

Drake, Kelly N

From: Mark A. Hussey, Interim President <president@tamu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, April 01, 2015 11:24 AM
To: Drake, Kelly N
Subject: Personal Identity and Possible Fraudulent Activity Information

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

April 1, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: Faculty, Staff and Students
Texas A&M University

FROM: Mark A Hussey
Interim President, Texas A&M University

RE: Personal Identity and Possible Fraudulent Activity Information

This communication is a follow up to my March 27, 2015 memo to all faculty and addresses two issues including the inadvertent online posting of social security numbers (SSN's) for faculty and graduate students who taught during the fall of 2014 and reports that have been submitted to the provost's office concerning the unauthorized use of SSN's and other personal information by others to submit fraudulent income tax filings.

With regard to the on-line posting of SSN's we have completed our internal investigation of this incident and concluded that this release resulted from the failure of at least two employees in a unit under the provost's office to follow established internal security procedures. Texas A&M University System Audit will also be conducting an investigation of this incident as well to provide an independent assessment of what internal controls were not followed along with what actions they recommend be taken. In the meantime I want to assure you that we have already implemented additional security measures in the office that made the mistake to insure that an incident like this does not occur again. Additionally I have asked Scott Honea to provide my office with additional security measures that might be implemented more broadly across the university to reduce the potential for an accidental release of SSN's and other personal information from occurring in the future.

The report by faculty of the use of SSN's and other personal information to submit fraudulent IRS income tax filings is equally if not more disturbing. Unfortunately at this time I can neither confirm nor deny that these events are related as some faculty have contacted the provost's office to report fraudulent IRS income tax filings who did not teach during the fall of 2014 and whose SSN's were not released. However I cannot deny that some (or additional) of the fraudulent tax returns may eventually be tied to our inadvertent release of SSN's.

Please note that while Texas A&M cannot directly engage on behalf of an individual who has experienced identity theft, regardless of how the personal information was obtained, I do believe that the university needs to provide support and resources to those who have been affected by the growing identity theft crisis in our country.

On March 11, 2015 letters were sent to every individual whose information was part of the data we accidentally released. We are extending the monitoring service that we are providing at no cost to them to two years. We are also listing additional resources that all individuals can use to help them take action if they are the victims of identity fraud.

Victims of a fraudulent tax return should do the following:

- Report the incident to the University Police Department. Our UPD is equipped to handle these incidents and have direct communication with governmental agencies that assist them with these cases. We notified UPD of the two issues after reports of fraudulent tax returns were brought to our attention and they have spoken with the IRS about the situation. You can visit their website at upd.tamu.edu or call (979) 845-2345.
- If you suspect your social security number may have been compromised, the [Internal Revenue Service](#) has detailed information available on their website to assist you. The IRS has also provided specific information in [publication 5027, Identity Theft Information for Taxpayers](#). Included in this one page publication, you can find the link to IRS Form 14039, Identity Theft Affidavit that can be completed and returned to the IRS. This will place the IRS on alert for questionable activity on your account.
- Report the incident to Texas A&M University. You may be eligible for additional one-time resources in recovering from identity theft related to fraudulent tax returns. Contact the Office of the Provost at provost@tamu.edu or (979) 845-4016.
- Request release time from your supervisor at work or an excused absence from your professor in order to deal with the issue of your personal identity being compromised or a fraudulent tax return.

I have also asked our information technology security and human resources departments to work together to develop an educational program that can educate and assist faculty, staff and students in dealing with the widespread issue of identity theft. That program will begin as soon as possible and no later than the fall of 2015.

I understand the anxiety this situation has caused many people and their families, and the frustration and stress that the individuals dealing with identity theft have while trying to maintain their focus on work and study. We have tried to take steps to minimize, and hopefully eliminate, such errors in judgment from happening again. We will continue to explore ways that the university might provide additional benefits to our employees such as access to affordable identity theft protection for everyone, or institutional rules and procedures to aid individuals who are dealing with criminal identity theft.

To help us monitor and continue to address this situation in a timely manner please continue to share any individual concerns directly with the Office of the Provost at provost@tamu.edu or (979) 845-4016.