

International Student Services Newsletter

UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS
SPRINGFIELD

From the Director's Desk:

Welcome! Or, welcome back, as the case may be.

January can be quite cold in central Illinois. I hope that all of you brought with you coats, gloves, hats, boots, etc. and are staying warm while enjoying the outside winter weather. Then again, there is also much going on inside this month. So, take advantage of the many opportunities to make new friends and get the spring semester off to a good start.

If you have not already done so, be sure to complete all the necessary steps to maintain your F-1 non-immigrant status. You can find all the instructions on the appropriate section of the ISS website. Then, once all that is done, those of you who will be finishing up your programs of study this spring will want to learn more about Optional Practical Training. That information is also on our website, but we will be holding a special workshop to answer all your questions early in February. If you will be applying for OPT, you will want to make sure to get that on your calendars right away.

At the time I am writing this we do not yet have the final number of new international students who are just beginning their programs of study this month, but it will be somewhere around 150. Please help us to make them all feel welcome, to learn their way around the campus and the city, and to discover all the support services available on campus. Our spring 2023 Welcome Party will be just a little later than usual, but we do hope to see all the new international students there and many continuing students, both international and domestic. It should be a fun time for all.

We also have several new International Ambassadors for spring. They will want to get to know all of you, and you can count on them to make sure that any concerns that you have reach our office and others. Help them to help you.

The January term actually begins with a holiday. Join in some of the campus activities honoring the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his amazing contributions to equal rights in the US. This is a great introduction to US culture and the continuing progress toward equal rights both here and around the world.

Once again, Welcome to spring 2023 at UIS!

Rick

STAFF

Director:

Rick Lane (He / Him)

Immigration Specialists:

Rachael Matingi (She/Her)

Tracy Rakes (She/Her)

Joel Short (He/Him)

Jolene Vollmer (She/Her)

Program Coordinator:

Erika Suzuki (She/Her)

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Student Employees:

Valentine Bosenko (He/Him)

Lynise Gutierrez (She/Her)

