



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

Newsletter



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- › Student Spotlight
- › Recent Events
- › Upcoming Events
- › Athlete of the Month
- › World Celebrations

APRIL 2025

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Walk-In Hours: Monday-Thursday 2:00-4:00pm



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

Greetings!

It is a warm welcome to another edition of the International Student Services (ISS) newsletter. I hope you are enjoying this beautiful weather that defines the Spring season.



Earlier this month, I sent an email about recent events related to immigration status and travel updates. We remain committed to providing you with all the necessary resources to ensure you are successful in your pursuit of higher education at the UIS. Take time to visit the special immigration page created to keep our students fully informed <https://www.uis.edu/immigration>. You can also talk to an Immigration Advisor during the walk in hours (Monday-Thursday: 2:00-4:00 pm) or by making an appointment. I will host a community chat on Monday, May 5, 2025, from 2:00-3:00 pm in the Student Union-South Ballroom.

On this edition of the newsletter, you will meet Sai Pratyush Danthala, who has been a Student Employee at the ISS for nearly a year. He will be graduating this Spring. You will also have a glimpse of the Holi festival and the Etiquette Dinner we held for international students. As usual, important celebrations in April are also listed for you.

Congratulations to all international students who will be graduating next month. We are so proud of your accomplishments. I wish you all the best as we approach the end-of-semester exams.

Thank you

Zafrul Amin
Director,
Office of International
Student Services

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

My name is Sai Pratyush Danthala, and my pronouns are he/him.

I'm from Hyderabad, Telangana, India. It's a vibrant city known for its rich cultural heritage, historical landmarks like the Charminar, and of course, the world-famous Hyderabadi biryani!

It's also a growing tech hub, sometimes referred to as "Cyberabad" because of its booming IT industry.

I'm pursuing a Master of Science in Management Information Systems (MS in MIS). I chose this major because it perfectly blends technology and business, two areas I'm passionate about. I was drawn to the program for its strong curriculum, industry connections, and the opportunity it gives to develop both technical and managerial skills.

Working as a student employee at the International Student Services (ISS) office has been an incredibly rewarding experience. It has allowed me to be part of a team that directly supports the international student community - something I personally relate to. I've had the chance to help students navigate everything from immigration questions to campus resources, and even just being there to listen when someone needs a familiar face makes a difference. It's also given me a great sense of purpose, knowing I can contribute to making the international student experience more welcoming and smoother for others.

I aspire to work as a Business Analyst or Program Manager in a dynamic, fast-paced organization. I'm particularly interested in roles where I can act as a bridge between technical teams and business stakeholders. Long-term, I'd like to grow into leadership positions where I can help guide teams, manage cross-functional projects, and continue to learn and innovate in the tech-business space. My ultimate goal is to make a meaningful impact through strategic thinking and efficient execution.

My experience in the U.S. has been eye-opening and full of learning, both academically and personally. It's definitely a big change—from the education system to the way of life—but I've embraced it as a growth opportunity. The diverse culture here has helped me see things from new perspectives and connect with people from all over the world. It's not always easy—there are moments of homesickness and challenges in adapting—but I've learned to become more independent, resilient, and open-minded. Exploring new places, trying new cuisines, and being part of a global classroom has made this journey unforgettable.

If I could give one piece of advice to new students, it would be: don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone. Moving to a new country and starting a new academic journey can feel overwhelming at first, but it's also full of opportunity. Make the most of campus resources, get involved in student organizations, and don't hesitate to reach out for help—there's a lot of support available, more than you might expect. Most importantly, be patient with yourself. It takes time to adjust, but every challenge you face is shaping you into a stronger, more capable version of yourself.



Etiquette Dinner Held for International Students



The office of International Student Services, in collaboration with the Career Development Center organized an etiquette dinner for international students at the UIS.

Facilitated by culinary expert Randall Williams, the dinner is designed to equip the international students with formal dining and networking etiquette skills which they will need in their professional careers.



Holi Festival Celebrated



International students from different countries gathered at the Recreation Park to celebrate the famous Hindu Holi festival. Organized by the Office of International Student Services and the Indian Students Association, Holi is considered one of the holiest ceremonies in parts of South Asia.

