

# International Student Services Newsletter

**International Student Services Office**

FEBRUARY, 2024

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## Inside this issue:

Student Spotlight	2
Tax Workshops	3
Past Events	4
Special Days in the US	5
World Celebrations	6
Upcoming Events	7

## From the Director's desk

The shortest and coldest (at least in Illinois) month of the year has arrived, and with it a lot of opportunities for you to get involved, meet other students, make future plans, etc. If you ski or have always wanted to try, February is also usually the month with the most snow, and you can join the group heading for the slopes on February 2. Watch for additional details on our website and on Campus Connections.

Unfortunately, for those of you planning to complete your programs of study in March or May and hoping to get approval for Optional Practical Training, our first OPT workshop of the spring semester is on that same day. You will not want to miss it as the application window for May graduates will be opening soon, and the window for those finishing in March is already here.

February also brings some US cultural events about which you will want to learn more. See the latter pages of this newsletter to learn about how we celebrate Groundhog's Day and St. Valentine's Day here. This year, February also has one more day than it did for the last few years. What do you know about Leap Year and why we need to do that every so often. Do any of you have a birthday on February 29? If so, how do you celebrate your special day during the years that do not have that day?

As always, your Immigration Advisors/DSOs in ISS are following closely all the government agencies with whom we work, our professional organization, and best practices that we pick up from our colleagues across the country. Whenever we learn of any news that might impact you, we send out mass emails to make you aware of those. For that reason, and others, it is always important that you open and read any email messages that you receive from ISS. Right now we are following a proposal to increase some of the government processing fees. For example, it is likely that the OPT application fee will increase soon. You will not want to file your online OPT application with outdated information. There is also a proposal to make some changes to the regulations governing F-1 student requirements. Our professional organization (NAFSA) has responded to that proposal, and we are awaiting a response. We will let you know about any changes and when they go into effect as soon as we do. Don't risk your F-1 status because you chose not to read our email messages.

Finally, let me encourage you to always make your academic studies your top priority. By the end of this month, you should have a pretty good idea about what you need to do to make sure that you are all caught up and succeeding toward your educational objectives. If you are not, now is the time to get help from your academic program, the Learning Hub, and others to head off any negative consequences. Be the best student you can. You will be glad that you did. No learning is ever wasted.

Rick

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

### Folarin Onileowo



My pronouns are he/him. I am from Iyin-Ekiti, Nigeria, but I was born in Ikorodu. I can speak English, Pidgin English, Yoruba and a little bit of French. My home country is a vibrant West African nation celebrated for its rich cultural diversity, stunning landscapes, and warm hospitality. I am captivated by the colorful tapestry of traditions, languages, and ethnicities that define our national identity. What I also appreciate most is the sense of community and resilience embedded in our culture. I am also a huge fan of our thriving music scene, with the global recognition of genres like Afrobeat.

foods and meeting new people. Having said that, I am still trying to be more active and social. My favorite Nigerian food is Pounded yam and vegetable soup, and my favorite food in the US would be sea food boil. My favorite movie is Christopher Nolan's Inception. I like it because of the unique concept of shared dreaming and its intricate and mind-bending plot.

A hashtag that describes me would be #ResilientSpirit. In envisioning my ideal role, I see myself crafting comprehensive security frameworks that not only meet industry standards but also align with the intricate requirements of defense and strategic operations and policies. This dream position would enable me to bridge the gap between strategic defense planning and the ever-evolving cybersecurity landscape, fostering a symbiotic relationship between these two domains. After UIS, I can't really say, but I am hoping for the best. It would be great to get my dream job and continue my professional career.



I am getting a Master's in Management Information Systems, and chose UIS because of the reputation of the MIS program, and the GPSI internship. The combination of both programs offered a great opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge into professional setting. Unfortunately, schooling has not given me a lot of time to get involved in UIS sports and organizations as much as I would like.



Outside of school and work, I live a simple and straight forward life. I like to watch movies and play video games. I also enjoy hiking with friends, bowling, trying new

Tips I can give to new students are UIS is a great school with a lot of wonderful resources, from the faculty, the academic resources and to the different organizations. Do your best to leverage all of them.



## INTERNATIONAL TAX WORKSHOPS

If you worked on campus during year 2023, you will need to be ready for tax season.

The ISS office 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 any of the webinars and learn about the nonresident tax in the US. **2023 tax forms must be filed by April 15, 2024!**



Department of the Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service

sprintax

### Sprintax Webinar Schedule 2023/2024



#### 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 2023 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 14th @ 1pm EST – [Register here](#)
- > Thursday, January 25th @ 12pm EST – [Register here](#)
- > Wednesday, February 7th @ 1pm EST – [Register here](#)
- > Wednesday, February 28th @ 12pm EST – [Register here](#)
- > Monday, March 11th @ 4pm EST – [Register here](#)
- > Thursday, March 28th @ 3pm EST – [Register here](#)
- > Wednesday, April 3rd @ 2pm EST – [Register here](#)
- > Thursday, April 11th @ 1pm EST – [Register here](#)
- > Monday, April 15th @ 11am EST – [Register here](#)

#### Sprintax Nonresident Tax Overview for OPT/CPT

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.

- > Thursday, November 16th @ 12pm EST – [Register here](#)
- > Wednesday, December 13th @ 1pm EST – [Register here](#)
- > Tuesday, January 23rd @ 1pm EST – [Register here](#)
- > Wednesday, February 28th @ 2pm EST – [Register here](#)
- > Thursday, March 21st @ 3pm EST – [Register here](#)

### Sprintax Nonresident Tax Webinar (EAP)

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April 11th @ 12pm – [Register here](#)

April 15th @ 10am – [Register here](#)

### Sprintax Nonresident Tax Overview for OPT/CPT

February 28th @ 1pm – [Register here](#)

March 21st @ 2pm – [Register here](#)



## ISS'S JANUARY EVENTS

### New International Student Orientation–January 11th

Our New International Student Orientation was held at the Student Union Ballroom. UIS received approx. 160 new international students this Spring semester, and they were welcomed by our office director, Rick Lane.



