

International Student Services Newsletter

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From the Director's Desk:

Can you believe that this is the last full month of the spring semester? You may still have a lot to get done over these last few weeks, but I hope that you can also get outside and enjoy Spring in Springfield. If you haven't made it to the Hinson Robinson Zoo, it opens the first weekend of this month and there is a big discount for groups of 10 or more. Gather your friends and go talk to the animals. Lake Springfield Marina is open, too. If we get a nice warm Saturday, why not spend part of it on the water. There are a lot of other fun things to do in and around Springfield. See our information on [100 Things to do while a Student at UIS](#). There are almost certainly some things on that list that you have not yet tried. Don't leave here without getting the full Springfield experience.

Speaking of leaving here, some of you will be completing your program of study next month and still need to finalize your plans for after graduation. Will you be returning home? Should you apply for OPT? Have you gained admission to a new program of study? What's next? Some of these questions need to be answered soon. Don't put them off until it is too late.

Others of you will be enrolled in summer classes, just taking a break while remaining in the US, or travelling home and coming back for the fall. These, too, require a bit of preparation. Do you need to meet with your academic advisor. Have you made your travel plans? Do you need to speak with Residence Life about a move? Do you have your travel signature on your form I-20? Are your other immigration documents up to date? Plan ahead to avoid unexpected problems. Oh, and don't forget that Registration is now open for both the summer and the fall. Sign up for the classes that you need as soon as you can.

Did you know that there is another large group, maybe even as large as last fall (400+), of international students coming to UIS in the fall? If you have an opportunity to interact with any of these, encourage them to come prepared, to examine our website, and to contact us with any questions that they may have. We want them to have a smooth transition. They can learn a lot from your experiences.

You may have noticed that there are a lot of new university personnel joining UIS at this time. We will soon have a new Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, a new Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and several others. Join us in welcoming them to campus. Introduce yourselves as you have opportunity. They will want to get to know you.

Enjoy these last few weeks of the semester. Prepare to celebrate with your friends who are graduating. Play some outdoor games. Have some fun!

Rick

ISS'S MARCH EVENTS

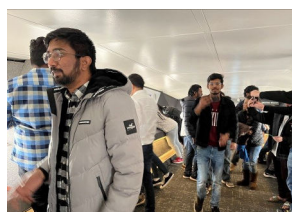
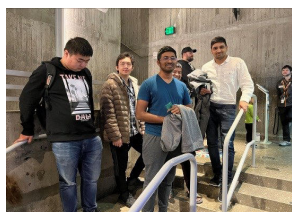
Professional Etiquette Dinner—March 3rd

The event was organized in partnership with the Career Development Center. Students learned net-working skills as well as table manners in order to prepare themselves for career success.



Trip to St. Louis—March 24th

Students visited the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, which is the site of a pre-Columbian Native American city, and the Gateway Arch National Park in St. Louis. They learned a lot of American history there!



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Alexandria Ballard

My pronouns are she/they. I am from the UK and live in a city called Derby. It's spelt like the Kentucky Derby but you pronounce it like Darby with an A sound which confuses some people sometimes! Its population is about 1.5 times bigger than Springfield so this is definitely a downsize to what I'm used to! My city is right in the center of the country, if you were to measure horizontally and vertically and take the cross point, you'd find Derby. It is not as interesting as some other student's home countries but it's home, nonetheless. I have a super small family and I currently live with my partner of two years who I love endlessly. I only speak English unfortunately. I studied German for a while in high school and really enjoyed it, so I can read it pretty well but my speech isn't strong enough to say I can speak it! I'm majoring in business management but I'm thinking about possibly doing accounting instead. I'm still unsure about changing but it's a possibility.

The UK has a lot of beautiful lakes and trails that I like to visit. I live in the peak district which has lots of beautiful walks and valleys that I like to go to during the summer. The beaches down in the south-west part of the country are especially beautiful. If you know the right spots to go to, the sand is almost white and the water is so clear and blue – they sometimes look like they should be in the Mediterranean! There are lots of places in England that are beautiful (if you know where to look) but the beaches around Cornwall and Devon are my favorite.