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

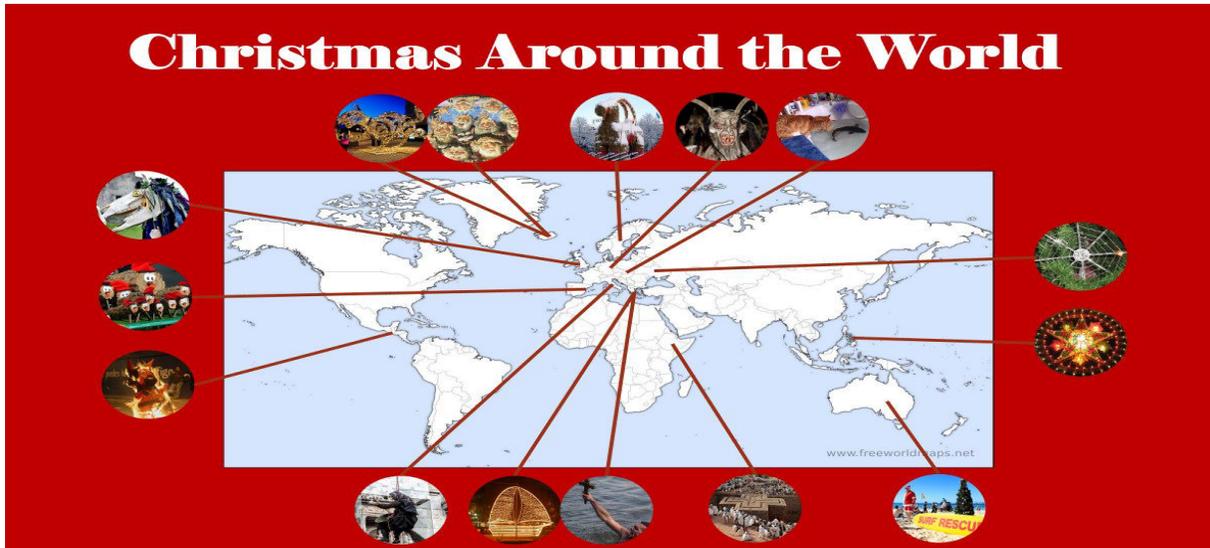
Sailaja Kanchibhotla

My pronouns are she/her. I speak English, Telugu, and Hindi. My major is Data Analytics. I am a computer science graduate and a cybersecurity engineer, who have 4 years experience in IT. I am from India. India is my home Country, being a great tourist destination. It is a huge place, wherever you go you are guaranteed an exciting and enchanting blast of color and chaos, along with a fantastic history. India is like a magical place, there are so many places to visit, from royal places to the iconic Taj Mahal, and from the lush green and picturesque beauty of Kerala to the snow capped mountains of Kashmir, India is beautiful in many ways. The traditional and cultural vibes of the land are so strong that I always love to know more about its vibrant culture and rich history, that's what I love most about my country. I love Indian Street food, Punugulu are my favorite, which are spiced crisp and tasty fritters, it is a deep fried snack made with rice, black lentils, and other spices. In US, I love cheesecake and cinnamon pretzel. Hashtag that describe me is #Explorer. I am a trained Carnatic classical singer, singing is my hobby. I am a talkative person, and love meeting new people. Also, I am interested in organizing events and love traveling to different places because it is something that gives me a lot of energy. Even though I am movie buff, I can't pick a favorite among the movies I like. I love watching web series. The dark web series on Netflix is my favorite, it's time travel Sci-fi with a gripping story, which made me watch the entire series in a week. I would love to see myself as a cybersecurity architect in the future. One of my friends, who is a graduate of UIS, suggested UIS to me. This is a diverse university. I feel that UIS is a happy place and a home for many students from different countries. They have programs like GPSI, which gives students the opportunity to work in state agencies, helps students gain knowledge and also financially supports the education of students. These are the factors that made me choose UIS. I am part of the Indian Students organization, currently serving as president and conducted few events in the fall semester. I was recently selected to be an international ambassador and am really looking forward to joining the work on campus. A tip I can give to new students is to stay focused on their goals and attend all the lovely events on campus, where you will meet lots of new people and have fun. After UIS I think it will be great, with the knowledge gained in my master's, I will take a good step forward in my career with an incredible job in hand.



CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

For many people, Christmas falls on December 25, but Armenian Orthodox Christmas is celebrated on January 6. Hundreds of millions of Orthodox Christians including Coptic Orthodox people celebrate it on January 7. The date depends on the calendar that the Christian groups follow. Today, some people and cultures follow traditional religious themes and the others incorporate folklore or regional customs, while other Christmas celebrations are entirely secular. There are various types of Christmas celebrations around the world. Below you can see some examples.



Catalonia: Caga Tió



The Caga Tió is a hollow log that stands up on two or four stick legs with a smiling face painted on its higher end having a little red sock hat and a stick nose. Around from December 8, children feed and take care of the log to Christmas day. On Christmas Day, the Tió is supposed to leave a small present to the children like candies, nuts, and small toys.

Wales: Mari Lwyd



The Mari Lwyd is a folk custom in South Wales. It was a tradition performed at Christmas time by the groups of men using an eponymous hobbyhorse which is made from a horse's skull mounted on a pole and carried by an individual hidden under a sackcloth. The groups with the Mari Lwyd stop by the individual houses and try to enter the household and to get food and drink.

Germany: Krampus Nacht



German celebrate Krampus night: According to the tradition, Krampus Nacht occurs before the night before the celebration of the Feast of St. Nicholas – a night when people dress up as the devil Krampus and walk through the streets. Krampus is a horned figure who, during the festive season, scares children who have misbehaved. Austrian celebrate Krampus as well.

Iceland: Jólakötturinn; the Yule cat



Mythical characters enforcing good behavior have been a part of Christmas folklore, but they are rarely as severe or fashion-savvy as Jólakötturinn. In Icelandic tradition, anyone who finished their chores before Christmas would get new clothes as a reward. Known as the Yule Cat, Jólakötturinn is a large feline that stalks the country on Christmas night. If any child who didn't receive new clothes as a reward because of lazy, Jólakötturinn would come to eat him/her.

Iceland: 13 Yule Lads



In Iceland, Christmas includes a blend of religious and regional folklore. Traditions like gift-giving are familiar, but instead of a single Santa Claus-like figure, Icelandic children are visited by 13 trolls known as the Yule Lads. Each troll leaves either sweets or rotten potatoes each night, depending on whether or not the child has been on their best behavior.

Philippines: Giant Lantern Festival



The city of San Fernando is known locally as the Christmas capital of the Philippines, thanks to its colorful, glowing "parol star" ornament. The ornament is central in the Giant Lantern Festival, which began in the early 1900s, but really took off in 1931 when the city got electricity. Each neighborhood fashions its own massive lantern through a collective effort, and all the lanterns are fastened together before Christmas.

Australia: Christmas in summer



Christmas in Australia is unique because it is held in the middle of its hot summer. The main holiday is Boxing Day on December 26 and has British origins. The Boxing Day test match; a big cricket match is held on the Melbourne Cricket Grounds. People enjoy Christmas street parties, backyard BBQ, and beach parties.

Ukraine: Spider and the Christmas tree



In America, spider and web decorations are generally reserved for Halloween. In Ukraine however, they're a symbol of good Christmas fortune. Families adorn Christmas trees with spider webs to commemorate a folktale about a family who couldn't afford ornaments and decorations for their tree.

