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
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.
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.
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
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, Kanum, 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)

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)

Wednesday, December 7th @ 12pm EST – Register here
Thursday, January 12th @ 11am EST – Register here

Sprintax Nonresident Tax Webinar (E)

Wednesday, December 7th @ 12pm EST – Register here
Thursday, January 12th @ 11am EST – Register here
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