My favorite food from England is a tough one – most of my favorite foods in general aren't from my home country! But the food I like the most from the UK is probably Yorkshire Puddings. They are made from the same batter as regular pancakes but you add savory seasonings like rosemary and thyme and bake it in the oven. They are served as a side dish and are especially good with a roast dinner and on big holidays like Christmas! My mom makes really good ones, so I always love going home and seeing a big pile of them in the middle of the table after they've just come out from the oven. My favorite food from the US though... I would have to say, recently after visiting Philadelphia, Philly Cheese Steaks. I'm vegetarian but I managed to find a place that has vegetarian options, and it was really good and tasted exactly like they should! I thought I wouldn't enjoy it, but it surprised me and I ended up having three more just in the space of two days. So, I want to try and recreate it soon.

I'm currently, back in my home country, a swimming teacher and coach alongside being a qualified lifeguard and have been doing that for too many years to count! With my swim teaching, I teach a variety of ages, but I mainly focus on teaching young children and children with learning difficulties. I also swim both competitively and leisurely. I've been swimming all my life and enjoy the feeling of being in the water – it's nice to just lose yourself in the water. I also enjoy art and painting which I create commissions of glass paintings for people which is a nice side hobby. I love music and have a very eclectic taste in it, and I can't go anywhere without a playlist in the background. I also like reading dark fantasy books and sometimes like to write myself, even if there's no one to read it! I collect crystals and go gem mining from time to time. I love film and TV with my favorite genres being horror and anime. I love playing video games varying from puzzle games to RPG's. I like playing cards like rummy and spades with friends and I win all the time (most of the time). When I can, I like going for walks and taking my dog to the dog park which she loves doing. As well as having a dog I've got two cats (one of which is called vicious, I wonder why!) and I love them to pieces.

As a previous film and media student there are a lot of films I enjoy but I'd have to say my favorite film is 'Parasite' directed by Bong Joon-ho. I love it not only because of the plot and the intricacies of it, but also the visuals and cinematography of the whole film. I think the subtle hints of how everything is going to play out and the portrayal of opposites between the two families is incredibly well done.



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INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Alexandria Ballard



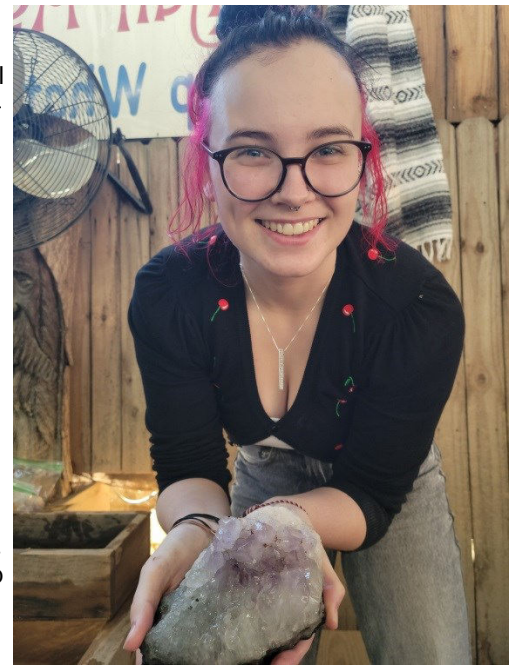
Hashtag that best describes me probably is #caffinatedandsleepdeprived because both together sums me up pretty well. My dream job from when I was younger revolves around the arts but at the moment, I want to work in the business industry with hopefully a job lined up at the end of my degree. If I could maybe pursue something with my art I create as well as working in the business industry, I think that would be a happy medium.

