme Targeting University Students with the Potential for Causing Financial Loss

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The FBI San Francisco Field Office, in coordination with the Office of Private Sector (OPS), prepared this AER to inform academia partners of a fraudulent employment scheme targeting university students. The purpose of this AER is to alert universities of this scheme to help prevent additional students from becoming victims. As part of this fraudulent employment scheme, criminal actors, purporting to be professors, contact students and offer employment opportunities. The fraudulent employment scheme leaves students who are seeking employment and/or career enhancing opportunities vulnerable to financial loss.

- In June 2022, a Massachusetts university student was contacted by an unknown individual believed to be a university professor offering a role working on a project as a research assistant. After the student accepted the job, the student received a check via email to pay for job supplies and subsequently deposited the check. The student received instructions to send half the amount of the check to an account via an electronic payment. After sending the funds, the student was directed to send the second half of the amount of the check to a different account. The student did not send the second amount of the check as instructed. The student also reported the deposited check was returned.
- In April 2022, a California university reported that students at the university had been defrauded by fake job listings. In these job listings, individuals pretended to be professors and solicited gift cards from the students.
- In April 2022, an Illinois university student received an email advertising a remote research assistant position open to any student at the university. After the student accepted the job, the student received a check via email to pay for supplies. The student was directed to send the amount of the check to an email address via a payment app. After the student sent the amount of the check, the bank determined this was fraud.
- In July 2021, an individual purporting to be a university professor contacted two California university students via email regarding virtual research assistant jobs at the university. The students received emails, purportedly from the university's human resources department, verifying the jobs. After the students accepted the jobs, the students were directed to purchase items needed for the positions. The students were told to send funds to a sales representative via an electronic payment system. Both students received checks via email from what appeared to be a legitimate university payroll accountant; however, the bank determined the checks were fake.







The FBI recommends alerting students and professors to be wary of unsolicited job opportunities. If offered a job from a university employee, the student should contact that university employee through official channels. Additional tips can be found on the Federal Trade Commission's website at <https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/job-scams>. If your students, professors, or other university employees have been a victim of this scam, please report the incident to the Internet Crime Complaint Center (www.ic3.gov) and local law enforcement.

OPS's Information Sharing and Analysis Unit disseminated this AER. Direct any requests and questions to your FBI Private Sector Coordinator at your local FBI Field Office: <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices>.



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