



Newsletter

International Student Orientation



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Student Spotlight
- Athlete of the Month
- Lincoln Quote

February, 2026

DIRECTOR,

- Zafrul Amin
(He/Him)

IMMIGRATION SPECIALISTS,

- Tracy Rakes
(She/Her)
- Jolene Vollmer
(She/Her)
- Rachael Matingi
(She/Her)
- Joel Short
(He/Him)

PROGRAM COORDINATOR,

- Erika Suzuki
(She/Her)

GRADUATE ASSISTANT,

- Musa Baldeh

STUDENT EMPLOYEES,

- 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!

Can you believe we're already halfway through the Spring semester? We hope you're keeping warm and staying hydrated. With March break just around the corner, we are so happy you'll have a chance to rest. Whether you're traveling to see family or just relaxing with friends, make sure to do something you truly enjoy!

Last month, we held an Optional Practical Training (OPT) workshop for our international students who will be graduating in May. This workshop is an important part of ISS efforts in preparing our students for life after UIS. We will organize another OPT workshop geared toward summer graduates (but all are welcome) on March 27. We strongly recommend you start working on OPT application if you will be graduating in May.

In this newsletter, we will feature Sumit Kumar Verma, an international undergraduate student from Nepal. Sumit was one of our International Student Ambassadors who worked closely with our office to facilitate international student programs. You will also meet Edoardo Matteo Pinna, a graduate student from Rome, Italy. He was a goalkeeper for the UIS Men's soccer team.

Our ISS website is loaded with important information, and we encourage you to check it out. As always, you can also talk to an Immigration Advisor (DSO) during the walk-in hours (Monday-Thursday: 2:00-4:00 pm) or by making an appointment. We are always happy to talk to you.

Enjoy your break and stay cozy!

Zafrul Amin
Director of ISS, PDSO

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

My name is Sumit Verma, and my pronouns are he/him. I come from Nepal, a beautiful, landlocked country situated in the Himalayas between India and China, known for its stunning natural features like the world's highest peak, Mount Everest, which draws adventurers from around the world.

Nepal has many different kinds of places from the warm Terai forests with animals like Bengal tigers and onehorned rhinos, to peaceful high mountain lakes like Phewa Lake in Pokhara, where you can boat while looking at the snowy Annapurna mountains. Interestingly, Nepal has eight of the world's ten tallest mountains, making it a paradise for trekkers, and it's the birthplace of Lord Buddha in Lumbini, a UNESCO World Heritage site that attracts tourists.

I am a senior currently pursuing my undergraduate degree in Management Information Systems at UIS, and I chose this major because technology has profoundly impacted my life growing up, I watched my brother, who majored in information management, dive into the tech world, playing with gadgets and solving complex problems, which sparked my interest and made me realize how innovation can transform everyday experiences. Initially, I came to the US as a biology major, drawn to the sciences, but as I explored courses and reflected on my passions, things shifted; technology always stood out to me as something dynamic and ever-evolving, especially when blended with business strategies, like using data analytics to drive decisions or implementing cybersecurity in enterprises, so MIS felt like the perfect fit that combines my tech curiosity with practical business applications.



SUMIT VERMA



LUMBINI, THE BIRTHPLACE OF LORD BUDDHA



ONEHORNED RHINO

My career aspirations are to become a leader in tech innovation, perhaps starting my own startup to solve real-world problems in emerging markets like Nepal, improving access to education through affordable digital platforms or enhancing supply chain efficiency for small businesses in rural areas something impactful that bridges technology with social good, creating jobs and fostering sustainable development while drawing on my cross-cultural experiences. As an international student ambassador with the International Student Services office, I have served for two years, and it's been an incredibly rewarding role where I have organized orientation events, guided new students through visa processes and cultural adjustments, and hosted workshops on campus life, which not only helped me make lifelong friends from diverse backgrounds but also gave me deep insights into global perspectives, leadership, and empathy, turning challenges like homesickness into opportunities for growth and community building.



MOUNT EVEREST, NEPAL

Generally speaking, my experience in the US has been truly transformative and positive from arriving with just a handful of acquaintances, feeling a bit overwhelmed and pace of life here in Springfield, Illinois, to now having a wide network of supportive people, including inspiring professors who have mentored me on projects, classmates who have collaborated on group assignments turning into close buddies, and coworkers at ISS and Student Union who have shared laughs and late-night study sessions; I have encountered kind-hearted peoples everywhere, from neighbors to campus events, which has made me feel welcomed and empowered, allowing me to dip in American culture through things like Thanksgiving dinners with host families or road trips to nearby cities, all while balancing academics and part-time work, turning initial culture shock into a sense of belonging and personal achievement.

