

Caution about Scholarship Search Offers

Nov. 4, 2008

The Student Financial Aid Office has received phone calls recently from families about an unsolicited letter they received which could possibly be a scholarship scam.

A BGSU student brought us a copy of a letter addressed to "(Name of student) or Parents of" from "College Financial Advisory", 825 College Boulevard, San Diego, CA. The letter has pre-printed "Bowling Green State University-Firelands" at the bottom and lists a "Student Profile Number" assigned to the student. The number is configured in the same format as a Social Security Number, xxx-xx-xxxx. The "College Financial Advisory" encourages the family to send \$49 along with a "Student Aid Profile Form" to apply for additional aid.

According to "College Financial Advisory's" website, the organization only offers customer service between the hours of 10am-2pm Pacific Time. The website was registered by Armond Aria, who gave his phone number as (858)458-0101 and email address as armond3332001@yahoo.com

Our office urges students and parents to be cautious about sending personal financial information to "College Financial Advisory" or any other organization which sends you unsolicited direct mail marketing materials. **The Student Financial Aid Office at BGSU has never given any information to this organization, nor do we endorse their services.** We have received no evidence that their services are effective or worth the \$49 that you must pay to use them.

The Student Financial Services Office warns students to be cautious of scholarship search firms that have any of these elements:

- You have to pay a fee
- Offers a Money-Back Guarantee
- Requires Credit Card/Bank Account Information
- Offers Exclusive Information
- Promises to replace loans with grant if you pay a processing fee

Should you have questions about scholarships or other student aid programs, the staff at the Student Financial Aid Office at Bowling Green State University are available to help from 8am – 5pm M-F. We can also be reached at (419)372-2651, or via our secure email service, "Ask SFA" available on our webpage: <http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/sfa/>

REPORT YOUR CONCERNS TO:

National Fraud Information Center (NFIC)

File an online complaint at www.fraud.org, call their toll-free hotline at 1-800-876-7060

Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

The FTC has an online complaint form at www.ftc.gov/scholarshipcams and a hotline at 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357; teletype for the hearing impaired: 1-866-653-4261).

US Postal Inspection Service (USPIS)

For complaints involving mail fraud, visit <http://postalinspectors.uspis.gov/> (You must have an address for the organization to file a complaint)

Call the Postal Crime Hotline at 1-800-654-8896

There is no ED program to replace loans with grants. There is no processing fee to obtain grants from ED.

The Department of Education offers this advice to students who think they may be victims of fraud:

- Report the fraud to ED's Office of Inspector General hotline at 1-800-MIS-USED (1-800-647-8733) or oig.hotline@ed.gov. Special agents in the Office of Inspector General investigate fraud involving federal education dollars.

For more information, follow this link:

<http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/lsa.jsp>