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ISSO Weekly Newsletter, June 11, 2020

University of Northern Iowa. International Students and Scholars Office.

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ISSO Weekly Newsletter

Thursday, June 11, 2020

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Important Announcement: Reduced Operations in ISSO

We regret to announce that as of June 1, 2020, all ISSO staff positions and services will be reduced 50%. We want you to know that it will most likely take us longer to respond to your messages and to provide the high-quality services that you have come to expect from us. Despite the reductions, ISSO will remain open from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. We care about you immensely and we will certainly do our best.

International Students and Scholars Office Online Services

Due to the public health and social distancing practices that have been instituted at UNI and in the state of Iowa, scheduled and walk-in appointments, and services with ISSO advisors will now be conducted online. Office hours will remain Monday-Friday, 8:00 am-4:30 pm. For information contact international.services@uni.edu or Julie.Hill@uni.edu, Immigration & Advising – Ross.Schupbach@uni.edu, Director – Isabela.Varela@uni.edu

Student Emergency Fund

The [Student Emergency Fund](#) assists University of Northern Iowa students by providing limited emergency financial assistance to currently enrolled students who are unable to meet immediate, essential expenses due to an unexpected emergency. Examples of unexpected emergency situations include accidents,

illness, death of a family member, fire damage, or the need for temporary housing. Priority will be given to students whose tenure at the university may be at risk because of said expenses.

Rowe Scholarship Fund

As part of the efforts of the Secretariat for Integral Development of the OAS to help mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the [Rowe Fund](#) is offering **\$2,000 scholarships** to international students from Latin American and Caribbean countries currently completing their studies in the United States. Learn more [here](#) and share.

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.

Sprintax has a 24/7 chat online for any questions you may have. 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. July 15, 2020 is the new deadline for filing 2019 tax returns!

Rental Housing Scams

Moving to a new city? As you consider issues like size, cost, and location of the

rental, also consider this: that rental listing could be a scam. Scammers often advertise rentals that don't exist or aren't available to trick people into sending money before they find out the truth. Scammers know that finding the right apartment rental can be hard work, and a good deal is hard to pass up. When you're looking for a rental, it is renter beware. Some scammers hijack a real rental or real estate listing by changing the email address or other contact information, and placing the modified ad on another site. Others make up listings for places that aren't for rent or don't exist, and try to lure you in with the promise of low rent, or great amenities. Their goal is to get your money before you find out. Here are some signs you may be dealing with a scam: They tell you to wire money. This is the surest sign of a scam. There's never a good reason to wire money to pay a security deposit, application fee, or first month's rent. That's true even if they send you a contract first. Wiring money is the same as sending cash — once you send it, you have no way to get it back. Another sign is they want a security deposit or first month's rent before you've met or signed a lease. It's never a good idea to send money to someone you've never met in person for an apartment you haven't seen. If you can't visit an apartment or house yourself, ask someone you trust to go and confirm that it's for rent, and that it is what was advertised. In addition to setting up a meeting, do a search on the owner and listing. If you find the same ad listed under a different name, that's a clue it may be a scam. Please visit The Federal Trade Commission <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0079-rental-listing-scams> for more information.

The Learning Center at Rod Library

The Learning Center REMOTE (TLCRemote) is NOW OPEN. As long as The Learning Center@Rod Library remains closed to the public, TLRRemote will be available 24/7. UNI Students who need academic support can explore their options by going to <https://tlc.uni.edu/>. The alert homepage message instructs students to select "COVID 19 TLRRemote" to review current academic support options. Option #1 encourages students to take advantage of Smarthinking, a 24/7 online tutoring service. Option #2 directs students to our newly developed Zoom tutoring center where we offer half-hour tutoring for math/stats, science, writing, and academic coaching/specialty tutoring. Questions can be directed to TheLearningCenter@uni.edu

IMMIGRATION

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

If you hold F-1 status and you graduated 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. 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

UNI Student Health Clinic Telehealth

The Student Health Clinic is moving to telehealth appointments only beginning Monday, March 23. The clinic will no longer provide face-to-face office visits, but will support students via telephone and Zoom telehealth visits. Students must call 319-273-2009 opt#1 to be assessed over the phone. Clinic staff will remain available 8-4:30 Monday through Friday. The Counseling Center will also provide mental health services via telehealth (through Zoom). Please call 319-273-2676 to schedule an appointment.

Student Health Insurance

The Student Health Clinic needs to know if you are planning to leave the US during summer break. You must email Connie Potter (connie.potter@uni.edu). You will need to provide the date that you are leaving and the date you are returning to the US. The Student Health Clinic will suspend your insurance coverage during that time. If you're not enrolled for the summer session and the Student Health Clinic does not hear from you, your coverage will automatically continue. It is important for you to tell the Health Clinic before you leave the US as they cannot remove the coverage when you return to UNI in the fall.

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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 society.



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