

Security Awareness: Security is everyone's responsibility.

In early May of this year, burglars broke into the Maryland home of a Veteran Affairs employee. One of the things they stole was a laptop; expensive, but replaceable. However, the laptop contained identity information (names, birthdays, social security numbers, etc.) for about 26 million veterans. The privacy of that information, and the peace of mind for the affected veterans, can never be replaced; their value, priceless.

This is an example of how the best "organization-wide" security measures can be bypassed through the actions of one individual – and in this case, an authorized individual. Taking home a database with identity information surely circumvented any controls (e.g., firewalls, anti-virus software, locked server rooms) that the VA may have put in place to protect such information.

Identity information is fast becoming, actually has become, the "golden egg", the most sought after prize by thieves. Consider this: if a person steals \$100 from you, well, you're out the \$100. If a person steals your identity he can continue to use that information to try to fraudulently get credit, buy things, etc. for an unlimited time period. Your birthday, Social Security Number, mother's maiden name, etc. don't change.

So what does this mean to you? As Hofstra employees, each of us has access, in one way or another, to data that might be considered sensitive, making us stewards of this data. Each of us has a responsibility, a duty if you will, to keep that data safe. Being aware of that responsibility, and the risks associated with where data is stored and how it can be compromised, is key to fulfilling that responsibility.

The thing to remember is that when you remove data from the Hofstra controlled environment, it is completely up to you to protect that data. If it's in the form of data stored on a CD, or a USB "thumb drive", or even on the hard drive of your computer at home, it is no longer protected by the Hofstra security umbrella; it's under your control, and your responsibility. The best way to protect data is to not take it off campus. If you must, treat it as if it were valuable currency.

So keep in mind, information security at Hofstra is everyone's responsibility. *We* are all part of the "chain" of security at Hofstra, and like any chain, it's only as strong as its weakest link. Be careful with the data under your control. You wouldn't want your identity information stolen, be careful not to let it happen to someone who's entrusted you with theirs.