



Newsletter

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October, 2025

DIRECTOR,

- **Zafrul Amin**
(He/Him)

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(She/Her)
- **Jolene Vollmer**
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- **Rachael Matingi**
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- **Joel Short**
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- **Erika Suzuki**
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- **Musa Baldeh**

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- **Mariam Abdulsalam**
- **Enimien Deborah**
Esangbedo



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



University Plaza, UHB 1006



217-206-6678



ISS@uis.edu

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.

From the Director's Desk



Hello International Prairie Stars,

We are almost halfway through the fall semester, and we hope classes are going well. Take a moment to step away from your studies and enjoy the last of the beautiful weather! Outdoor activities like walking, biking, and jogging are great for reducing stress and boosting focus.

In each issue, we love to highlight the incredible stories of our international students. This month, we're excited to feature:

- Tobiloba Philip Olatokun (Nigeria): A medical doctor who has recently joined the UIS community.
- Miran Todorovic (United Kingdom): An accomplished tennis player for the UIS Prairie Stars team.

We hosted our 47th annual International Cultural Festival on October 25, 2025. First held in 1977, this wonderful event celebrates cultural diversity through a flag parade, cultural performances, food exhibitions, and many other activities.

If you will be continuing your studies at UIS in the spring and plan to travel outside the US during the break, you will want to register for spring classes right away, check all your immigration documents, and make sure that the travel endorsement on page 2 of your current form I-20 is still valid.

We want you to utilize the ISS website (<https://www.uis.edu/iss>) as it is a great resource for you. It has essential information that is relevant throughout your time as a student with us. Our Immigration Advisors are more than happy to guide you on all immigration-related issues. So, feel free to visit us during the walk-in hours (Monday-Thursday: 2:00-4:00 pm) or by making an appointment. Our office line (217-206-6678) is always available during working hours.

Just as farmers harvest their crops in the fall, now is a great time to focus on your own hard work. All the effort you've put in is paying off. Keep planting those seeds of knowledge, and you'll see a wonderful harvest of success.

Warmly,

Zafrul Amin
Director of ISS, PDSO

UIS Celebrates 47th International Festival



The Office of International Student Services proudly hosted the 47th International Festival on Saturday, October 25th, celebrating the rich tapestry of cultures represented at the university.

The event commenced with a vibrant flag parade, where students dressed in traditional attire proudly carried flags from their respective countries, showcasing the global diversity within our campus community.

This annual festival serves as a platform to honor international students and foster an appreciation for cultural diversity at the University. This year's festivities featured an array of captivating performances, including traditional dances, music, and theatrical presentations by UIS students, along with talented groups from the Springfield community and beyond.

Attendees were treated to a delightful culinary experience, with stalls offering a variety of authentic dishes that reflected the unique flavors and traditions of different cultures.

Embracing the theme "Around the World in a Day," the festival has become the university's longest-running student-led event, drawing crowds that celebrate unity and cultural exchange. Each year, it aims to enhance understanding and appreciation among students and community members, making it a highlight of the academic calendar.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

I am Tobiloba Philip Olatokun (Olatokun being my last name). My pronouns are His/Him/He. As a Yoruba man from Nigeria, I'm proud to call this vibrant nation my home. With over 250 million people and 400 ethnic tribes, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, comprising 36 states and 774 local governments across six geopolitical zones. Specifically, I'm from Oyo State, Ibadan North-East Local Government.

Nigeria is endowed with abundant natural resources, including crude oil, gold, limestone, and iron ore. Its human resources are equally impressive, with notable achievements such as the first Black Nobel laureate, a Grammy Award winner, and entrepreneurs who have made significant contributions to their fields. Nigeria is also home to Nollywood, the second-largest movie industry in the world, and some of the largest churches globally. Our youthful population is vibrant, resilient, and ambitious, earning us the nickname "Giant of Africa."

I'm currently pursuing a degree in Public Health at UIS, with a focus on Environmental Health. This major aligns perfectly with my future goals, as my medical background has sparked an interest in exploring the intersection of public health, environmental health, and clinical sciences.

I was drawn to UIS because the program suits my ambitions, and I'm impressed by the alumni network from my school who have attended the university. The opportunity to intern and learn while studying, offered through the GPSI, was a major selling point for me. Having secured an internship before resumption solidified my decision to choose UIS over other schools. However, on arrival, I learnt I might have to wait for a session to begin.

As a clinician, I aim to combine medicine with environmental health. Upon completing my master's degree, I plan to work with NGOs, governmental organizations, and global institutions like the EPA, FDA, United Nations, and Africa CDC. My goal is to develop innovative solutions that improve community health outcomes by exploring environmental factors influencing health disparities.

I'm passionate about translating scientific knowledge into practical solutions that benefit individuals and communities. Through research and collaboration, I hope to drive positive change in public health, advancing health equity and community resilience. By integrating my clinical background with research expertise in environmental health, I aim to make a meaningful impact in public health. I'm excited to contribute to global initiatives addressing pressing health challenges and promoting sustainable development.

My career aspirations are centered around harnessing research and collaboration to improve health outcomes. With my academic preparation, clinical experience, and research skills, I'm confident I'll make a lasting impact in public health, both locally and globally.

Moving to a new country can be overwhelming, and I've certainly faced my share of challenges. From finding accommodation to navigating the local transportation system and building a community, it's taken time to settle in. However, I'm gradually getting accustomed to my new environment, making friends, and learning my way around.

What has impressed me most is the university community's willingness to help – from colleagues to professors, everyone has been supportive. Additionally, I've been blown away by the approachability and teaching style of my lecturers and professors. They have a remarkable ability to break down complex subjects into easily digestible material, and their practical approach to learning has been invaluable.

