LEARN THE SIGNS OF COMMON SCAMS
Scammers (thieves trying to trick victims) are targeting students in Southern California. Scammers posing as local police officers, agents of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), travel companies, apartment leasing companies, and immigration agencies – such as the Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and U.S. Embassies abroad are contacting students and demanding money and/or personal information.

Never provide personal information or money to anyone who has contacted you by phone, email or the internet claiming you have violated your immigration status or owe taxes and must transfer money through Western Union, or other companies, in order to rectify your immigration status.

Avoid making cash transactions with strangers. Most scams are achieved by a stranger approaching you with either a sad story or a business offer. They seek to gain money from you in exchange for something that may not be true. If you don’t know the person desiring to make a cash transaction, DPS recommends that you request a DPS officer to witness the transaction. Or, ask the person to meet with you at the DPS station to make the transaction. Most likely, the stranger would not be comfortable with an officer present.

If you are contacted by such persons, do not reveal any personal information. Ask for their contact information and report the incident immediately to the USC Department of Public Safety and or your local law enforcement agency.

Beware of Tax Scams!
Do not fall victim to scammers who call and say they are with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)! More and more phone scams have been happening in which people will call and threaten you with police arrest or deportation if you do not pay them.

Please be advised, even if you do owe taxes…

- The IRS will never call and demand immediate payment over the phone.
- The IRS will never threaten or intimidate you, demand payment with a prepaid debit card, or ask for your credit card or debit card number over the phone.
- The IRS will never threaten to call the police or immigration agents if you don’t pay.

If you or a fellow student receive a call like this, report it to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration online or by calling 800-366-4484. Also, report it online to the Federal Trade Commission.
Extortion Scams
Scammers are contacting students via various online social media and chat platforms. They deceive students into believing they are entering into a consensual online sexual encounter and secretly record them. Then they threaten to make the video public unless the student sends the individual a substantial sum of money via Western Union or MoneyGram. This is a criminal act known as extortion and is a serious crime. Scams (criminal acts accomplished through trick or deception) such as these can be avoided. Do not respond to friend requests from complete strangers. Never send strangers money or give them your credit card information.

If you have been the victim of this type of crime, the University of Southern California encourages you to report the crime to DPS by calling (213) 740-6000 or to the Los Angeles Police Department by calling (877) 275-5273.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE BEEN DECEIVED?
If you believe that you are a victim of theft accomplished by trick and deception, please notify the USC Department of Public Safety at:

University Park Campus  (213) 740-6000
Health Sciences campus  (323) 442-1200

If you are in immediate danger, call the LAPD at 9-1-1 or DPS at (213) 740-4321 for UPC or (323)442-1000 for HSC.

If you have any questions regarding this crime alert, please contact the on duty Watch Commander in the Department of Public Safety at (213) 740-5523.