To new students, I would share these words of wisdom: embrace the unknown with an open heart step out of your comfort zone to join clubs or attend events, as those connections will become your support system; stay organized with your studies and finances, remember to prioritize self-care, whether it's calling home or exploring hobbies, because homesickness is normal but temporary; seek help when needed, from advisors to peers, as exposure builds strength; and finally, view every challenge as a lesson whether it's navigating bureaucracy or adapting to new foods, it all contributes to your growth, so stay strong, curious, and grateful, because this journey will shape you into a more confident international ready to conquer the world.

Pictorial of 2025



International Festival



Professional Etiquette Dinner



Ice Skating



St. Louis Zoo



Ski Trip



International Congratulatory Ceremony

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

February 4th

Rosa Parks Day



February 12th

Abraham Lincoln's Birthday



February 14th

Valentine's Day



February 17th

Feast of Shesmu



February 21st

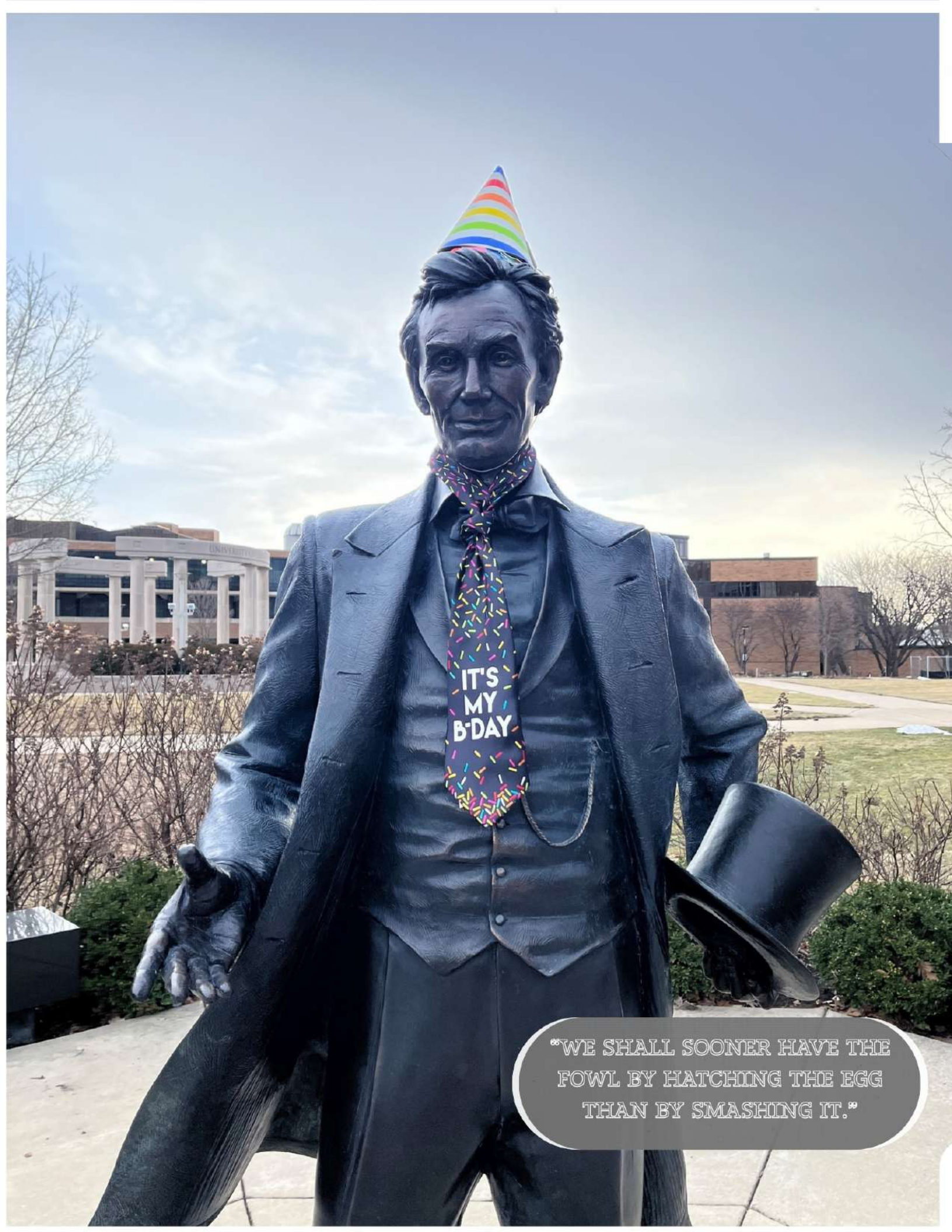
International Mother Language Day



February 28th

National Science Day





"WE SHALL SOONER HAVE THE FOWL BY HATCHING THE EGG THAN BY SMASHING IT."