



September 10, 2020

**Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem**  
Office of the Attorney General  
Consumer Protection and Antitrust Division  
1050 E Interstate Avenue, Suite 200  
Bismarck, ND 58503  
[NDAG@ND.GOV](mailto:NDAG@ND.GOV)

Dear Attorney General Stenehjem:

The Valley City State University Foundation, of Valley City, North Dakota, hereby wishes to inform you of a data security incident involving the Foundation's third-party service provider, Blackbaud, Inc. ("Blackbaud"). The Valley City State University Foundation ("the Foundation") is committed to answering any questions you may have about the data security incident, its response, and steps it has taken to prevent a similar incident in the future.

**1. Nature of security incident.**

On July 16, 2020, Blackbaud notified the Foundation that it had experienced a ransomware attack in May 2020. As part of that communication, Blackbaud informed the Foundation that it was able to detect and stop the attack prior to the deployment of ransomware, but its independent forensic investigation revealed that, prior to the attempted ransomware deployment, the threat actors successfully removed a copy of a database backup file containing a limited amount of the Foundation alumni and donor information. Blackbaud also informed the Foundation that all Social Security numbers, credit or debit card numbers, bank account information, and any usernames or passwords contained in the database were encrypted at rest and not at risk of compromise. After receipt of the notification from Blackbaud, the Foundation reviewed the unencrypted data fields in the impacted database and discovered that a limited number of alumni and donor names, dates of birth, addresses, phone numbers, marital status, and information relating to donations and wealth status were present in the impacted database and not encrypted by Blackbaud. Blackbaud also informed the Foundation that it paid the threat actors in exchange for assurances that any stolen data was deleted and received confirmation of the same after deletion.

**2. Number of North Dakota residents affected.**

The Foundation sent written notice to four thousand three hundred and thirty-four (4,334) North Dakota residents whose information was present in this Blackbaud database. The

September 2, 2020  
Page 2

notification letter was sent to the potentially affected individuals on August 31, 2020 via regular mail (a copy of the form notification letter is enclosed).

**3. Steps taken or plan to take relating to the incident.**

The Foundation is working with Blackbaud to obtain more information about this incident, how it occurred, what improvements Blackbaud has made to its network and systems, and whether Blackbaud can encrypt all database fields going forward.

**4. Contact information.**

The Valley City State University Foundation takes the security of personal information in its or its third-party service providers' control seriously and is committed to protecting the personal information of its community. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at [larry.robinson@vcsu.edu](mailto:larry.robinson@vcsu.edu).

Very truly yours,



Larry Robinson  
Executive Director for University Advancement

Enclosure



**VALLEY CITY**  
**STATE UNIVERSITY**

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION - PLEASE REVIEW CAREFULLY**

<<Addressee>>  
<<Addrline1>>  
<<Addrline2>>  
<<City>>, <<State>> <<Zip>>

August 27, 2020

Dear <<Addressee>>:

We are writing to let you know of a data security incident at a third-party service provider that may have involved some of your personal information. The Valley City State University Foundation ("Foundation") takes the protection and proper use of your information very seriously; therefore, we are contacting you to explain the incident and measures taken to protect your information. While we do not believe that this incident is reasonably likely to subject you to a risk of harm, we are providing you with this notice in an abundance of caution and transparency.

**What Happened?**

We were recently notified by one of our vendors, Blackbaud Inc., of a security incident in which they stopped a ransomware attack. However, prior to being locked out, the cybercriminals removed backup files from Blackbaud's platform, which hosted data for numerous colleges, universities, health care organizations, foundations, and other non-profit organizations around the world, including our Foundation. Blackbaud believes the breach occurred between February and May 2020. Blackbaud discovered the incident in May, conducted an investigation, and notified the Foundation on July 16, 2020.

**What Information Was Involved?**

After a careful review, we have determined that the information removed by the threat actor may have contained some of your information, which included your name, address and/or date of birth. **Please be assured that we do NOT store bank account or credit and debit card information, and therefore none of this information was part of the incident. Blackbaud has confirmed that the investigation found that no encrypted information, such as Social Security numbers or passwords, was accessible.** Also, Blackbaud worked with law enforcement and third-party experts and informed us that they paid the threat actor to ensure that the data was permanently destroyed.

**Risk and Continued Mitigation**

**According to Blackbaud, there is no evidence to believe that any data will be misused, disseminated, or otherwise made publicly available. Blackbaud indicates that it has hired a third-party team of experts, including a team of forensics accountants, to continuing monitoring for any such activity.** Unfortunately, these ransomware attacks are becoming more and more common. As a best practice in today's world of cybercrime, we recommend that you remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity or suspected identity theft to us and the proper law enforcement authorities. For more information on this incident, please visit [vcsualumni.org/news-events-publications/alumni-news.html](https://vcsualumni.org/news-events-publications/alumni-news.html)

**For More Information**

We remain fully committed to maintaining the privacy of personal information in our possession and have taken many precautions to safeguard it. We sincerely regret any inconvenience this incident may cause you. Should you have any further questions or concerns regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact us at [foundation.privacy@vcsu.edu](mailto:foundation.privacy@vcsu.edu) or by calling 701.845.7203.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry Robinson".

Larry Robinson  
Executive Director for University Advancement