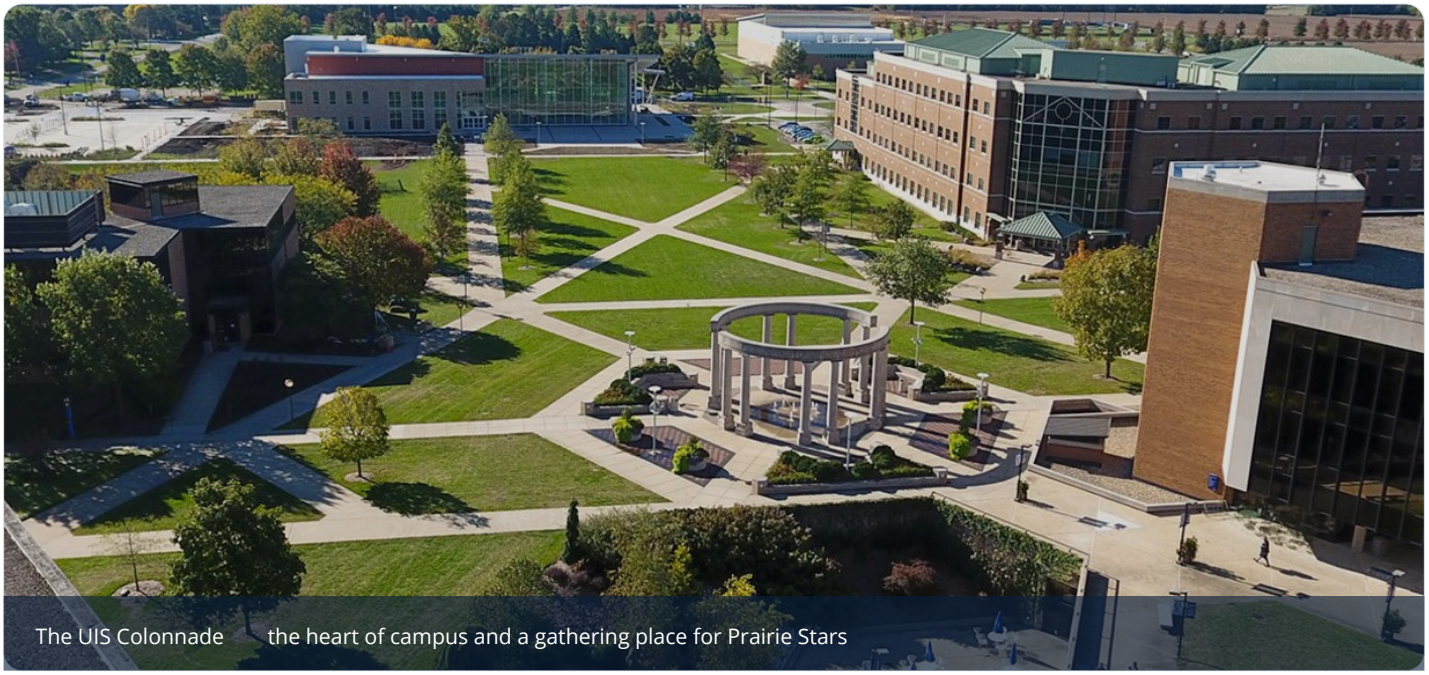
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

UIS NEWSLETTER• NOVEMBER 2026



The UIS Colonnade — the heart of campus and a gathering place for Prairie Stars

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- UIS Took International Students to the Refuge Ranch

Office Closure - Thanksgiving
ISS will be closed Thursday, November 26 and Friday, November 27. We will reopen on Monday, November 30.



Prairie Stars at the Colonnade fountain

ISS DIRECTORY

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Zafrul Amin (He/Him)

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Rachael Matingi (She/Her)
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Erika Suzuki (She/Her)

GRADUATE ASSISTANT
Sumit Verma (He/Him)

STUDENT EMPLOYEES
Enimien Deborah Esangbedo (She/Her)

Walk-In Hours
Monday, Tuesday & Thursday, 2:00–4:00 p.m.

