We are writing to make you aware of an electronic mail scam, that is being directed at university staff and faculty members. This scam is currently being investigated by the Baltimore Police Department and Campus Safety and Security.

Emails from an unknown source are claiming to be university department heads or deans. The individuals then claim that they are in an important meeting and request a cell phone number from the recipient. A text message is then sent to that cell phone number, instructing the recipient to purchase gift cards from a local store. After purchasing the gift cards, the recipient is asked to photograph the numeric code on the back of the card and send it back via text. The originating email address attempts to indicate that it is an official Johns Hopkins account and may include the name of a university faculty member. If you receive such an email, do not respond. Instead, contact Johns Hopkins University Campus Safety and Security Investigations at 410-516-4600. The university would never ask faculty and staff to conduct any of these actions. Never provide any identifying or personal information to an unconfirmed source.

Unfortunately, criminals are attempting to take advantage of unsuspecting victims during the current situation. Other methods have been reported, including:

- Fake COVID-19 cures or at-home test kits for sale online. At this time, there is no cure, vaccination or home test kit for COVID-19.
- Phishing emails and phone calls purportedly from the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or similar organizations requesting personal information. These organizations will never ask for personal or financial information over the phone, via text message or through email.
- Text messages, phone calls and emails about federal relief checks. The official source for information is the Internal Revenue Service — details are here.
- Fraudulent donation requests for illegitimate or nonexistent charitable organizations. Do your homework when donating, and never give in cash, gift cards or wire transfers. If you wish to donate, please visit charitywatch.org/ to ensure you are working with a reputable charity.
- Counterfeit products and medical equipment, such as hand sanitizer, N95 respirator masks, eye goggles, face shields, protective gowns and gloves. Only purchase from trusted sources, and be aware of possible counterfeit products.

If you find yourself a victim of any these or any other fraudulent activities, please contact the Baltimore Police and/or Campus Safety and Security.