



Spring 1-8-2015

Winthrop Students Warned By Campus Police About Phone Scam

Winthrop University

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Recommended Citation

Winthrop University, "Winthrop Students Warned By Campus Police About Phone Scam" (2015). *Winthrop News 2015*. 1.

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Winthrop Students Warned By Campus Police About Phone Scam

Quick Facts

- Campus Police Chief Frank Zebedis said his office has received five complaints about suspicious calls this week from students or parents of students.
- Zebedis warned students not to give out any personal information or to agree to pay any fines or make payments over the telephone. Students who have outstanding balances should contact Winthrop's Cashiers or Records and Registration offices.



Frank Zebedis

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – **Campus Police** have warned students about a phone scam where callers are pretending to be university staff members asking for outstanding bills to be paid over the telephone.

Chief Frank Zebedis said his office has received **five complaints** about suspicious calls this week from students or parents of students.

The callers, some of whom have a foreign accent, identify themselves as Winthrop University employees and then tell the students that their classes are being cancelled, transcripts held and degrees voided for outstanding balances. The callers then advise the students that they are being investigated for a variety of things such as fraud, and if the student wants to talk further, they can be switched to an “investigator.”

The callers then tell the students that fines can be paid over the phone to clear the matter up.

Zebedis warned students not to give out any personal information or to agree to pay any fines or make payments over the telephone. Students who have outstanding balances should contact Winthrop's **Cashiers** or **Records and Registration offices**.

Zebedis also said the **Rock Hill Police Department** and the **Joint Terrorism Task Force** in Columbia have been informed and are investigating. Zebedis is grateful for the students and parents who have reported the calls.

He noted that according to the **Joint Terrorism Task Force**, a similar phone scam occurred last fall at the **University of South Carolina** in Columbia as well as at the **USC Aiken campus** and at universities across the Southeast. Most callers spoofed the local police department numbers in those areas so the caller ID number looked like it came from the police departments. In the Winthrop cases, the calls appear on caller ID to come from the **Rock Hill Police Department**.

Zebedis said the callers appear to be using student telephone numbers from university online directories. No other information is known to be compromised, according to Zebedis and Winthrop information technology staffers.

On **Winthrop's online directory**, students are given the option to remove their phone number, address, or entire entry from the online directory. They can also contact the **Office of Records and Registration** to put additional privacy controls in place on their student records.

Campus Police offered these guidelines:

- If someone you don't know asks for money over the phone, do NOT comply.

- Never give personal information over the telephone, particularly date of birth, Social Security number or financial information
- If the caller identifies themselves as law enforcement, get a name and phone number to call back and verify the intention/information
- If the call back number is fake and part of a scam, call local police immediately
- Do not engage in a lengthy conversation with the caller
- If the calls continue, keep a detailed log of the times, topic and demands, then provide police with the information. This will aid in the investigation.

For more information, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at 803/323-2404 or e-mail her at longshawj@winthrop.edu.

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