From the Director's Desk

It’s May, and another semester at UIS is “in the books.” Some of you have also completed your studies with us and have moved on to the Optional Practical Training, returned home for a visit with family and friends, or decided to take that long-overdue vacation. Others have registered for your summer and fall classes and are still working toward that degree. Still, others are making final preparations to join us for your first semester at UIS this fall. Whatever stage of your journey awaits, we wish you the very best and will do our best to continue to support you. Tell us how we can help.

The whole pandemic thing is still a bit uncertain. On the positive side, the vaccine is now available to all adults in the US, and the number of new cases on campus has continued to drop, some weeks with none at all! You are to be congratulated on your cooperation and your efforts to help to make sure that our campus environment is safe for everyone. On the negative side, there is still a lot of COVID-19 circulating around the globe, and new variants continue to pop up. Up-to-date information is shared every week in the Chancellor’s briefings. Please join those on Thursdays at 1:00 (central time) as your schedule allows. As soon as we receive any important updates from the US government agencies, we will post those to our website and send email alerts. Please pay close attention.

As of right now, it looks like we will have a larger number of new international students this fall, but we are also concerned about the lack of availability for visa appointments. We continue to work with colleagues all over the country to advocate for making more of those available at the consulates around the world as soon as possible. That said, if you are a continuing student and your visa is expiring soon. This is probably not a good time to leave and count on getting a new visa in time to return. Let us know if you have any questions about that.

Everyone in ISS will be trying to take a few vacation days this summer, but the office will continue to be open to serve your needs. If you do not get a prompt response to your email or voicemail messages from your assigned advisor, please contact the general office email (iss@uis.edu) or telephone number 217-206-6678 and we will channel your request to someone who can help.

Have a wonderful summer!

Rick Lane
Learn about Ramadan
April 7th, 2021

The event started with ISA’s presenting the reasons why Ramadan is important to Muslims and how Muslims follow the traditional lessons. Students created their own Ramadan one-dimensional lantern paper project. Ramadan Lantern, which is also called fanoos, is a very important symbol in Ramadan because it is a symbol of hope to light the way from the darkness. Traditionally, Muslims hang the lanterns during Ramadan.
HOLI FEST '21

INDIAN STUDENT ORGANIZATION EVENT
APRIL 12TH 2021
Springfest- Quaran team (international student team)

*WON SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD*
During this celebration, students started with ‘Asian language games,’ with the help of the tri-fold poster that included more than 30 Asian countries and Asian languages, students picked out a piece of paper from a bucket that had an easy one sentence written in a specific language of an Asian country. Which then the student would have to guess the country’s language and the meaning behind the sentence. Along with all the fun, participants had the opportunity to get their names written in Chinese calligraphy. Students also had the opportunity to play a Japanese music instrument known as Koto. While playing a Koto, ‘Amazing Grace’ was suggested since the melody was one most knew and could pick up on easily. The celebration was enjoyed by many students!
This festival celebrates the birth of a child. Hamamatsu Festival's origins date back to the 16th century when the birth of an heir to the domain was celebrated with a kite display. The tradition is echoed around the country when carp flags are flown on Children's Day on May 5, the climax of the festival. Over the three days, more than 100 large kites take to the skies.