### New International Student Welcome Party –January 19th

Welcome party was performed at the Student Union Ballroom and new students had the chance to meet each other, make connections, and have fun together with quizzes and games.



## GROUNDHOG'S DAY

This day is a tradition observed in the United States and Canada on February 2 of every year. It derives from the Pennsylvania Dutch superstition that if a groundhog emerges from its burrow on this day and sees its shadow, it will retreat to its den and winter will go on for six more weeks; if it does not see its shadow, spring will arrive early. While the tradition remains popular in the 21st century, studies have found no consistent association between a groundhog seeing its shadow and the subsequent arrival time of spring-like weather. The holiday gained prominence, particularly internationally, with the release of the 1993 comedy film *Groundhog Day* with Bill Murray and Andie MacDowell. Over time, the film became a cult classic and significantly increased awareness and attendance at Groundhog Day events.

Though not a federal holiday, Americans tune in to see if the famed groundhog, Punxsutawney Phil, sees his shadow every year. The festivities take place at Gobbler's Knob in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. The celebration is free to attend and spectators can enter the grounds starting at 3 a.m. The Punxsutawney Groundhog Club celebrates with talent shows, banquets and performances leading up to, and after, the prediction.



## ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

This day is celebrated annually on February 14 and it is originated as a Christian feast day honoring a martyr named Valentine and through later folk traditions. It has also become a significant cultural, religious and commercial celebration of romance and love in many regions of the world. This is a day to celebrate romance and love and kissy-face fealty. Many will break the bank buying jewelry and flowers for their beloveds. Some will celebrate in a SAD (that's Singles Awareness Day) way, dining alone and bingeing on self-gifted chocolates, while others will find a way to make peace with singlehood in a society that wants everyone to partner up. In the country, about 190 million Valentine's Day cards are sent each year, not including the hundreds of millions of cards school children exchange.





## WORLD CELEBRATIONS



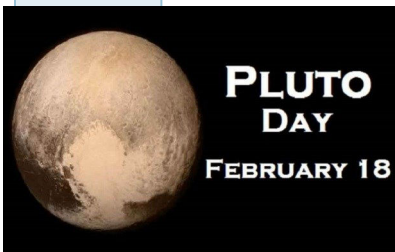
February, 4th—World Cancer Day: This day seeks to spread awareness for cancer, focusing on its prevention, detection, and treatment. Every year, there are 17 million new cases of cancer diagnosed throughout the world. By year 2040, it is estimated that there will be 27.5 million new cases of cancer. The most common cancers include lung, female breast, bowel, and prostate.



February, 10th—Chinese New Year: This traditional holiday period for the Spring Festival lasts 23 days. The public holiday is celebrated for 7 days meaning that those in China who celebrate the Chinese New Year get 7 days off from work. Another feature of the Chinese New Year is that each year is always associated with an animal. The animals always go in a certain order and repeat every 12 years. This year ushers in the year of the Dragon.



February, 15th—National Flag Day of Canada: This day commemorates the official birth of the Maple Leaf Flag, installed on February 15th, 1965. Canadians celebrate the day by wearing red and white, raising their flag high and paying tribute to the big leaf.



February, 18th—Pluto Day: This day celebrates the discovery of the former planet. Up until 2006, it was considered one of the nine planets in the solar system. On August 24th, 2006, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) reduced Pluto to a dwarf planet and determined that it failed to meet certain criteria that defined it as a full-sized planet because there are no other bodies of comparable size under its gravitational influence. Also, modern technology has allowed astronomers to discover other bodies in space that are the same size or larger than Pluto.



February, 19th—President's Day: This day is also called "Washington's Birthday" as a celebration of the life and achievements of the nation's first President. In 1880, Congress voted to make this the first national holiday which honored an individual. In 1968, Congress enacted the Uniform Monday Bill, to give workers as many long weekends as possible. The day is an occasion for community celebrations and parades. In addition, many stores and businesses hold special sales.



February, 21st—Mother Language Day: This day draws awareness for linguistic and cultural diversity and promotes multilingualism. A mother language is the first language that someone speaks, so a person's mother language helps to define their identity. Unfortunately, a mother language disappears every two weeks. When this happens, an entire cultural heritage disappears along with it.

## International Student Services Office

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[On Facebook](#)

## Upcoming Events

- ♦ OPT Workshop for Spring 2024 grads:  
February 2, 2-4pm @ Brookens  
Auditorium.
- ♦ Ski Trip with TRAC: February 2. If questions  
contact Jay Swenson ([jswen2@uis.edu](mailto:jswen2@uis.edu)).
- ♦ Bowling in King Pin: February 9, 1pm @  
Student Union Lobby.
- ♦ Lunar New Year, Year of the Dragon:  
February 16, 12-2pm @ Union Ballroom.
- ♦ International Mother Language Day:  
February 21, 12-2pm @ Union North  
Entrance
- ♦ Carnival: February 23, 12-2pm @ Union  
Center Ballroom.



## WALK-IN HOURS:

Monday-Thursday  
2:00-4:00pm

If you need to speak directly with an immigration specialist (DSO), you can come during walk-in hours, or email [ISS@uis.edu](mailto:ISS@uis.edu) to make an appointment.