

## Beware of Financial Aid Fraud and Scholarship Scams

The cost of college education continues to rise and college-bound students and their parents are seeking any financial assistance they can get making them particularly vulnerable to financial aid fraud and/or scholarship scams. These are designed to get consumers to disclose personal information or to pay unnecessary fees.

The Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation advises high school students and their parents to be on the lookout for the warning signs of scam:

### Scam

1. The scholarship is guaranteed.
2. We do all the work for you.
3. You have to pay a fee.
4. Your credit card or bank information is requested.
5. Unsolicited opportunities.

### Reality

- Legitimate scholarship sponsors will not guarantee scholarship money. You must apply for scholarships or grants yourself. Legitimate scholarship sponsors do not charge fees. Protect your identity - do not give out personal information. You've been informed that you've won an award that you did not apply for.

### If you think you've received an offer that's fraudulent:

- Research the organization with the Better Business Bureau ([www.bbb.com](http://www.bbb.com)).
- Report the information to the Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation (888-283-3757 or [www.state.ma.us/consumer](http://www.state.ma.us/consumer)), the Attorney General's Office (617-727-8400 or [www.mass.gov/ago](http://www.mass.gov/ago)) or the National Fraud Information Center (800-876-7060 or [www.fraud.org](http://www.fraud.org)).

### If you think you are a victim of a financial aid fraud:

- Contact your bank and/or credit card company, explain the situation, and request that your account be closed or monitored.
- Report the fraud to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of the Inspector General (email [oig.hotline@ed.gov](mailto:oig.hotline@ed.gov) or call 800-647-8733),
- Federal Trade Commission ([www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams](http://www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams) or call 877-382-4357);
- National Fraud Information Center ([www.fraud.org](http://www.fraud.org), or call 800-876-7060).

### For more information about legitimate scholarships, financial aid information, advice, and tools:

- FinAid - [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)
- FastWeb - [www.fastweb.monster.com](http://www.fastweb.monster.com)
- National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) - [www.nasfaa.org](http://www.nasfaa.org)
- For more information about scholarship scams and what to avoid:
- U.S. Depart. of Education's Office of Inspector General - [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/misused/sscams.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/misused/sscams.html)
- FinAid - [www.finaid.org/scholarships/scams.phtml](http://www.finaid.org/scholarships/scams.phtml)
- College Board - [www.collegeboard.com/student/pay/scholarships-and-aid/408.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/pay/scholarships-and-aid/408.html)