There are several reasons for choosing and coming to UIS. First, I wanted a change in scenery and to have some independence away from my family. Second, I thought it was a good university which provided me with good scholarships and even though it wasn't in a major city, still had a lot of amenities that I knew I would enjoy. And finally, and probably most important, my girlfriend lives here and so what better way than to spend every day with her whilst also getting a degree at the end of it? I felt like it was a win-win situation that I couldn't turn down and I'm thankful for her involvement with my time here at UIS.

My involvement in UIS is not as involved as I would have hoped or liked it to be. I felt like I wanted to focus on settling into life in America properly and getting back into a routine of education I had been away from for so long with my first semester. I'm also a heavy

introvert so I struggle with pushing myself past my boundaries until I've gotten some familiarity. Maybe over the next few semesters, now I have gotten my bearings, I hope to be more involved with some organizations and work on campus.

A tip I can give to new students is for your classes, I would say make sure you read your study books and answer the example and practice questions because I've noticed that it is much easier to understand the material and content if you practice exam style questions. I would also say that your professor is your number one person to go to if you don't understand anything. They really want to see you do well and although it may seem intimidating, they are easier to talk to than you may realize so definitely go to them if you have any questions. For your life at university, I would say, and I know a lot of people say this so it may be redundant, but don't be afraid to put yourself out there and talk to people you don't know or sign up for a workshop/organization you were considering. The worst thing you think will happen won't and you may surprise yourself with how easy it is to make friends and participate in whatever you want to do.



After UIS, I want to travel the States and then head back to England to spend some time with my family before coming back to the US and hopefully starting a job with a financial advisor company that I have lined up but that's in the far future, so we shall have to see!

NEW YEARS CELEBRATED THIS MONTH

Many countries in Asia celebrate New Year's Day in the middle of April as you can see below.

Cambodia – Khmer New Year celebration, April 14 – April 17

Laos – Pi Mai celebration, April 14 – April 18

Thailand – Songkran celebration, April 13 – April 17

Myanmar – Thingyan celebration, April 10 – April 17

Unlike the traditional Lunar New Year celebrations celebrated in many Asian countries, these New Year's Day celebrations mark the day when the sun moves from the zodiac sign Pisces to Aries. This is another example of how calendars usually have the astronomical origins. In the ancient era, the movement of the sun into Aries would have been closer to the Vernal Equinox, which marks the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere. However, the dates of these events differ today because of errors introduced by the precession of the Earth, which refers to how the rotation of the Earth “wobbles” during its rotation. The “wobble” effect introduces variation into the dates of the Equinoxes on a cycle that spans a period of 25,000 years! But regardless of the exact date these various New Year celebrations are also a celebration of the arrival of Spring.

Among the New Year celebrations, Thingyan in Myanmar is also known as the Water Festival. People celebrate by spraying each other with water. The tradition originates from the idea of washing away the bad luck and misfortune of the previous year, so you can welcome in a bright and happy new year.



NEPALESE NEW YEAR



One of the major festivals in Nepal is the Nepali New Year, also known as *Navavarsha*. This annual festival falls on the first day of the first calendar month of Baisakh, typically in mid-April according to the Gregorian calendar. Nepalese celebrate joy, renewal, and reflection during this festival. Nepal's New Year begins in Baisakh, the first month of the Bikram Sambat calendar.

It is celebrated in various places throughout Nepal, but especially in Bhaktapur and Thimi. The festival highlights these cities' cultural heritage and traditions, contributing to their unique practices.

The pulling of chariots during the Navavarsha Celebration is one of the most iconic events. A chariot is an enormous, towering structure decorated with carvings and decorations. Bhaktapur locals pull two chariots, one representing *Bhairab* and the other representing *Bhadrakali*. Pulling these chariots is considered an honor, and many people eagerly await the chance to participate.

Another important event during *Navavarsha* is the Bhairab Mask display. This mask is considered holy and believed to possess divine powers. The mask is displayed on a platform in Bhaktapur's Taumadhi Square, where people gather to worship and pray.

