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Reaching HIGHER

Wait! Don't Send the Pic!

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This certainly wasn't my favorite thing to write. Many of you will probably wonder why I wrote it at all. I can promise you I would not have taken the time if I didn't *really* care about you all – and if it wasn't an extremely common issue. Let's dive in.



With the return of students to our vibrant campus comes the return of individuals looking to take advantage of them. This happens in many ways, including theft, scams, and extortion. Thieves often take bicycles or laptops. An adept con artist may pose as your boss or friend and ask you to pick up a bunch of gift cards and send the codes with a promise of future payment. I've even been the target of this one when our "Chief" [sent a bunch of us emails \(https://fb.watch/nGHlliCugy/\)](https://fb.watch/nGHlliCugy/) asking for us to send her gift card codes. She was delighted about all the Kwik Trip gift cards were delivered to her desk that day (only kidding).

Last year, we saw a substantial increase in one specific type of crime and it's uncomfortable to talk about. However, we are adults and it's worth trying to help keep you all safe, secure, and comfortable in the spaces you occupy. It usually goes something like this:

An alluring person will contact you on some sort of social media platform, perhaps posing as a fellow student. They'll strike up a conversation, flirt with you, share their vulnerabilities, and perhaps make some requests of you. One thing leads to another and intimate photos are exchanged. A perfectly acceptable thing for consenting adults to do – but then the problem starts.

This flirtatious, attractive person who you've just been exchanging pleasantries with will take on a new tone. They will demand payment. They will screenshot profiles of your friends, family, and employer and threaten to release your intimate photographs to them if you don't pay. If you do pay, it's more than likely they will demand more and more. **We**

aren't joking when we say folks around campus have lost many thousands of dollars to these incidents. The unfortunate reality is it is almost impossible for us to solve these cases given the anonymity of the internet. Use these tips to protect yourself.

- If you choose to exchange intimate images (consensually), ensure you are certain of the identity of the individual on the other end of your device.
- Avoid sending images which contain identifiable aspects of your identity (face, unique tattoos, background items, etc).
- Be skeptical of individuals who contact you on dating apps and seem overly willing to "jump right in."
- **If you do find yourself being extorted, immediately cease contact with the individual and block them on all platforms on which you've had contact. Do not send them any money. It is very rare that the individuals follow through on threats to send photographs.**
- **Seek help if you feel trapped, scared, or overwhelmed. UWPD is available 24/7 to help you with advice in these situations or to take reports. UHS and the Dean of Students office can also offer support if you feel victimized or vulnerable due to extortion.**

It's unfortunate that people will use the common desire to share intimate experiences with others to their advantage. This problem is pervasive and it leaves countless people in our community feeling violated and victimized every year. Take a little extra time this year to protect yourself and your friends and ensure that the relationships you build are grounded in trust, consent, and mutual respect.

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