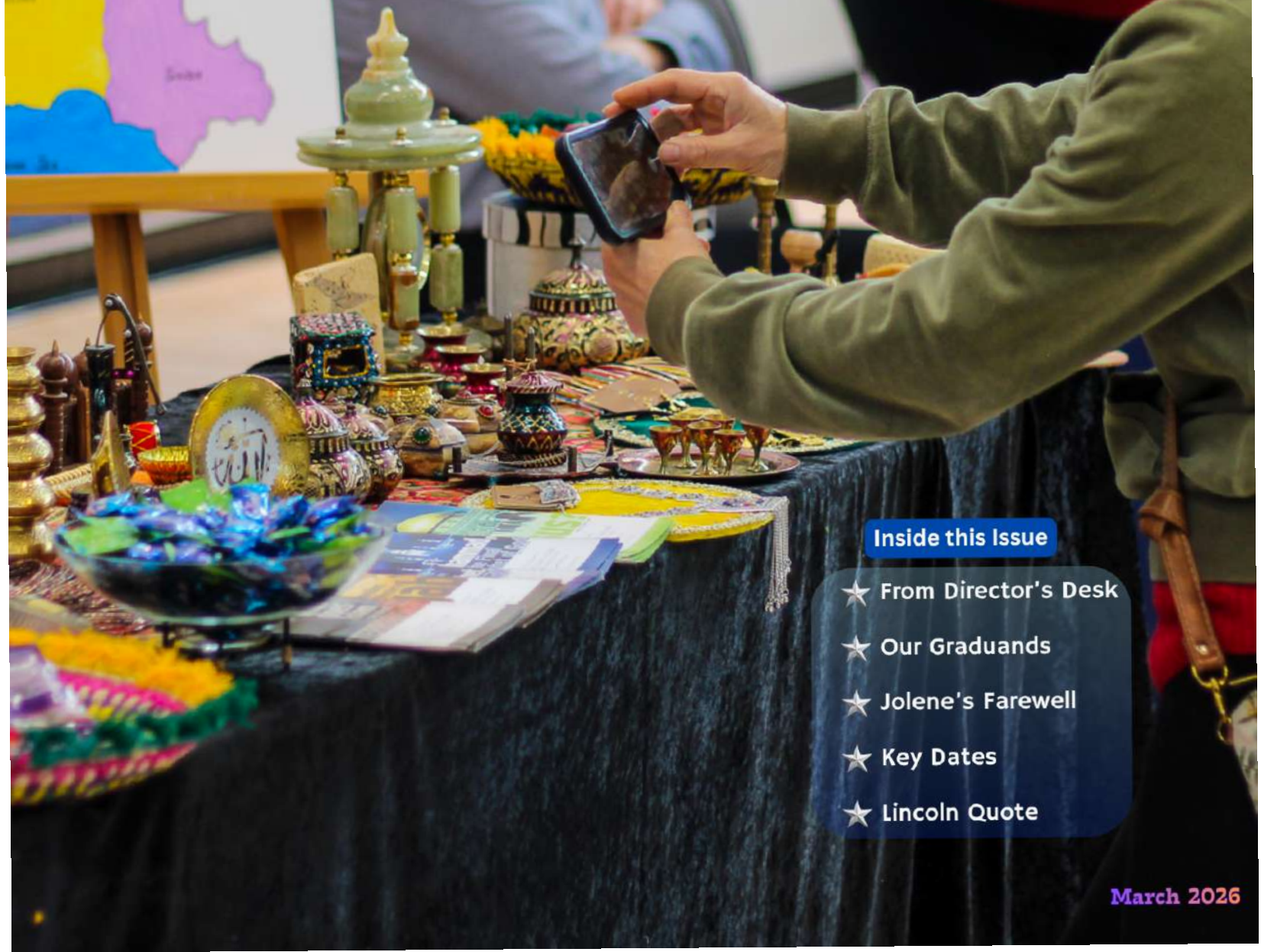


International Student Services Newsletter



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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 everyone,

Happy Spring! It's a joy to welcome you to this month's newsletter. We hope you are able to enjoy outdoor activities and recharge as we head into finals week. You've got this!

A special shout-out goes to our upcoming graduates. We know how much hard work it took to get here, and as your DSOs, nothing makes us happier than seeing you reach your goals. Congratulations on this amazing achievement!

