“April showers bring May flowers.” It is a common saying in the US, and it really varies, depending upon in what part of the US you find yourself, but there really is some truth in it. Sometime from late March to early May, wherever you happen to be, all kinds of flowers will be popping out. Enjoy!

April also means that we are almost at the end of the spring semester. That means that there are a lot of immigration concerns that need your attention. If you are a current student, you received an email message from ISS back on March 17. If you have not yet addressed all of the concerns mentioned in that message, go back and look at it now. All those concerns are time-sensitive and need your attention.

If you are a newly admitted student and will be coming to UIS in the fall, I hope that you have already obtained your form I-20 and have made your visa appointment. There is a real backlog at the US embassies/consulates around the world. I understand that some may not have any appointments available until August. Any delay on your part getting that form I-20 and making your appointment could mean that you will need to defer your enrollment to spring 2022.

All of you will want to learn more about the many programming events that we have planned for the coming months. Don’t miss these learning and networking opportunities. We had to cancel the annual International Festival this past fall due to the pandemic. Recent improvements in the availability of the vaccines and our very good control of the virus on campus are pointing toward a full on-campus experience for fall. So, we are already making plans to have all our programming live and in person this fall, including the Festival. Talk with your friends and your student organizations now about how you can, once again, participate in that early in the fall semester.

Get ready for a great summer, whether you will be in the US or outside. There are better days ahead!

Rick
March Event

ST. PATRICK’S DAY EVENT

Thanks to everyone participated!

@UISIntlStudents @uisinternational
Students participated in activities of Chahar Shanbe Suri, which is a traditional fire jumping and egg decoration. These activities are typically in Iranian style festival (Nowruz) although Nowruz, Novruz, and Nauryz are celebrated in the widely spread area and with diversified styles.
I am from Nigeria. Nigeria is the Giant of Africa and one thing I love about is the variety in culture and wide range of talents and intelligence that flows through the land. My major is accounting. My dream job would be to become a professional Auditor. I speak English and Yoruba. I love going on adventures, sleeping, taking pictures, and shopping. I would like to travel to Canada, Kenya, and Turkey. A hashtag that best describes me is #Friendly. I don’t have a favorite movie but I do love any crime or action movie. My Favorite food in Nigeria is fried rice and fried chicken. I haven’t had a lot of American dishes but so far I like Chicken sandwiches, fries, mashed potatoes, and steak meals. The thing I like best about UIS is their prompt action regarding the Covid-19 pandemic is applauding. The spirit of community and togetherness is also lovely. Finally, I love how the student union and ISS still manages to organize activities despite being in the middle of a pandemic. I chose UIS for its cultural acceptance, internship opportunities, financial aid, and diversity in coursework. I currently work at the survey research office and I enjoy how well we are able to make an impact in the health sector. I have learned how to communicate with and tolerate people irrespective of their moods. Life after UIS will be me being a professional auditor and a certified accountant. A tip I have for new students is to be open to friendships and look out for career opportunities in every class.
The Islamic calendar follows the phases of the moon, commonly known as the lunar cycle. As a result, the Holy month of Ramadan falls approximately 10 days earlier each year in the Gregorian calendar. The Ramadan start date for 2021 is expected to begin on Monday 12th April 2021, following the sighting of the moon over Mecca. Lasting for 30 days, Ramadan will end on Tuesday 11th May 2021, with the celebratory days of Eid al-Fitr starting on Wednesday 12th May 2021 or Thursday 13th May 2021.

**Sawm** is one of the Five Pillars of Islam and the Arabic word for ‘fasting’. Although fasting occurs elsewhere in the Islamic calendar, it is primarily associated with the month of Ramadan for the month-long fast. Fasting is a key part of Ramadan and all those of able body and sound mind should fast during this Holy time. Sawm takes place every day from sunrise to sunset and our Ramadan timetable of daylight hours makes it easier to prepare. It is essential to familiarise yourself with the fasting times as anyone who is still eating their suhoor (pre-dawn meal), at the completion of the Fajr (call to prayer) is disqualified from that day's fast.

The sunset and the start of Maghrib prayers mark the end of the day's fast. It is traditional to break the fast by eating dates, a proven healthy snack, before iftar (evening meal) which is normally eaten with friends and family.

**Eid al-Fitr** meaning ‘Festival of Breaking the Fast’, is the important holiday that follows the month of Ramadan. Celebrated for up to three days, Eid al-Fitr does not begin until the sighting of the moon although is expected to start on Wednesday 12th May or Thursday 13th May 2021. It is a time for great feasts, the giving of gifts to children and spending time with those dearest to you. Check with your local mosque for confirmation of dates and any community activities that are taking place near you.

Before the end of Ramadan and the special Eid al-Fitr prayer, all Muslims should make Zakat al-Fitr, a charitable contribution traditionally of a staple food item. Intended to help those less fortunate to enjoy the celebration of Eid al-Fitr with their friends and loved ones, you can donate Zakat al-Fitr through Muslim Aid and we will distribute food items to those most in need.