Apart from these events, families and friends gather to enjoy traditional Nepalese dishes like *Samay baji* (the most popular food for Newari people), various snacks, and *Sel roti* (classic ring-shaped sweet fried made from rice flour). It is also when people wear stylish clothes, exchange gifts, and visit their loved ones. Despite the Coronavirus adversity in recent years, the Nepalese people hold onto their cultural heritage and traditions. As we celebrate *Navavarsha* this year, let us reflect on Nepal's resilience and strength.

Navavarsha is an exciting and vibrant festival integral to Nepalese culture. While the pandemic may have disrupted the festival this year, Navavarsha continues. During this time, people come together to celebrate their traditions, reminding them of the importance of community and cultural heritage on this special day.

Happy new year to all!

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 the coming months.

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

Upcoming Sprintax Webinars



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](#)

sprintax

Sprintax Nonresident Tax Webinar (EAP)

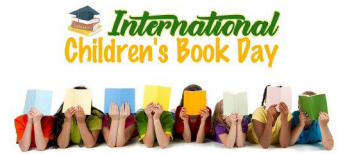
Wednesday, April 5th @ 1pm EST – [Register here](#)

Tuesday, April 11th @ 1pm EST – [Register here](#)

Friday, April 14th @ 12pm EST – [Register here](#)

WORLD CELEBRATIONS

April 2nd— International Children’s Book Day: This is the birthday of Danish author Hans Christian Anderson. The goal of the day is to create and further in children a love of reading. The day also spotlights children’s books such as those written by Hans Christian Anderson.



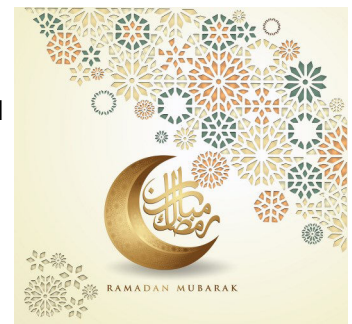
April 2nd— World Autism Awareness Day: This day each year shines a bright light on a growing global health crisis. According to the National Autism Association, Autism affects 1 in 59 children. The bio-neurological developmental disability usually presents itself by the age of 3, and it is more prevalent in boys than girls. As children with autism grow older, they face all sorts of obstacles. Because many don’t speak or use social cues, they become targets for bullies or are excluded altogether. Due to their inability to communicate, they cannot tell someone their name or where they live, either. Additionally, adults are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed. However, resources are available for families and schools to help keep children safe and to support them lead happy and healthy lives.



April 9th—Easter: This day is an important religious event for Christians. They celebrate the day that Jesus rose from the dead, three days after his crucifixion. It’s the culmination of events during Holy Week beginning with Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday reflects the return of Jesus to Jerusalem. Maundy Thursday commemorates the Last Supper of Christ, and Good Friday remembers the crucifixion of Jesus. Easter Sunday celebrates his resurrection after his death.



Until April 21st—Ramadan 2023: Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting (sawm), prayer, reflection and community. A commemoration of Muhammad's first revelation, the annual observance of Ramadan is regarded as one of the Five Pillars of Islam and lasts twenty-nine to thirty days, from one sighting of the crescent moon to the next. 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 Ramadan timetable of daylight hours makes it easier to prepare.



April 22nd—Earth Day: The goal was to set aside one day to look at the environment we live in, promote ecology, and bolster awareness of global air, water, and soil pollution. Today over 140 countries participate in Earth Day. On April 22, fairs and outdoor events are held to encourage people to help our planet thrive. Individuals make special efforts to conserve water, paper, and electricity. Take time this day to learn what you can do to conserve energy and reduce, reuse, and recycle products in your neighborhood.



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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

- ◇ Holi celebration: April 7, 2pm @ REC Park
- ◇ Trip to Starved Rock: April 28, 8am @ Student Union lobby

