



International Student Services

Newsletter



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FEBRUARY 2025

STAFF

INTERIM DIRECTOR

- Jolene Vollmer
(She/Her)

IMMIGRATION SPECIALISTS

- Tracy Rakes
(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.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

My name is Hamza Azhar, and my pronouns are He/Him/His.

I hail from Sadiqabad, Pakistan. It is a small countryside area in the province of Punjab. Pakistan is known for its rich agricultural production and thriving textile industry, which is exported worldwide.

I am pursuing a Master's in Management Information Systems (MIS). Coming from an IT and data background, I have always been passionate about managing data and information, which led me to choose the MIS program.

The United States is a global leader in technology, offering incredible learning opportunities, exposure, and hands-on experience. Pursuing MIS aligns with my career aspirations, providing me with a gateway to explore the ever-evolving tech industry.

It has been six months since I arrived in the U.S. and joined UIS, and my journey so far has been truly amazing. I have learned valuable life skills, from living independently and managing tasks efficiently to balancing academics and co-curricular activities. The best part has been meeting incredible people in Springfield, building friendships with students from around the world, and experiencing the warm and welcoming UIS community. Springfield's friendly atmosphere reminds me of my hometown, Sadiqabad.

I want to tell every new and continuing student to stay strong, believe in yourself, and keep pushing forward while giving your best. You may face challenges, but with persistence, you will find solutions and grow stronger. Great opportunities await you embrace them with confidence!



UIS APPOINTS NEW ISS DIRECTOR

In an email addressed to the UIS campus community, the Dean of Students, Jantzen Eddington, announced the appointment of a new director for the Office of International Student Services (ISS). Below is an excerpt from the announcement.

“I am very pleased to announce that Zafrul Amin has accepted the position to serve as our next Director of International Student Services! Zafrul's first day at UIS is February 24.



Zafrul has an undergraduate degree in Computer Information Systems from the University of Dubuque, Iowa and a graduate degree in Industrial Technology Management from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. He has been working in higher education for the past two decades in various roles such as International Student Services, Adjunct Faculty, Instructional Specialist, Tutoring Services, Campus Assessment, Academic Advising, and Admissions Advisor. He is very passionate about international students and values the wealth of knowledge and culture they bring to the community and the country.

Please join me in welcoming Zafrul to UIS.”

ISS CONDUCTS OPT WORKSHOP FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



The Office of International Student Services (ISS) conducted an Optional Practical Training (OPT) workshop for international students who are on the verge of completing their programs of study at the UIS.

Attended by more than 120 participants from various fields of study, the workshop was presided over by Joel Short, one of ISS's designated school officials (DSOs) who specializes in providing immigration related advice to foreign students.

OPT is a privilege provided by the U.S. government to international students who desire to gain employment experience in their major field of study.

The workshop is designed to better prepare prospective beneficiaries about the application processes which includes, among other essentials details, an understanding the eligibility criteria, reporting requirements, key dates. OPT applications are administered and authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

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

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





Sprintax Webinar Series 2024/2025 Season (EAP)

Sprintax Nonresident Tax Webinars (EAP)

In these webinars, international students, scholars and professionals will be run through everything they need to know about nonresident tax for the 2024 tax season. Topics will include who must file, tax residency, FICA, State returns, implications of misfiling as well as how to use Sprintax to prepare a compliant tax return.

- **Tuesday, November 26th @ 12pm EST** – [Register here](#)
- **Wednesday, December 11th @ 1pm EST** – [Register here](#)
- **Thursday, January 23rd @ 12pm EST** – [Register here](#)
- **Thursday, February 6th @ 11am EST** – [Register here](#)
- **Wednesday, February 26th @ 12pm EST** – [Register here](#)
- **Tuesday, March 11th @ 2pm EST** – [Register here](#)
- **Thursday, March 27th @ 1pm EST** – [Register here](#)
- **Thursday, April 3rd @ 1pm EST** – [Register here](#)
- **Thursday, April 10th @ 2pm EST** – [Register here](#)
- **Monday, April 14th @ 11am EST** – [Register here](#)

OPT Webinars – Sprintax Nonresident Tax Overview for OPT/CPT (E)

Topics covered will include residency for tax purposes, tax liabilities when on OPT/CPT and pre-employment tax forms when on OPT/CPT. The Sprintax team will also provide an overview of Sprintax Forms which can be used to prepare your pre-OPT/CPT employment tax documents.

- **Tuesday, November 19th @ 12pm EST** – [Register here](#)
- **Wednesday, December 11th @ 1pm EST** – [Register here](#)
- **Tuesday, January 21st @ 1pm EST** – [Register here](#)
- **Wednesday, February 26th @ 2pm EST** – [Register here](#)
- **Thursday, March 27th @ 12pm EST** – [Register here](#)

Lunar New Year (Year of the Snake) celebration



Ski/Snowboarding at Snowstar





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