Location
University Plaza, UHB 1006

Contact
217-206-6678 | ISS@uis.edu

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

From the Director's Desk



Zafrul Amin, Director of ISS, PDSO

Dear Students,

We have reached the midpoint of the semester and the world around us is changing. The air is getting crisper, the leaves are turning vibrant shades of amber and gold, and the initial rush of the new school year has settled into a steady, familiar routine (hopefully). Hitting the halfway mark is a unique milestone. If you are feeling a little tired, overwhelmed, or are questioning your momentum, that is completely normal—and it is exactly why this season is the perfect metaphor for your journey. Think of this mid-semester point not as a hurdle, but as your autumn clearing. It is the perfect moment to pause, breathe, and recalibrate.

In this newsletter, we are proud to feature an exceptional international student from India, Janvi Sehdev. She is an undergraduate student majoring in Computer Science. Please read her amazing journey from India, accomplishments, and future goals.

Please check out our November Calendar of Events. We have a hiking trip scheduled on November 6th, International Education Week events from November 16th–20th, and OPT Workshop for Spring 2027 graduates on November 13th.

As always, the ISS office is here to support. You are welcome to use walk-in hours on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 2:00–4:00 pm. If these times do not work with your schedule, please contact us at 217-206-6678 or iss@uis.edu to schedule an appointment. As you navigate the coming weeks, keep these three thoughts close to heart: celebrate your progress, embrace the power of reset, and rest, don’t quit.

Warm regards,

Zafrul Amin
Director of ISS, PDSO



The UIS Colonnade at night — a landmark of community, tradition, and Prairie Star pride

Student Spotlight

Janvi Sehdev (She/Her)

COMPUTER SCIENCE · UNDERGRADUATE · INDIA



My name is Janvi Sehdev, and my pronouns are she/her.

I am from India, from the state of Punjab. Punjab is known for its rich culture, welcoming and energetic people, delicious food, and strong traditions. One of my favourite things about Punjab is how important community and celebrating together are. Festivals, family gatherings, and sharing food with others are a big part of our culture.

I am an undergraduate Computer Science student at UIS and currently a sophomore. I chose Computer Science because I have always been interested in technology and how it can be used to solve real-world problems. I am especially interested in areas such as artificial intelligence and web development. I chose UIS because I found the Computer Science program to be a good fit for my goals, while also offering opportunities to get involved on campus and build connections with other students and faculty.

My long-term career goal is to build a career in the technology industry, particularly in areas such as artificial intelligence and web development. As a Computer Science student, I want to continue developing my technical skills while gaining practical experience through internships, projects, research, and campus involvement.

My experience in the United States has been really positive and full of growth. Moving to a new country for college has helped me become more independent, confident, and open to new experiences. I have had the opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds, learn about different cultures, and become involved in many activities at UIS.

Being away from home can sometimes make me miss my family, friends, and familiar traditions. However, getting involved on campus and meeting new people has helped me feel more connected and comfortable. The friendships and connections I have made at UIS have made the experience feel more like home.

My biggest advice to new students is to step outside your comfort zone and connect with as many people as you can, especially during your first semester. Attend campus events, introduce yourself to classmates, join student organizations, and take advantage of events organized by International Student Services. Making friends and building good connections can make a huge difference, especially when you are far away from home.

I would also encourage international students to participate in cultural events and celebrations on campus. Events such as Diwali and other celebrations organized by ISS are a great way to share your culture, learn about others, and make new memories together. Don't be afraid to put yourself out there—the connections you make can become one of the most meaningful parts of your college experience.



Cultural celebration with friends



International Education Week activities



Campus outing with fellow students

Upcoming November Events

Cultural Observances & International Days



NOVEMBER 1

All Saints' Day

A Christian observance honoring the saints.



NOVEMBER 1–2

Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)

A Mexican cultural tradition honoring deceased loved ones.