It is characterized by friends and family members throwing water and colors at each other. Held at the end of Winter and the beginning of Spring, the Holi festival colors signify the victory of the good over the evil.



Athlete of the month

My name is Edoardo Matteo Pinna.
I am from Rome, Italy. I play soccer as a goalkeeper.

I chose soccer because it has always been my passion. I started playing at a very young age and quickly fell in love with the unique role of the goalkeeper. While most kids preferred to play as forwards or attackers, I was drawn to the risks and challenges of being a goalie. I enjoyed the responsibility, the thrill of making decisive saves, and the fearlessness required to dive and jump. From the beginning, I knew I wanted to be a goalkeeper, and I've been playing in professional academies since I was 8 years old, fully committed to this position.



Our journey in the GLVC tournament ended in the quarterfinals with a goal in extra time, leaving us with a bitter sense of disappointment. While we had the quality to perform better during the regular season, we truly deserved more in that final game.



I played at a high level in Italy and came close to signing a professional contract while playing for Lazio. Later, I joined a fourth-division first team while also pursuing my education. Despite having the prospect of becoming a professional player, I never abandoned my studies. After a few years of not securing a contract, I had the opportunity to come to Springfield, combining my academic and athletic paths. I took this opportunity to study for an MBA after earning a BA in Sociology.

Soccer, even though I didn't turn professional, gave me the chance to travel across the world, meet new people, and invest in my future. Now, I aim to integrate my sociological and cultural background with my MBA and marketing studies to build a strong foundation for my career.

WORLD CELEBRATIONS

April 2nd

World Autism Awareness Day



**World Autism
Awareness Day
2025**

Advancing Neurodiversity
and the UN Sustainable
Development Goals

April 7th

World Health Day



April 7th

Earth Day



April 7th

**International Day of
Sport for Development
and Peace**



Earn Your Degree Faster with Summer Classes



Take a class or two while you're home this summer to get ahead on your studies. More than 250 courses are available, most of which are offered online!

Don't wait. Classes begin Monday, June 2, so secure your spot today!

Visit <https://www.uis.edu/summer-classes>





Let's celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month by exploring the cultural significance of mahjong. More than just a game, mahjong offers a fascinating lens through which we can examine American history—touching on themes of race, gender, society, immigration, ethnicity, and community.

Mahjong is a four-player game in which participants build matching or sequential sets of tiles. Though its popularity has fluctuated over the years, mahjong has been part of American life for nearly a century. In the U.S., it has served not just as a pastime, but as a powerful community-building tool. Originally from China, mahjong was adapted and Americanized in ways that reflected the country's diverse cultural landscape. Notably, it played a key role in community formation among both Chinese American and Jewish American women—though each group embraced the game in different ways.

In the 1920s, American businessman Joseph P. Babcock marketed mahjong as an exotic and authentic expression of Chinese culture. To many Americans at the time, it symbolized a modern, cosmopolitan lifestyle. Its growing popularity led to a demand for instructors, which provided Chinese Americans with opportunities to earn income and assert cultural authority. For Chinese American communities, mahjong became a symbol of transnational identity, cultural pride, and social connection.



By the mid-1930s, the National Mah-Jongg League was established to standardize the game in the U.S., introducing simplified scoring and mass-produced plastic tiles. Though it wasn't originally intended to become associated with Jewish American culture, mahjong found a unique place within Jewish women's networks—especially after World War II.



During the suburban boom of the 1950s, many Jewish American women—often highly educated and transitioning out of the workforce—sought new ways to build community and establish a sense of belonging in unfamiliar neighborhoods. Mahjong provided a shared ritual, a way to connect, and a cultural bridge in the midst of change. It allowed players to imagine connections to China while also fostering identity and solidarity within their own communities.

Historian Annelise Heinz highlights that the rhythm and structure of mahjong play are instrumental in forming relationships and nurturing social bonds.

If you're curious to experience it yourself, stop by Mahjong Monday in HBC lobby on Mondays from 2 to 4 p.m. All are welcome! Thank you!

Citation: Heinz, A. (2021). Mahjong: A Chinese game and the making of modern American culture. Oxford University Press.