You can donate Zakat al-Fitr anytime throughout the month, however, like Zakat, many people choose to make their donation on Laylat al-Qadr (the Night of Power) which falls in the last 10 days of Ramadan. The Night of Power is a special time, in which rewards are multiplied.

Learn more about Ramadan at our next event!
In Thailand, the celebration of New Year is referred to as Songkran. The exact date varies every year depending on the lunar cycle but usually happens sometime in April. The traditional celebration of Songkran is to return to your families and pay respect to your elders by spraying a little scented water on their hands. However, Songkran has changed over the years and has become a public 3-day water fight. It is near impossible to walk down the street without being sprayed by water. Shop owners will sit outside their shops with giant containers of ice water ready to throw at anyone walking by, while others will roam the streets, sometimes in tuk-tuks! Tourists from all over the world will travel to Thailand to take part in these celebrations.
ISS Student Employee Appreciation

Thank you for all you two do!

Tasneem Shaik
'21 Computer Science Graduate Student

DemiTalabi
'23 Management Information Systems Undergraduate Student
"Ahaira Project is a company born from the idea of second chances in life. When the pandemic hit us, the whole world came to a pause with no predictions of getting back to normality. During this time many people lost jobs, homes, families, money, and even their loved ones. We are one of those unfortunate folks who lost their loved ones. I lost my father to Covid and the rest of my family too suffered from Covid. My mother is very grateful for getting the 2nd life after surviving Covid and a Heart attack. When life was so unfortunate for us, we thought about the people around us. We saw how families were suffering due to a lack of jobs, funds to feed their families.

That is when my mom and I came with an initiative to help such families/individuals, make them believe in life again, and hence, started the Ahaira Project. The word Ahaira was created combining the things we believe in our life, “AH – A Hope”, there is always hope for good to happen in life and we want to give people the hope that they can be something in life. “AIRA – The Breath of Life” which is also the middle letter of my father’s name “Jairaj”. The breath of life means a thing that someone needs to live. So, we’re here to provide that initial breath of life, to support the individuals to believe in life and in themselves again.

My mom and I have always been associated with clothing and designing, so we chose a Designer clothing line as our first step for the Ahaira project. We found individuals who were affected by the pandemic, looking for opportunities to restart life, who love clothing and are eager to work hard for a living. We rented a place, bought the necessary equipment and raw materials to start the work. It has been 2+ months since we started our workshop, and it has been running great. Our initial plan was to sell our products online but through word of mouth, we got many local in-store orders which kept us busy. We took a brief break in between due to health and family issues which were unavoidable. But our clients are very understanding to wait for us to resume work and now we are back in full swing. Hence, we are reaching out to you to help us spread the word through social media so we can expand, grow big, better and create more opportunities.

Our Accomplishments:
- A small thought is now a fully functioning workshop.
- Created employment opportunities and paid full salaries.
- Launched our 1st online collection RUST which was appreciated by celebrity stylist Priyanka Sahajanada and worn by Bigg Boss star Monal Gajjar for an NTV interview.
- Delivered 80+ fully finished products in our 1st month.
- Daily meals, medicines, work-related transportation expenses, and other MISC expenses are taken care of by the company
  - Sent a brilliant student to college.
- Put a smile on our team’s face and food on their family’s plate.
- Provided monthly support for a child in SOS India for a month.
- Giving mental and moral support to our team to rise in life.

Future Plans:
- Expand work opportunities in our workshop
- Educate more children, provide career and financial guidance
- Expand Ahaira to other fields like sustainable living.
- Conduct free classes for the unprivileged in various areas like tailoring, electrical work, photography, etc.

- Ritesha Jairaj ’17 Graduate
Our office created a bulletin board to represent all our student's independence day. Make sure to check it out under Brookens!
Upcoming Events

**International Student Ambassadors present:**

**Dinner Etiquette Workshop**

**When:** Friday, April 2nd 5:00pm to 6:00pm CST  
**Where:** Zoom  
https://uisconnection.uis.edu/event/6988413

Join the International Student Ambassadors over Zoom to learn about proper table manners and good dinner etiquette!

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**International Student Ambassadors Present:**

**Learn about Ramadan**

**When:** Wednesday, April 7th 1:00pm to 2:00pm CST  
**Where:** Student Leadership Center  
**RSVP at:** https://uisconnection.uis.edu/event/6931309

Join us in learning about Ramadan with interesting facts about the holiday, a fun craft, and traditional treats!

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**HOLI’21**

**Let’s Have a Colorful Mess**

**Food**  
**Games**  
**T-shirts**  
**DJ**

**When:** April 30th 5:00pm to 7:00pm

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**Asian Pacific Islander Heritage**

**When:** Monday and Wednesday  
April 19th and 21st  
1:00pm to 3:00pm CST  
**Where:** Student Leadership Center  
(located inside the Student Union)

Learn about the various countries in Asia and the Pacific Ocean and win a free shirt!