



International Student Services

Newsletter



Inside this Issue

- ★ From Director's Desk
- ★ Our Graduands
- ★ Key Dates
- ★ Lincoln Quote

April 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.

Hello everyone!

Welcome to the latest edition of the ISS newsletter. As the flowers bloom across campus and we head into the final stretch of the Spring semester, we hope you are feeling energized and ready to finish strong.



The big moment is finally here! This Saturday, May 9th, we will proudly cheer on our international students as they walk across the stage to receive their hard-earned degrees. To kick off the celebrations, please join us this Friday, the 8th, for our International Congratulatory Ceremony. We'll be recognizing your remarkable achievements, presenting honor cords, and enjoying refreshments together.

For those graduating: what's next on your horizon? Whether you are heading home, applying for OPT, or starting a new degree, remember that the ISS office is always here to support you. Please keep us updated so we can assist with your transition.

For our continuing students: if you plan to travel outside the U.S. this summer, remember that you need a travel signature from your DSO. Please visit our Travel Page for essential information on domestic and international travel.

In this edition, we are also excited to feature reflections from Barbara Crankson (Ghana) and a student profile of Sneha Gupta (India). We hope you enjoy getting to know these two vibrant members of our community!

Congratulations to the Class of 2026!

Zafrul Amin

Director of ISS, PDSO

I AM SNEHA!

My name is Sneha Gupta and my pronouns are she/her.

I am from India, a country known for its rich cultural diversity, long history, vibrant festivals, and wide range of languages, traditions, and cuisines. One of the most beautiful things about India is that every region has its own unique identity, yet there is a strong sense of connection and community that brings people together. It is a place full of color, resilience, and warmth, and that is something I carry with me wherever I go.

I am currently pursuing my Master of Public Health in Environmental Health at the University of Illinois Springfield. I chose this field because, as a physician, I have seen how deeply health is shaped not only by medical care, but also by the environments in which people live, work, and grow. I wanted to expand my understanding from individual patient care to population-level prevention and public health impact. I found the UIS program appealing because of its supportive learning environment, strong public health focus, and the opportunity to grow both academically and professionally.

My career aspiration is to build a meaningful career in public health research, environmental health, and community-based prevention, where I can contribute to improving health outcomes on a broader scale. I hope to combine my medical background with public health training to work on issues related to prevention, health equity, environmental risk communication, and community outreach. As an International Student Ambassador with ISS, I enjoy supporting students, helping foster a welcoming environment, and contributing to a sense of belonging for the international student community. It is rewarding to be able to connect with others, share experiences, and help students feel more comfortable as they adjust to a new academic and cultural setting.

My experience in the United States has been challenging, enriching, and transformative. Studying here has helped me grow in confidence, independence, and adaptability. It has also given me the chance to meet people from many different backgrounds, learn from diverse perspectives, and discover new strengths in myself. While adjusting to a new country comes with its own set of challenges, it has also been an incredibly meaningful journey filled with learning and personal growth.

My words of wisdom for new students would be: be open, be patient with yourself, and do not be afraid to ask for help. It is okay to take time to adjust. Every new experience teaches you something valuable. Step out of your comfort zone, connect with people, and make use of the support systems available to you. Most importantly, believe in yourself. You belong here, and your voice, story, and journey matter.



I'M GRADUATING!

I'm Barbara Crankson from Ghana, currently preparing to graduate in the upcoming commencement for Spring 2026 with a Master of Public Administration and Nonprofit Management degree.

I feel both giddy and nervous about graduation. Giddy because time has gone by so quickly with so much to look back at, opportunities given and initiatives taken, I am grateful for the entire experience so far. Nervous because of what lies ahead and facing the world, however, I believe I have all I need to thrive in the real world.

I look forward to working in the nonprofit sector as a fundraiser, campaign manager, development manager, government relations manager, or grant writer, with a focus on women's education, women's health, and health communications. Some organizations I would love to work with include the United Nations, UN Women, the Bill Gates Foundation, and Global Fund for Women, among other nonprofit organizations with missions in these areas.

I would describe my experience at UIS as fulfilling; I believe committing to what you love and connecting with people are what I did that have helped me enjoy my journey so far.

Volunteering, taking initiative, and saying yes even in the face of uncertainty have been major factors in developing leadership skills and building my confidence.

Mine will certainly be the people, the close-knit campus, professors who remember your name, and the opportunities that have opened for me to experience things I never imagined, like going to the UN General Assembly.

Always take initiative and say yes even when you're unsure.



International Congratulatory Ceremony



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**





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

Abraham Lincoln