Sweden: Gavle Goat



The Yule goat is a Scandinavian and Northern European Yule and Christmas tradition. Its origin may be Germanic pagan and there are many variations in the history. The regular size yule goat made of straw can be a Christmas tree ornament. Cities and towns throughout Sweden build huge statues of Yule goats (Julbock in Swedish). The goat is built on the first day of Advent. The famous one is Gavle goat, which would be around a 40-foot-height.

Slovakia: Bathub carp



There is a unique tradition of eating carp for Christmas dinner in Slovakia. Central Europeans have been doing it for centuries. In Slovakia, however, custom calls for the live carp to swim in the family's bathtub for a few days before it becomes a Christmas feast. During this time, residents don't bathe and the doomed fish is named and treated as a pet. There is the same tradition in Czech and Poland as well.

Ethiopia: Ganna



Since most of Ethiopia's Christian community is Orthodox, the nation celebrates Christmas, Ganna Genna, on Jan. 7. Thousands of pilgrims travel to the town of Lalibela, the site of 11 old churches in 12th–13th centuries. They attend a traditional mass with a traditional robe of white cotton cloth. The festivities are known collectively as Ganna, where revelers traditionally don white robes adorned with bright stripes on their way to church.

Guatemala: Burning the Devil



About 500,000 fires rage in the capital city of Guatemala on Dec. 7 every year. It is a tradition for families to create an effigy of the devil and set it on fire that night. This tradition is meant to symbolize a day of purification ahead of the Catholic festival of the Immaculate Conception.

Greece: Karavaki



People in Greece's islands and coastal regions decorate a boat rather than an evergreen tree at Christmas. The tradition of the "Karavaki", which is Greek for "small boat", is deeply rooted in the folkways of a country with a symbiotic relationship with the sea. Today, Greek people still decorate a boat as well as a Christmas tree.

Greece: The Blessing the Waters



On January 6th, a priest throws a cross into the Aegean and then young men dive into the icy water to retrieve a cross to celebrate Epiphany. This is the holiday season's final act called as The Blessing the Waters. The one who returns the cross is blessed by the priest. This tradition is carried out to commemorate the baptism of Christ and to bless the waters.

Italy: La Befana



Italian children believe a magical present-bearer comes down the chimney at night to deliver gifts to nice kids and coal to naughty ones—but it's not Santa and it's not on Christmas. Instead, kids hold their breath for Jan. 6, the day of the Epiphany, when they're visited by La Befana, the beloved Christmas witch.

JANUARY 1st: NEW YEAR'S DAY



It's one of the most celebrated holidays of the year. Celebrations will begin in the Pacific Ocean with Samoa celebrating the New Year before the rest of the world. The latest stroke of midnight will occur in the middle of the Pacific Ocean near Baker Island, which is halfway between Hawaii and Australia.

Traditions Around the World:

- ◆ Kiss at midnight the one person you hope to keep kissing the rest of the year.
- ◆ Making noise, either in the form of fireworks, ringing bells, or horns, are traditional around the world.
- ◆ In Holland, they toast to the new year with spiced wine, wassail in England, or champagne in the United States.
- ◆ Resolutions are not a modern tradition. The Babylonians made commitments to return borrowed objects and to pay old debts.

Resolutions:

- ◆ Losing weight
- ◆ Getting more exercise
- ◆ Reducing screen time
- ◆ Saving money
- ◆ Buying a large item (house, car, boat, vacation)
- ◆ Organizing the home
- ◆ Starting a hobby
- ◆ Reducing stress
- ◆ Starting a business



WORLD CELEBRATIONS

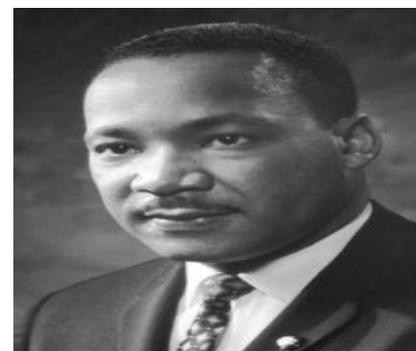
January 6—Epiphany: In Christianity, this is the official end of the Christmas season. For Western Christians, it primarily commemorates the coming of the Magi, the three kings, to Bethlehem where they presented their gifts (gold, frankincense, and myrrh) to the newborn Jesus. There are minor references to the baptism of Jesus and the miracle at the Wedding at Cana (the first miracle attributed to Jesus of turning water into wine). Eastern Christians celebrate the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan.



