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ISSO Weekly Newsletter, February 27, 2020

University of Northern Iowa. International Students and Scholars Office.

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ISSO Weekly Newsletter

Thursday, February 27, 2020

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

International Coffee Hour Every Thursday!

Join us for our International Coffee Hour every Thursday in the International Students and Scholars Office, 113 Maucker Union from 3-4 pm.

Winter Clothing Drive

The International Student and Scholars Office winter clothing drive has been very successful. Coats, scarves, gloves, etc. are available to international students who are not prepared for the Iowa winter. Please come to 113 Maucker Union to pick up some items!

Smooth Sounds in Your Second Language March 2

Learn about ways to improve your pronunciation. This panel is open to learners and speakers of any additional language. Presenters will discuss practical ways to make your speaking comprehensible through self-teaching pronunciation. Monday, March 2 from 3-4 pm in the Rod Library ScholarSpace.

Spring Graduation Fair March 11

Graduating students should attend the spring graduation fair Wednesday, March 11, from 9 am- 5 pm in the Old Central Ballrooms B and C, MAU. For more information, visit the [Registrar website](#).

Income Tax Season

Students may be hearing about W-2 forms and filing "income tax" returns for 2019. An income tax return is a report that you must make to the Internal Revenue Service (<http://www.irs.gov>) of the US Government for any calendar year when you earn income in the United States. Fortunately, you do not need to do these alone. This year for the first time, UNI has made special software available for \$6.24 per person to use for income tax filing. The Office of Business Operations has reached out to students who were employed on campus during 2019 and/or who might have taxable benefits and need to file tax returns. So, please watch your inboxes for this important information from UNI. We encourage you to use Sprintax, and if you have questions about how to get started with it please ask Ross at ross.schupbach@uni.edu

If you have tax-related questions or concerns and if you would like further assistance, the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program will have one or two stations set up for international students to come in to use a computer to access Sprintax; if you have questions during the process they may be able to offer help. However, Sprintax has a 24/7 chat online for any questions you may have. VITA student volunteers will not be certified to work with international students until March 2nd, so that station will not be available until then. If they want to file sooner, Sprintax is your best option. VITA will be open Monday 6-8 PM, and Wednesday 3-5 PM. They will NOT prepare any 1040NR tax returns, so all non-residents will have to use Sprintax. If you did not have a job in 2019, you should still file IRS form 8843, available here: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8843.pdf>. You will only need to complete Part I and Part III before signing at the bottom of the form and sending it to the IRS at the address indicated in the instructions. April 15, 2020 is the deadline for filing 2019 tax returns!

Delta Kappa Gamma Society International Scholarship

The Iowa chapters of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International will be awarding \$1,000 grants to several international women students enrolled in Iowa colleges or universities. The applications and attachments must be completed and postmarked by April 1, 2020. Recipients will be notified by May 15, 2020. See attachments for

application and criteria.

2020 Mary Ann Bolton Undergraduate Research Awards

Applications for the 2020 Mary Ann Bolton Undergraduate Research Awards, which are administered by Rod Library, are now being accepted. The application deadline is April 3, 2020. These awards recognize and celebrate extraordinary research and scholarship on the part of undergraduate students through the generous support of alumna Mary Ann Bolton (Class of 1970). Three awards will be given: First Place - \$1,000; Second Place - \$500; Third Place - \$250. More information about the awards, including submission guidelines, is available [here](#).

The Learning Center at Rod Library

All students are encouraged to use The Learning Center @ Rod Library for assistance with writing, math, science, and college reading and learning strategies. Beginning week two, The Learning Center (TLC) operates on a walk-in basis and is open 10:00 am to 10:00 pm Monday through Thursday. For more information, go to <https://tlc.uni.edu/tutoring>, email TheLearningCenter@uni.edu, call 319-273-6023, or visit the TLC desk located on the main floor of Rod Library. If you are unable to come in during normal tutoring hours, online tutoring is available through Smarthinking. You will need your CATID and passphrase to gain access. To access the Smarthinking platform go to <https://tlc.uni.edu/schedule>.

IMMIGRATION

Optional Practical Training (OPT) for Eligible F-1 Students

If you hold F-1 status and you are planning to graduate in May 2020, now is the perfect time to think about applying for Optional Practical Training as you are probably eligible for this 12 month period of employment authorization within the U.S. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will begin accepting applications from UNI students that they receive on or after February 10, 2020. If you desire to begin employment soon after the semester ends on May 8, it will be necessary for you to submit your OPT application in mid-February because it takes

USCIS approximately 3 months to process these applications. See our web site for more information about [OPT](#).

Maintaining US Immigration Status

International students are responsible for **maintaining their U.S. immigration statuses**, and an important part of this is **always having a valid, unexpired I-20 or DS-2019 form**. We recommend that F-1 students check the "Program of Study" section near the center of their I-20 forms once per month to make sure they do not study past the program end date indicated in that section. J-1 students should always be aware of their DS-2019 form validity dates in section 3. Page 3 of all I-20 forms specifies that "If you cannot complete the educational program by the program end date on page 1 of your Form I-20, you should contact your DSO at least 15 days before program end date to request an extension." Ross Schupbach is your Principal DSO, and he is always happy to help when students need extensions.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

International Student Support Group

International Student Support Group meets every Monday from 3:30-5:00 pm in the Student Health Center, 2nd floor. The International Student Support Group allows international students to share their experiences with others who can understand and relate to their concerns. To learn more about the group, you can consult a counselor by calling or walking into the counseling center from 8 am-4 pm, no appointment required. Contact 319-273-2676, Student Health Center, 2nd floor.

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Office hours 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m

The University of Northern Iowa provides transformative learning experiences that inspire students to embrace challenge, engage in critical inquiry and creative thought, and contribute to



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