



Inside this Issue

[Recent Events](#)

[Student Spotlight](#)

[Athlete of the Month](#)

[World Celebrations](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

OCTOBER 2024

FROM THE DITOR'S DESK



It has been a few months since we were last able to publish our “monthly” newsletter. We are very happy to have our new Graduate Assistant, Musa Baldeh, on board for many reasons, but one of those is that our GA is the primary editor of the office newsletter and is instrumental in helping us to get these to you in a timely manner. We should be able to get back on our monthly schedule with this edition.

That said, we are also very happy to welcome all our new international students who joined us in August. We hope that you are settling into a normal routine and are beginning to feel at home in the US, in Springfield, and at UIS. If you are still navigating some of the normal effects of culture shock, please do not hesitate to call on our office for assistance and to take advantage of others across the campus who are eager to assist you, most especially the UIS Counseling Center.

Allow me to express my appreciation to all of you who are planning ahead and have attended our recent OPT workshops. The groups have been large and engaged. Most of you appear to be also taking advantage of the OPT application sessions and getting your applications submitted to USCIS in a timely manner. Those who have completed this are likely to receive your approval and your Employment Authorization Documents before your requested start date. For those who have not yet applied, we do encourage you to do so as soon as you are confident that you will complete your program of study in the current term. See the OPT page on our website for additional information.

For those continuing with us in January and also planning ahead, be sure to register for your spring courses as soon as that option becomes available to you. We have another great group of students joining us in the spring, and they will also be registering for their classes. Now might be a good time to touch base with your academic advisor so that you know which courses you will need for the next term. If you plan to travel outside the US during the upcoming break between the semesters, take note of the guidance on our Travel page. You can get your travel signature from us at any time, but if any of your other documents are in need of renewal, that may take a bit longer.

I know that many of you have participated in the educational and cultural programming events that Erika and the International Ambassadors have organized this semester. There are still few more in what remains of this year. You can find those and eventually the new opportunities for the spring here. ISS is always here to support you, and we wish you the best in the second half of the fall term. Enjoy the changing season.

Rick Lane

STAFF

DIRECTOR,

- Rick Lane
(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
- Sai Pratyush Danthala



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.

UIS Celebrates 46th International Festival



The Office of International Student Services & International Student Association hosted the 46th International Festival on Saturday, October 19th. The event started with a flag parade of elegantly dressed students representing close to 20 countries.

The annual festival is an opportunity to celebrate International students in the University and promote cultural diversity. This year's celebration featured mouthwatering performances by UIS students and invited groups from the community of Springfield. Attendees also treated themselves to traditional foods from a variety of cultures.

In his welcoming remarks, Rick Lane, Director of the ISS, thanked all the attendees at this year's Festival. He noted that the UIS highly cherishes its international students and making their experiences memorable is a priority.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

I'm from The Gambia and my pronouns are he/him. The Gambia is a small West African Country with beautiful sandy beaches along the Atlantic Ocean and friendly, welcoming people hence its popular nickname "Smiling Coast of West Africa". It is a popular tourist destination for these reasons coupled with the rich culture, diverse flora and fauna, and exquisite cuisine.

I come from a traditionally cattle herding group called the Fula (Fulani) which is spread across West, Central and Eastern Africa. My favorite dish is made from rice or corn powder and can be best served with soup or fresh cow milk.

At UIS, I am pursuing a master's degree in Communication. Over the years, I have developed a keen interest in the intersection of communication, diplomacy and international security. This interest underpins my passion and informs my future academic and professional aspirations.

My travels around the world have deepened these interests and have shaped my worldview immensely. I firmly believe that the world would be a better place if we engaged in simple acts like talking to, and learning from, one another's cultures and values. This fosters love, understanding and appreciation for people. Our commonalities are far more than our differences.

UIS is quite a welcoming environment. My experience with lecturers and administrative staff has been amazing. What impressed me most was how swiftly they responded to my emails from the time of admission to my arrival in the US. This is very valuable.

I love playing soccer and I am a big fan of Real Madrid (Spain) and Cristiano Ronaldo (CR7). I enjoy spending time at the beach with family and friends and swimming in the Atlantic Ocean.

I have a little piece of advice for new students. Make the most of the variety of resources available for students at the UIS. Also, take time to make new friends, enjoy the environment, attend campus events and take good care of yourself.



Athlete of the month



My name is Elena Dimaggio (she/her). I am from Udine, Italy. I have been playing soccer since I was 7 years old. I have always played as a winger, both left and right sides.

I started playing soccer because my older brother was very much into that sport. I used to watch his games, and then we would spend hours in our backyard playing together.

Some of my classmates were also involved in soccer and encouraged me to join their club. At the time, when I was seven, there were no girls' teams in my hometown, so I ended up playing with the boys. I was the only girl among 30 boys, and I played with them until I turned 13.

It wasn't always easy because being the only girl meant a number of judgments coming from other people. My teammates were very supportive, though, and nothing really mattered more to me than to be able to play on and on no matter what those other people thought.

Now, I'm fortunate to play alongside and compete against other girls. I also enjoy watching soccer on TV, which has fueled my passion and kept me playing all these years. Soccer, and sports in general, have been a huge support in my life. I believe staying active is essential for both physical and mental health. It gives me a chance to disconnect from my thoughts and fully immerse myself in something I love for a few hours each day. It's incredible that after 17 years, I'm still playing soccer and enjoying it just as much as I did in my first year. It's also amazing how fortunate I am to be able to play the sport on an entirely different continent. I'm truly grateful for this experience.



We are currently playing in the Great Lakes Valley Conference (GLVC). We are currently 7th but our goal is to win the next games to be able to host the play-off matches. It would be a great opportunity to push more people to come to our games and support us, which is really helpful when you're playing.

Although I love soccer and enjoy playing it, I don't want it to be my career as a professional player. Instead, I want to keep soccer as a passion I pursue on the side, something I do purely for fun and enjoyment.



WORLD CELEBRATIONS

October 5th → **WORLD TEACHERS' DAY** →



October 10th → **WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY** →



October 14th → **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY** →



October 24th → **UNITED NATIONS DAY** →



October 31st → **HALLOWEEN** →



UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, November 1st → Carter Bros Haunted HayRide

Friday, November 8th (2-4 pm) → OPT Workshop for Spring 2025 Graduates (Brookens Auditorium)

Friday, November 15th (9 am) → American History Trip at St Louis St Louis, MO

Monday, November 18th (12-4 pm) → International Education Week Kick-Off (Union North Entrance)

Friday, November 22nd 12 - 1pm → Thanksgiving Luncheon (Union Ballroom)

