July 18, 2013,

Dear International Students,

I’m writing to make you aware of a very sophisticated scam which is targeting international students. Unfortunately, one UB international student just lost almost $2,000 in this scam. She received a phone call from someone claiming to be from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The phone number matched the USCIS toll-free number. The caller had the student’s name and date of birth, and could confirm that an H-1B petition had been filed on her behalf.

The caller claimed that the student had not filled out her I-94 card correctly, which had raised immigration issues, and that she would be deported in 24 hours and not be able to return to the U.S. for 25 years. The caller spoke in a very intimidating manner and pretended to consult with other immigration authorities during the call. He referenced certain numbers on her immigration documents, which he claimed could only be corrected by traveling abroad immediately.

When the student said she could not travel abroad immediately, the caller pretended to make arrangements with other immigration authorities for her immigration documents to be corrected if she paid large sums of money through Green Dot MoneyPak. The caller then said that she needed to go to the airport to get her new Alien Number registered, which also required paying $994. He intimidated her for four hours on the phone. Unfortunately, the student sent $1,988 to USCIS.

AS ALWAYS, BE ALERT TO SCAMS. IF ANYONE CALLS YOU AND CLAIMS TO HAVE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR IMMIGRATION STATUS, BE SUSPICIOUS. ASK FOR THE CALLER’S CONTACT INFORMATION (E.G. NAME, PHONE NUMBER, E-MAIL ADDRESS, MAILING ADDRESS). THEN CALL OUR OFFICE AND REPORT WHAT HAPPENED. NEVER FOLLOW PHONE INSTRUCTIONS TO SEND MONEY. NO U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCY OPERATES IN THAT WAY SO YOU CAN BE SURE IT IS A SCAM.

Best regards,
Ellen Dussourd