Overall, I'm enjoying my experience so far and am grateful for the opportunity to learn and grow in this new environment. As a new student myself, I'd like to share two pieces of advice that resonated with me. Firstly, "if you've come this far, you can go all the way." Having traveled thousands of kilometers to pursue education, you've demonstrated resilience and determination. With continued hardwork, I'm confident you'll reach your goals – it's just a matter of time.

Secondly, "don't give up." The journey may seem challenging initially, but by following the rules, working hard, and seizing opportunities, you'll find your footing. Resilience is key to overcoming obstacles and thriving in this new environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts.



Int'l Festival Highlights



Athlete of the month

My name is Miran Todorovic.

I was born and raised in London but am originally from Bosnia and Croatia.

I play tennis. There are no specific positions in tennis as it is an individual sport but I would say my playstyle is quite aggressive relying on a strong serve, backhand and coming to the net.

I played many sports growing up all to a decent standard but after starting the sport of tennis late in a park, I instantly fell in love with it and wanted to make a career out of it. I started playing and competing seriously very late around the age of 15 when I had the finances to be able to receive coaching and travel to tournaments around the UK.

We are currently out of season as we play in the spring and I am not sure as to what our ranking is. However, we have played 2 matches so far beating a division 1 Chicago state and losing a close match to Purdue Northwest who are top 30 in the nation. It would definitely be a dream come true to play professionally.

Having started so late in such a difficult and technical sport it is definitely a catch-up game but hopefully with the right work ethic I can make it happen. I would like to make it top 1000 in the world long term and if that was to happen go from there.



October 5th

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY



October 10th

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY



October 13th

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY



October 24th

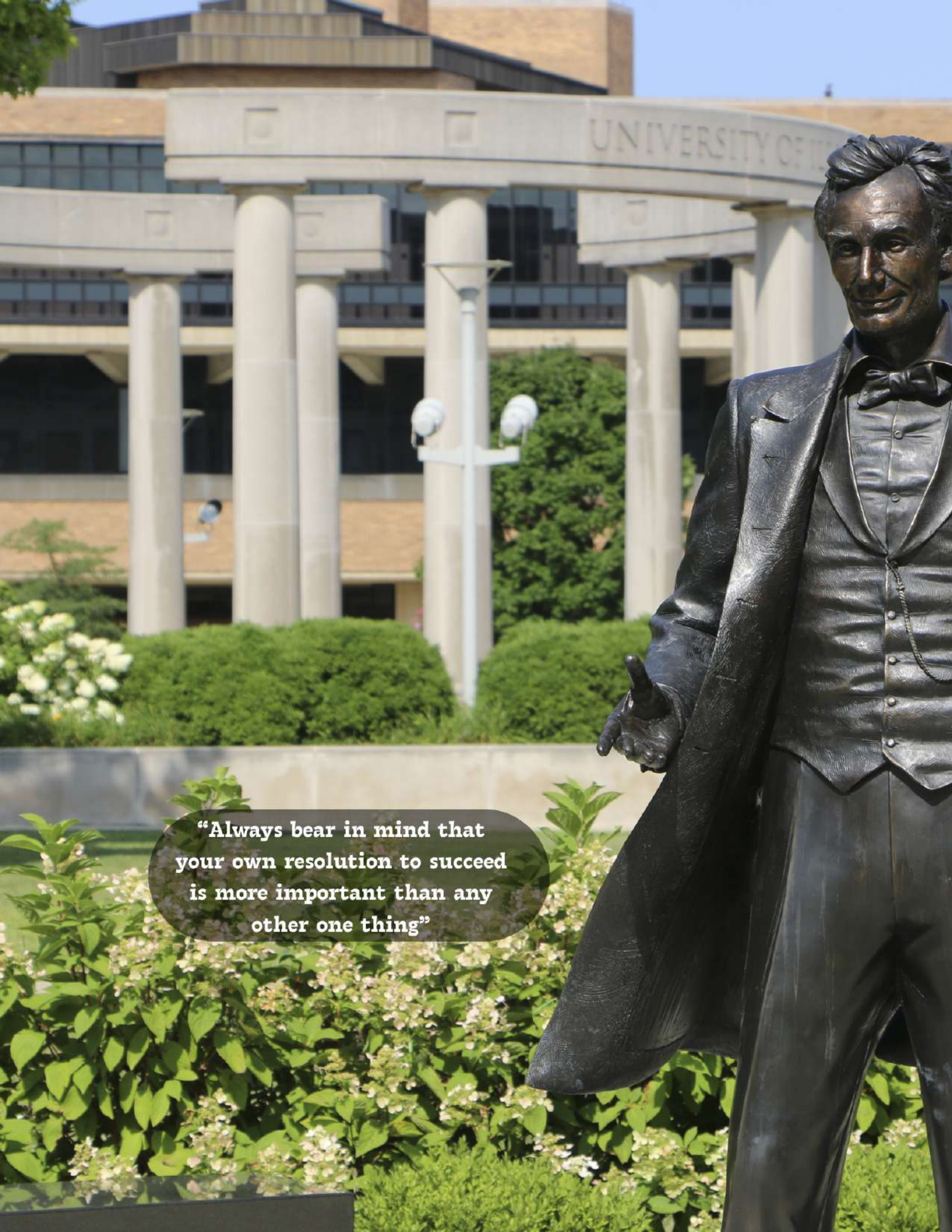
UNITED NATIONS DAY



October 31st

HALLOWEEN





**"Always bear in mind that
your own resolution to succeed
is more important than any
other one thing"**