



In this issue

Alert: Unmasking the
Recent Email Scam

In our unwavering commitment to safeguarding our school community, we are spotlighting a recent scam email to ensure you are armed with knowledge and caution.

⚠ Anatomy of the Scam

An email, cleverly masquerading as a benevolent offer from an alleged alumna, Mrs. Smith, promises recipients high-value items completely free of charge. The trick? A seemingly inconspicuous "shipping fee."

🔍 Recognizing the Red Flags:

1. **Unexpected Generosity:** The email tells of an alumnus suddenly deciding to give away valuable items for free. While it is not impossible for people to be generous, the sheer value and variety of items listed here are suspicious.
2. **Free Items, Paid Shipping:** One classic scam technique is to offer something valuable for free but then ask for payment for something ancillary, like shipping. In many cases, the scammer will simply take the shipping fee and disappear without sending any items.
3. **Non-Institutional Email Address:** The email address provided (hotmail.com) is not tied to any institution or official domain. If the email was legitimately from an alumnus and sanctioned by the school, it would likely come from or be backed by an official email domain related to the institution.
4. **Sense of Urgency:** The email emphasizes the need for a "quick and urgent response." This is a common tactic to prevent the recipient from taking the time to think critically or consult with others about the offer's legitimacy.
5. **General Audience:** The email is addressed to "students and staff members." Legitimate communications about such valuable gifts would likely be more specific and targeted.
6. **Lack of Verification:** There is no way to verify the authenticity of this message, as no official channels, contacts, or references are provided beyond the hotmail address. Legitimate offers of this kind would typically come with more transparency and means of verification.
7. **Too Good to Be True:** As the saying goes, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. A grand piano, a guitar associated with Eric Clapton, and other valuable items being given away for free is very unlikely.
8. **Non-specific Details:** The institution is only mentioned as "SMUS" without further details. Often, scammers use templates where they can plug in various institution names to send out in bulk.

Defensive Tactics:

1. **Double-check:** Before jumping into any offers, especially involving money, it is prudent to verify its legitimacy. An extra phone call or email to a known contact can save a lot of trouble.
2. **No Unknown Links:** With today's technology, creating a carbon copy of a legitimate website is child's play for scammers. Approach unfamiliar links with caution; it is better to manually type in known web addresses.
3. **Say No to Wire Transfers:** These are a scammer's dream! Irreversible and hard to trace, once you have wired money, it is almost always gone for good.
4. **Inspect Email Headers:** Scammers are crafty, making it appear as though an email is coming from a trusted source. Delving into email headers can unveil its true origin.
5. **Guard Your Info:** Personal and financial data are gold mines for malicious actors. Handle them with care, revealing them only when absolutely certain of the recipient's integrity.

Suspecting Foul Play? Here is What to Do:

1. **Silence is Golden:** If your inner alarm bells are ringing, cease all communication. It is the first step to prevent escalation.
2. **Avoid Unknown Attachments:** Received attachments from a suspicious source? Stay clear! They might contain malicious software designed to infiltrate or harm your system.
3. **Run a Security Scan:** Update your antivirus software and conduct a comprehensive scan on your system. Regular scans can catch potential threats early.
4. **Monitor Your Online Presence:** Every so often, take a moment to check your online profiles and presence. Scammers may misuse your information or even impersonate you.
5. **Update Credentials:** If you have inadvertently shared or suspect a leak of your info, change your passwords without delay, prioritizing accounts linked to sensitive information.
6. **Enable Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA):** It is a simple step with significant implications. By enabling MFA on platforms that support it, you are putting an added safeguard against unauthorized access.
7. **Educate and Share:** Keeping colleagues informed creates a more robust defense network. Share details about potential threats, ensuring the entire team remains vigilant.
8. **Inform:** Our IT department isn't merely about fixing computers. They are a frontline defense against cyber threats. Ensure they are in the loop about any suspicious activities or communications you have encountered.

Remember:

In the digital age, vigilance is our strongest weapon. If an offer feels too good to be true, it probably is. We are a community, and together we will fortify our defenses.

Attention Grabber

All caps and exclamation marks. Formal emails do not communicate loudly.

Spoofed Email

Both sender and receiver email addresses are the same.

From: R [REDACTED] <R [REDACTED]@smus.ca>
Sent: Friday, August 25, 2023 6:15 PM
To: R [REDACTED] <R [REDACTED]@smus.ca>
Subject: ALUMNI GIVING AWAY !!!

Inconsistent Formatting

Poor spacing, bad grammar, inconsistent punctuations.

Seriously?!

Eric's Clapton guitar for free (but only costs shipping)

Dear students and staff members of SMUS ,

One of our Alumni, Mrs [REDACTED] Smith is currently downsizing and she's generously offering to give away her late husband's cherished possessions. Among the items available are a neatly used

(PlayStation 5, Apple MacBook Pro, Violin, a 2014 Yamaha baby grand Piano, Eric Clapton's 1939 Martin 000-42 Guitar, Canon EOS 800D Camera).

To express your interest in these items, we kindly request that you contact Mrs Smith .She can be reached at [s\[REDACTED\]22@hotmail.com](mailto:s[REDACTED]22@hotmail.com) for quick and urgent response

It is important to emphasize that these items are being offered for free, with no pickup available. Instead, Mrs Smith is offering to have the items delivered directly to your home.

To facilitate this, a shipping fee will be required, regardless of the destination.

We encourage those interested to reach out to Mrs Smith [s\[REDACTED\]22@hotmail.com](mailto:s[REDACTED]22@hotmail.com) promptly, as these items are sure to find new homes quickly. Don't miss this opportunity to acquire these remarkable pieces.

Thank you for your attention.

Urgency

Emphasizes need to respond quickly.

Missing signature

Signatures are usually missing or generic and don't provide much information of the sender.