If you are planning to apply for OPT, please remember that processing times have increased. We strongly encourage submitting your application as soon as possible to avoid delays. Have you filed your taxes yet? If not, please do so by Wednesday, April 15. We are always here to help—stop by during our walk-in hours (Mon–Thu, 2:00–4:00 pm) or give us a call at 217-206-6678.

We are sad to let you know that one of our DSOs, Jolene Vollmer will be leaving UIS shortly for a better opportunity. She was always involved with international community and a supportive member of UIS. We will miss Jolene and wish her all the best.

Finally, don't miss our student spotlights on Sharmeen and Pa Seedy. Their stories are truly inspiring examples of the international student experience here.

Warmly,

Zafrul Amin

Director of ISS, PDSO

I'M GRADUATING!

My name is Sharmeen and I majored in Management Information Systems. Well, to be this near graduating is a little surreal. It is being on the edge of something massive, part relief, part excitement, and part "wait... is this really happening?" I feel proud about the progress that I have made but feel like I am wondering what will come up next.

I hope that someday I will have a career in which technology and business intersect in some concrete sense, be it in the analysis of data, digital strategy, or systems management. I'm especially interested in how data can be used to make smarter decisions and enhance user experiences. In the long run, I would like to be associated with organizations which are innovative, such as Microsoft, Google, or even consulting firms where I could work on various projects. I also consider a role that would allow me to continue learning since, frankly, in technology, when you quit learning, you fall behind.



SHARMEEN

My experiences in UIS have been varied in terms of growth, challenges and a lot of learning other than reading textbooks. The classes challenged me to be more critical and collaborating with classmates who had other backgrounds made me open up quite extensively. The best moments were truly the little ones - the late night assignments, group projects that went smoothly and the events on campus. In the case of the U.S., it has been an experience by itself. It is a lesson to learn to be independent even when you are not ready. You get to know how to handle it all time, money, responsibilities and that transforms you. It is not always simple, but it will certainly make you a better and more flexible person.

The sense of community and familiarity will be what I will miss the most. UIS is a place where you develop gradually with the course of time, you do not even notice how you have transformed at the end. I will miss the people, routine, and even smaller details such as walking around campus or other things like last-minute study sessions. It is weird that the mundane things are the ones that one remembers best.

I'M GRADUATING!

My name is Pa Seedy Jammeh, and I studied Public Health with a specialization in Environmental Health. As I approach graduation, I feel a deep sense of gratitude and fulfillment. This journey has required resilience, discipline, and faith.

Looking back, I am proud of how far I have come. Alhamdulillah, I am truly grateful and excited for the next chapter.

In the future, I aspire to continue making a meaningful impact in public health, particularly in epidemiology, environmental health, emergency management, and policy development.

During my time at UIS, I had the opportunity to serve as an Office Assistant with the Office of Engaged Learning, and I also worked with the Illinois Department of Public Health as a GPSI intern. Additionally, I have served at the Illinois Department of Public Health, which has strengthened my passion for protecting population health and contributing to evidence-based decision-making.

Moving forward, I aim to work with organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other global public health institutions, where I can contribute to disease prevention, research, and strengthening health systems both in the United States and internationally.

My time at the University of Illinois Springfield has been truly transformative. The academic environment challenged me to grow intellectually, while my classmates and lecturers provided a supportive and inspiring space to learn. I had opportunities to engage in conferences, discussions, and practical experiences that prepared me for real-world public health work.

Beyond academics, serving the university and working with state public health systems made my experience even more meaningful. Living in the United States has also broadened my perspective, exposing me to diverse cultures, systems, and opportunities that contributed greatly to my personal and professional development.

What I will miss most about UIS is the community. The relationships I built with classmates, professors, mentors, and colleagues are truly invaluable. I will also miss the environment that constantly pushed me to strive for excellence and the opportunities that allowed me to grow both professionally and personally.



FAREWELL

Dear Students,

I wanted to share that I will be moving on from my role at UIS to a new position with the Illinois Board of Higher Education. I will continue to live in Springfield, so don't be surprised if you still see me around!

Working with international students has been the most meaningful part of my time at UIS. You have brought so much joy, perspective, and inspiration into my life, and it has truly been a privilege to support you throughout your journeys. I have learned so much from you, and I will always be grateful for the experiences and connections we've shared.

While it's hard to say goodbye, I want you to know that you are in excellent hands. The ISS team is truly the best group of people I've ever worked with—knowledgeable, supportive, and deeply committed to helping you succeed. You could not be in better care.