The highlight is a battle between 100 kites. The aim is to cut your opponent's string using friction alone. You can fly your own kites nearby, but the battle is for experts only. In the evening the streets see a parade of 83 festival floats accompanied by traditional music. Each float is elaborately carved and decorated, and they are referred to as “palaces.” Other attractions include dancing and drum and bell performances. Hamamatsu has a substantial non-Japanese community who take part in the festival, giving it a welcoming and cosmopolitan atmosphere.
I am from Vietnam. I grew up in a busy city in Vietnam, filled with many local stores on the streets. Also, Vietnamese street foods are so delicious that makes me really want to come back now. Sometimes, I miss the natural, majestic, and wild beauty spots in Vietnam too. I speak Vietnamese and English. My favorite Vietnamese food is sea snails and in the U.S. I like steak. Hashtags that represent me are #bepositive and #YOLO (you only live once). I love traveling, outdoor activities. Furthermore, playing sports is my hobby because I enjoy not only the games themselves but also the social aspect that it entails. As a big fan of action movies, my favorite is the Fast & Furious series. This film has taught me some values about family and friends. I have never been to Europe so I want to travel there in the near future. From my perspective, Springfield is a peaceful city, which provides me a suburban feel and a reasonable cost of living. My major is Business administration and my minor is in management. I dream that I can work for international corporations to travel to different countries while working. I love learning about new cultures and working styles, especially in doing business in other countries. The advice I have for future students: do not hesitate to ask when you have questions. Get to know a wide range of people – faculty, staff, and students. Join sports activities, community activities, etc., as much as you can, but don't forget to balance them with your study. I chose UIS because of its friendly environment and affordable tuition fee for international students like me. Another reason is that I want to explore myself as I come to a place where there are no acquaintances. I am an International Student Ambassador working for International Student Services and a member of the International Student Association. I made lots of friends and learned various interesting things about different cultures and countries. I also work for UIS TV Production, where I can learn more about cameras, angles of view, etc. After graduation, I would like to join the OPT program to earn a year of working experience. Then I want to pursue a master's degree and a Ph.D. degree in my major at UIS or UIC (if possible).
The Cheung Chau Bun Festival is one of the liveliest and certainly one-of-a-kind of Hong Kong Festivals, full of folklore and tradition and set in picturesque Cheung Chau Island, just a short ferry ride from the city. The trademark of the festival are the huge bamboo mountains covered with handmade buns which are set up near the Pak Tai Temple where the majority of the celebrations take place. According to the legends, the festival originated after the island was plagued by an epidemic that killed thousands, and the disease was only conquered until the locals brought in the god Pak Tai to Cheung Chau who drove the plague and evil spirits away. Since then, this festival that is dedicated to Pak Tai has been celebrated every year, on the Buddha’s Birthday, and the week-long festivities encompass a wide range of activities from the prayers and offerings to the god, to floats, parades, lion dances, and the culmination of the festival with a "bun scrambling" contest at midnight of the last day. The major part of the festival day is the parade which runs from Pak Tai temple around the village and returns to the temple. Originally replicating the tour of the village by the image of Pak Tai it is now joined not only by many other images of Taoist gods but also traditional and not-so-traditional performers from all over Hong Kong. With plentiful drums and lion dances leading the way there are also brass marching bands, boat dancers from Yuen Long, and of course the most important part which is the Children’s Float. Each of these floats holds two local children dressed in costumes of famous characters doing what appears to be an impossible balancing act, with one child standing on the outstretched hand of another for example. The imaginative themes and costumes of the floats are kept a closely guarded secret by the various street associations who organize them until just before the parade. The festival culminates with a very unique and peculiar "Bun Grabbing Contest" at midnight on the last day of the celebrations. A 60-foot- tower is set up for this purpose and a dozen participants climb up the bun-covered structure as they scramble to grab as many lucky buns as possible in three minutes. For the two and a half days before the festival, there are only vegetarian foods in the Buddhist style. No eggs, milk, meat or fish are served. Even the local McDonalds serves only a "vegiburger". However, some of the more tourist-oriented seafood shops do continue to serve some meat. However, all the traditional restaurants will be serving various "jai" dishes involving lots of bean curd items formed into different shapes.
As the global community is called to re-examine our relationship to the natural world, one thing is certain: despite all our technological advances we are completely dependent on healthy and vibrant ecosystems for our water, food, medicines, clothes, fuel, shelter, and energy, just to name a few. The theme “Our solutions are in nature” emphasizes hope, solidarity, and the importance of working together at all levels to build a future of life in harmony with nature.

The theme will cover 3 essential topics during the week leading up to the observance: 18 May will cover the importance of knowledge and science; 19-21 May will raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity; and finally, the day of the observance will issue a call to action.

2020 is a year of reflection, opportunity and solutions. It is expected, from each of us, that we will “Build Back Better” by using this time to increase the resilience of nations and communities as we recover from this pandemic. 2020 is the year when, more than ever, the world can signal a strong will for a global framework that will “bend the curve” on biodiversity loss for the benefit of humans and all life on Earth.

#ForNature.
Tasneem Shaik chose the University of Illinois Springfield because of the courses it offers, internship opportunities, and great learning experiences. She works as a student employee at the Office of International Student Services and is vice president of the Indian Student Organization. As an international student, she says “one of the best things about UIS is we get a platform to explore the traditions of different countries through various events and activities conducted by student organizations.” Following graduation from UIS, she plans to “take up a challenging role in a reputed organization to utilize my skills for the growth of the organization as well as to enhance my knowledge about new and emerging trends in IT sector.”

WE WILL MISS YOU! WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING ALL ABOUT YOUR SUCCESS IN THE FUTURE!

- ISS

LINKS OF TASNEEM'S PARTICIPATION:

** HTTPS://WWW.UIS.EDU/BRAND/TASNEEM-SHAIK/
** HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=ENDA5VAC5O