NOVEMBER 5

World Tsunami Awareness Day

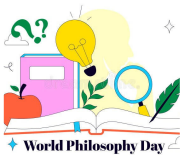
Highlights disaster preparedness and community resilience.



NOVEMBER 16

International Day of Islamic Art

Recognizes the artistic traditions of Islamic cultures.



NOVEMBER 19

World Philosophy Day

Celebrates philosophical thinking, dialogue, and critical inquiry.



NOVEMBER 20

Africa Industrialization Day

Highlights industrial development and economic growth in Africa.



NOVEMBER 29

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

An official United Nations observance.

World Celebrations

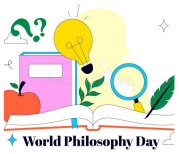
November 2026



NOV 08

Diwali — Festival of Lights

A major Hindu festival celebrating the victory of light over darkness.



NOV 10

World Science Day for Peace and Development

Promotes the role of science in building a sustainable and peaceful world.



NOV 11

Veterans Day

Honors all who have served in the United States Armed Forces.



NOV 16

International Day for Tolerance

Promotes mutual understanding, respect, and dialogue among cultures.



NOV 17

International Students' Day

Celebrates the contributions and experiences of international students.



NOV 25

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Raises awareness and calls for the prevention of violence against women.



NOV 26

Thanksgiving Day

A day of gratitude, family gatherings, and shared meals in the United States.

UIS Takes International Students to Refuge Ranch

Building Community, Sharing Culture, and Celebrating Fall

The Office of International Student Services (ISS) and Christian Student Fellowship (CSF) brought students together for a memorable autumn excursion to Refuge Ranch on October 23. The visit offered students an opportunity to connect with one another, experience a local community organization, and enjoy the beauty and traditions of the fall season.

Refuge Ranch is a rescue farm dedicated to caring for horses and supporting local youth through educational and community outreach programs. During the visit, students had the opportunity to explore the ranch, meet fellow participants, and learn more about the meaningful work the organization does in the community.

The excursion also featured classic autumn activities, including pumpkin painting. These shared experiences created a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere where students could make new friends, strengthen connections, and enjoy seasonal traditions together.



For international students, experiences like this offer a special way to learn about American fall traditions while building friendships and a stronger sense of belonging. The trip reflected the spirit of ISS and CSF: bringing people together through community engagement, shared experiences, and meaningful connections.

A day of friendship, learning, and fall memories—made special by the people who shared it.



Pumpkin painting together



Painted pumpkins on display

Upcoming ISS Events

Hiking at Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site
Friday, November 6, 1–5 p.m.

OPT Workshop for Spring 2027 Graduates
Friday, November 13, 2–4 p.m. · Brookens Auditorium

International Education Week at UIS

International Education Week is an opportunity to celebrate the benefits of international education and cultural exchange at the University of Illinois Springfield. This special week recognizes the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives that international students bring to our campus community.

Through cultural activities, educational programs, and opportunities to connect with others, students can explore different traditions, share their experiences, and build meaningful connections across cultures. International Education Week also highlights the importance of global understanding, mutual respect, and collaboration in today's interconnected world.

At UIS, we celebrate the diversity that makes our campus unique and encourage students to take part in activities that broaden their perspectives and strengthen our international community.

International Education Week Events

International Education Week 2027 Kick-off Table

Monday, November 16, 1–3 p.m.

Student Union North Entrance

International Education Week Online Trivia Quizzes

November 16–20

UIS Connection

Documentary Focused on International Students' Experiences

Thursday, November 19, 4:30 PM-6:00 PM

A Message of Perseverance

An Inspirational Message for International Students



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

— Abraham Lincoln

Studying in a new country takes courage, determination, and an open mind. Every challenge is an opportunity to learn, every new connection helps build a sense of belonging, and every step forward brings you closer to your goals.

Keep believing in yourself, embrace new experiences, and continue moving toward the future you envision.