January 14 (15) - Makar Sankranti / Pongal: It is a Hindu harvest festival celebrated in most parts of India, Nepal, and Bangladesh during the Magh month of the Nepali calendar. Some regional names are Makar Sankranti, Kanumu, Lohri, Bihu, Bhogi, Thai Pongal, Poki festival, and Hadaga Festival. Makar Sankranti marks the transition of the sun into the zodiacal sign of Capricorn. The date of the festival is based on a this solar event making it one of the few Hindu festivals which fall on the same date every year, January 14, with occasional exceptions, when it's falls on the 15th.



January 16—Martin Luther King, Jr. Day: Held on the third Monday in January. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a Baptist minister and a civil rights activist. His efforts led to the 1963 March on Washington, where he delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech. In 1964, King became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end segregation and racial discrimination through civil disobedience and other non-violent means. He was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, TN and was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Jimmy Carter in 1977. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was established as a national holiday in the United States in 1986. It's a federal holiday, an authorized holiday recognized by the US government. In 2004, King was posthumously awarded a Congressional Gold Medal.



January 22—Chinese New Year / Spring Festival: Fireworks, dragons, lions, and Nian gao all signify the start of Chinese New Year. This is one of the most important holidays in China. It's observed all over the world. Similar celebrations occur in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam known as the Lunar New Year or the Spring Festival. Most Chinese holidays follows the lunar calendar so the date varies from year to year. The Chinese New Year always occurs in January or February on the second new moon after the winter solstice, though on occasion it has been the third new moon.



January 22—Vietnamese New Year: The holiday in Vietnam is officially three days, but is often celebrated for seven. Tet is regarded as one of the most important Vietnamese holidays. Tết Nguyên Đán literally means the first morning of the first day of the new period. It's believed that the course of these few days will determine the path of the coming year. People stop their quarreling, children vow to behave, and families make special efforts to gather together.



INTERNATIONAL TAX WORKSHOPS

Be ready for the tax season!

If you worked on campus during 2022, you will need to be ready for the tax season in January. Please check an email from System HR Services and take appropriate action before December 31, 2022. For more details, please visit the [System Human Resource Services website](#).

The office of International Student Services is planning to support our F-1 international students with Sprintax service. Sprintax will provide Nonresident Tax Webinars until April, so we strongly encourage you to participate in the webinar and learn about the nonresident tax in the US.



Sprintax Nonresident Tax Webinar (EAP)

In these tax webinars, international students, scholars and professionals will be run through everything they need to know about nonresident tax for the 2022 tax season. Topics will include who must file, tax residency, FICA, State returns, implications of misfiling as well as how to use Sprintax to prepare a compliant tax return.

- › Thursday, December 8th @ 12pm EST – [Register here](#)
- › Thursday, January 26th @ 12pm EST – [Register here](#)
- › Thursday, February 2nd @ 1pm EST – [Register here](#)
- › Wednesday, February 22nd @ 12pm EST – [Register here](#)
- › Wednesday, March 1st @ 1pm EST – [Register here](#)
- › Tuesday, March 21st @ 4pm EST – [Register here](#)
- › Wednesday, March 30th @ 12pm EST – [Register here](#)
- › Wednesday, April 5th @ 1pm EST – [Register here](#)
- › Tuesday, April 11th @ 1pm EST – [Register here](#)
- › Friday, April 14th @ 12pm EST – [Register here](#)

Sprintax Nonresident Tax Overview for OPT/CPT (E)

Topics covered in these webinars will include residency for tax purposes, tax liabilities when on OPT/CPT and pre-employment tax forms when on OPT/CPT. The Sprintax team will also provide an overview of Sprintax Forms which can be used to prepare your pre OPT/CPT employment tax documents.

- › Wednesday, December 7th @ 12pm EST – [Register here](#)
- › Thursday, January 12th @ 11am EST – [Register here](#)

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UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS
SPRINGFIELD

Walk-In Hours

If you need to speak directly with an immigration specialist, you can come during walk-in hours, or email ISS@uis.edu to make an appointment.

Monday-Thursday 2:00-4:00pm

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◇ Spring Orientation: January 12, 8:30am @ Union Ballroom
- ◇ Lunar New Year Celebration: January 20, 11am-1pm @ Student Leadership Center
- ◇ Welcome Party: January 27, 5-7pm @ Union Ballroom

New International Student Orientation Spring 2023

Date: January 12
Time: 8:30 AM
@ Student Union Ballroom



Lunar New Year Celebration

January 20, 11 AM - 1 PM
Student Leadership Center

新年快乐



Office of International Student Services

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
ASSOCIATION INVITE YOU TO:

New International Student Welcome Party Spring 2023

Friday, January 27 @ 5 pm

Student Union Center Ballroom



S.O.F.A.

You're
Invited!

UIS
Star Map