Thank you for letting me be part of your UIS experience. I'll be cheering you on and wishing you all the very best as you continue your journeys! 😊

Sincerely,
Jolene



Pictorial of Past Ceremonies



WORLD CELEBRATIONS

March 3rd

World Wildlife Day



March 8th

International Women's Day



March 17th

St. Patrick's Day



March 21st

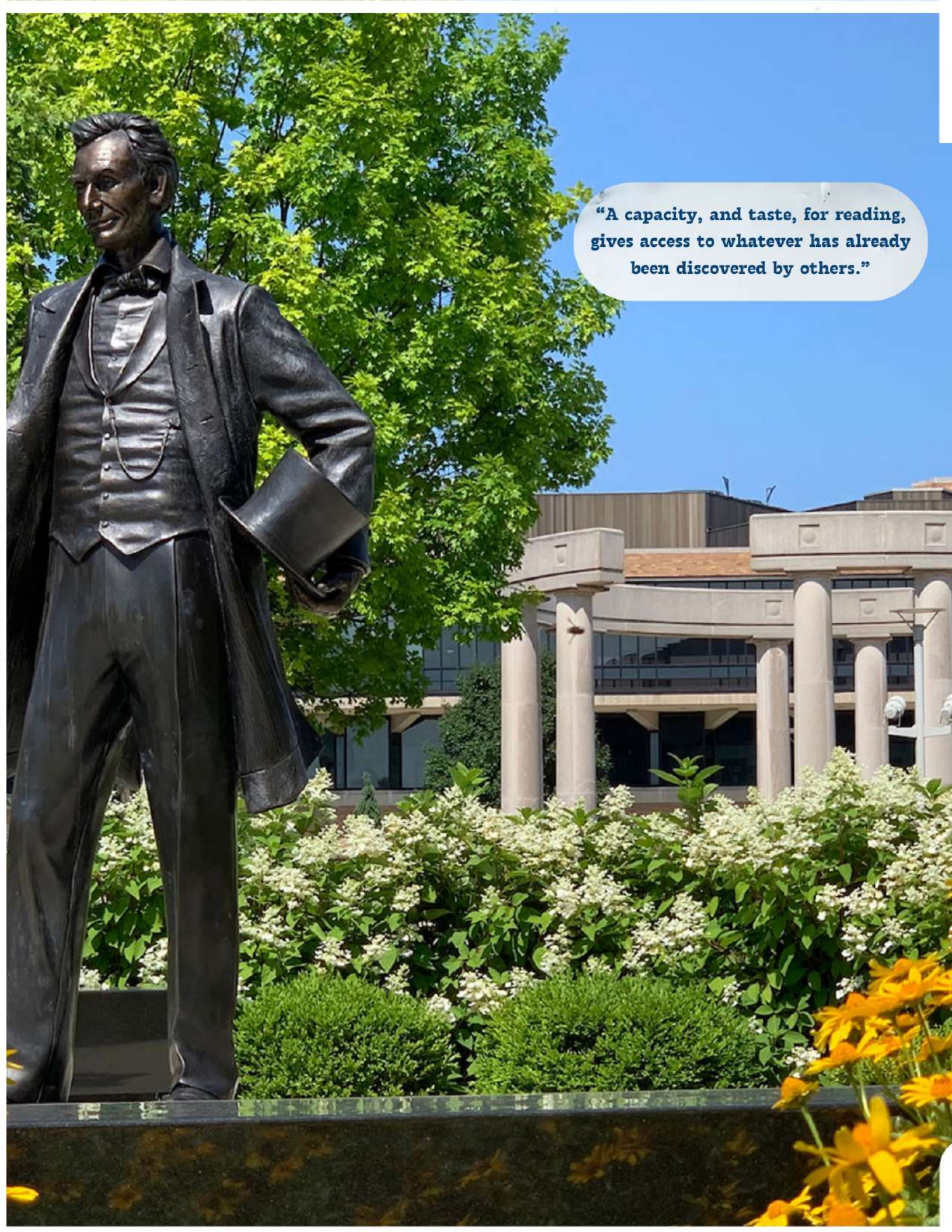
**International Day for the
Elimination of Racial Discrimination**



March 27th

World Theatre Day



A bronze statue of a man in a suit and bow tie, holding a book, stands in the foreground. The background features a modern building with columns and lush greenery under a clear blue sky.

**“A capacity, and taste, for reading,
gives access to whatever has already
been discovered by others.”**