

1) I had an incredibly awful time trying to figure tax questions for UO payroll purposes when I first came to the UO and needed to fill in the payroll documentations. The documents I was required to fill in were 1) incredibly difficult to understand, as they were full of legal terms, and 2) even after spending hours reading these documents and looking up all the legal terms, I still couldn't really understand what many of the phrases implied, because the documents clearly required a general understanding of US taxation system. As a responsible person who wants to do my best to understand the rules of the country I am in, I did all the research I could on my own, and tried to ask ISSS about questions that I still couldn't figure out. All I could get as a reply were short messages with links to UO resources, which didn't really answer my questions. Understanding that ISSS won't be of much help, for days and days I tried asking every single person I knew from university if they could offer help (all this while having to navigate my first study week in the US, in the middle of the pandemic). Finally, being desperate, I asked an accountant from the UO who I just happened to know, and surprisingly and luckily that person redirected me to another person – international payroll specialist - who just happened to be kind and knowledgeable enough to take the time to actually look into and answer my question. That week, when I was trying to figure out the documents I needed for payroll (also, of course, I couldn't get my salary without submitting those documents) was one of my worst weeks in the US. I had to spend hours and hours trying to read and navigate difficult legal documents and the IRS website instead of studying, eating and taking rest, and the worst part was that it felt like nobody cared. All I could generally get as an answer was "I am no attorney/tax specialist, so I can't answer your questions." As an international student who is not majoring in US legal studies, I am also obviously no specialist, too, and while I was trying my very best to navigate these documents, I didn't feel like there was help available from the university's side (until I found a kind person who decided to help, which was pure luck – her contacts were not offered to me by ISSS, or mentioned among the UO resources for international students), although I was asking about the documents that were required by university in the first place. Moreover, there are other tax questions that I am currently trying to navigate, and it's another nightmare, because now it's not directly connected with UO, and because of this no one at all has enough experience in tax regulations for international students to answer my questions. I

think it would be crucial for international students to have support in understanding the difficult country-specific tax regulations. We all want to follow the rules of this country, but we don't have the resources to understand these rules.

2) Several issues:

- Taxes were double withheld in January 2019 by Joy Germack; it took hours of visits to her office for her to realize this mistake and meant that I did not have enough money in my account to pay essential bills. She was very challenging to deal with, although I acknowledge her position is a stressful one.
- The ISSS told me in person and on their website that there was a tax treaty that would protect 10,000\$ of my scholarship -- this was false information and required a lot of digging and bureaucracy to sort out. Additionally, I financially planned with the expectation that that would not be taxed which led to issues down the line.
- The fact that our taxes have to be paid via paper means we cannot track them online properly. I have no idea if my 2019 tax return was received, there is no way to track it online, the IRS requires a credit card to make an online account (which it is very hard for international students to obtain because credit scores from our home countries are not acknowledged!). I am still waiting on a \$600 refund and it is stressful to be short on cash and not know when (or if) that will arrive. No one is able to help navigate that.
- Income and deduction numbers seem to come out of thin air and are impossible to trace. Codes regarding my status are inconsistent.
- Hard to quantify, but trying to do taxes have honestly caused pretty extreme emotional distress. There is no support, and we aren't in the position to pay for accountants or online services. It's rough. Our taxes should be so easy -- there is so little income and so few deductions. Spending a lot of money on accountants, most of whom don't know what to do about non-resident aliens on student visas makes little sense when we make so little income!

3) My experience of filing taxes for the UO income was pretty awful too. The only source of help is a website with outdated information. I found the explanations on this website very confusing and had to ask a classmate who did it before, asking a friend for a legal

matter like this certainly not a good idea. I spent hours reading through and following the instructions. But after I sent out my documents, I got several letters from the IRS saying that some of my information was missing/at error. One of the letters was really confusing and I had no idea what was missing; I ended up returning the documents unchanged and I have no idea what influence does that have. My undergraduate institution holds tax filing information sessions regularly. I understand that UO is a small school with small number of international students but that doesn't mean we're not important. I think the school should improve the quality of instructions regarding tax filing for the international students, say, setting up some information sessions or purchasing online filing tools(ex:sprinttax). I had never done something like this back in my home country and this process is extremely confusing for me.

- 4) I had to do my return for UO GE income. I came to know about this contact in California through another international student who spoke highly of her. I called several people in Eugene and Springfield but all refused saying they don't do tax returns for international students. So I was desperately looking for someone who could help me and took my colleague's recommendation blindly. The lady sounded very friendly over the phone and asked me to pay \$275. She said you are getting a return of upto \$800 but I will do it only when you pay me \$275. I agreed thinking if I am getting \$800 in return, I can pay \$275. But soon I received a letter from Oregon State that my application was all wrong and my return came out only \$150. I never received any Federal tax return till date. I don't even know if it was done. I contacted the lady again but she never returned my call or email. Later I enquired more and learned that the tax return filing fee for international students is rather lower than other applications and it should be between \$50-\$100. What she charged is way higher than usual tax filing fee and extremely unprofessional for doing fraud on my tax return.. So here I'm pulling my hair, feeling disgusted and fooled so easily. I still feel very insecure because to do tax filing, we give a lot of sensitive information like SSN. Not sure how people take advantage of it. We need someone we can trust. There is no help or guidance anywhere in the university about how to know who is genuine. How can we check these agents are not scam? I am still not sure how I will manage this year. Thanks for giving this space to share and feel someone is thinking about international students.

- 5) I'm a single parent (which means I have a dependent with an F-2 visa) no SSN for the dependent with that type of visa. However, the IRS allows them to apply for an ITIN number, that way they can be a taxable dependent, and eventually, get more tax refunds because I pay more health insurance, childcare, etc. I went to ISSS for help to apply for ITIN for my child, and after several attempts, the only answer was that my child did not legally have to get an ITIN number, so they were not going to help me get it. And I just gave up, losing money in tax returns because I didn't know the system. I didn't want (or know how) to look for an accountant because I was afraid of scams.
- 6) I'm with the student right above. I'm a single mum having my kid as my dependent with me right now in the US but I couldn't get ITIN for him. In the winter of 2019, the students at UO business school were volunteering to help UO students to file tax forms but not until the third time I went there did I actually get their help due to the super long list of people waiting. When I finally got my turn, they tried to help me but none of them knew how to do the dependent tax file. Then I went to two H&R Block offices last year hoping they could help with this but none of the agents wanted to take my case, which was extremely discouraging to me so I just gave up and did nothing so far. I couldn't claim any tax return over the past two years due to this and I think that's quite some money because I probably have already been eligible to file tax as a resident alien. I really hope UO could have some resources for us to learn not only how to understand the intimidating tax documents but also how to solve these specific and very difficult questions such as tax filing for dependents, when and how we can file tax as a resident alien, etc.

I also wanted to add that not only H&R Block was not super excited to help us internationals, but also the tax softwares - I was told by the UO business school students that international students cannot file tax online. The only way is to print the files and mail them. I don't know if this information is true but I have been mailing tax forms that I put something like "I don't claim any tax return" without expecting anything back.