

MY BARBADOS EXPERIENCE

Studying in the Sun

By Lauren Tevis, law student

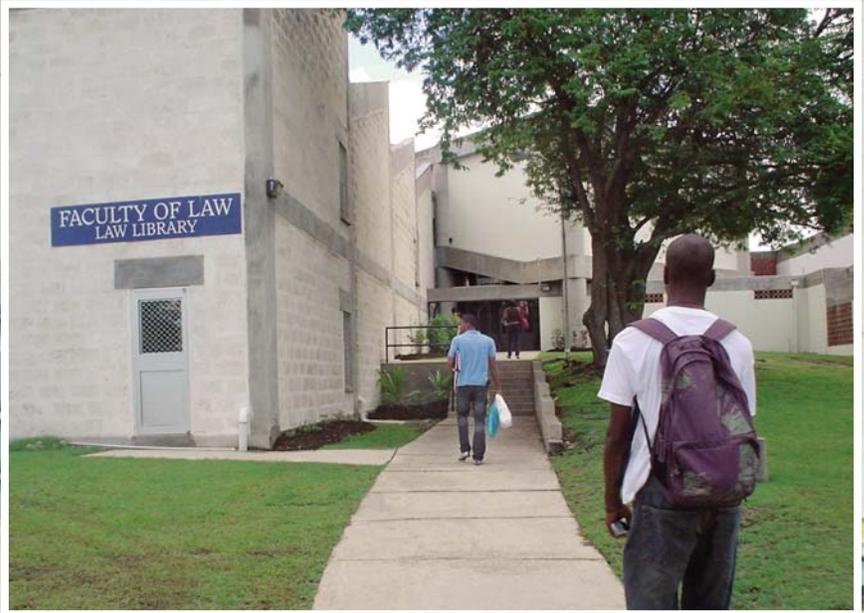
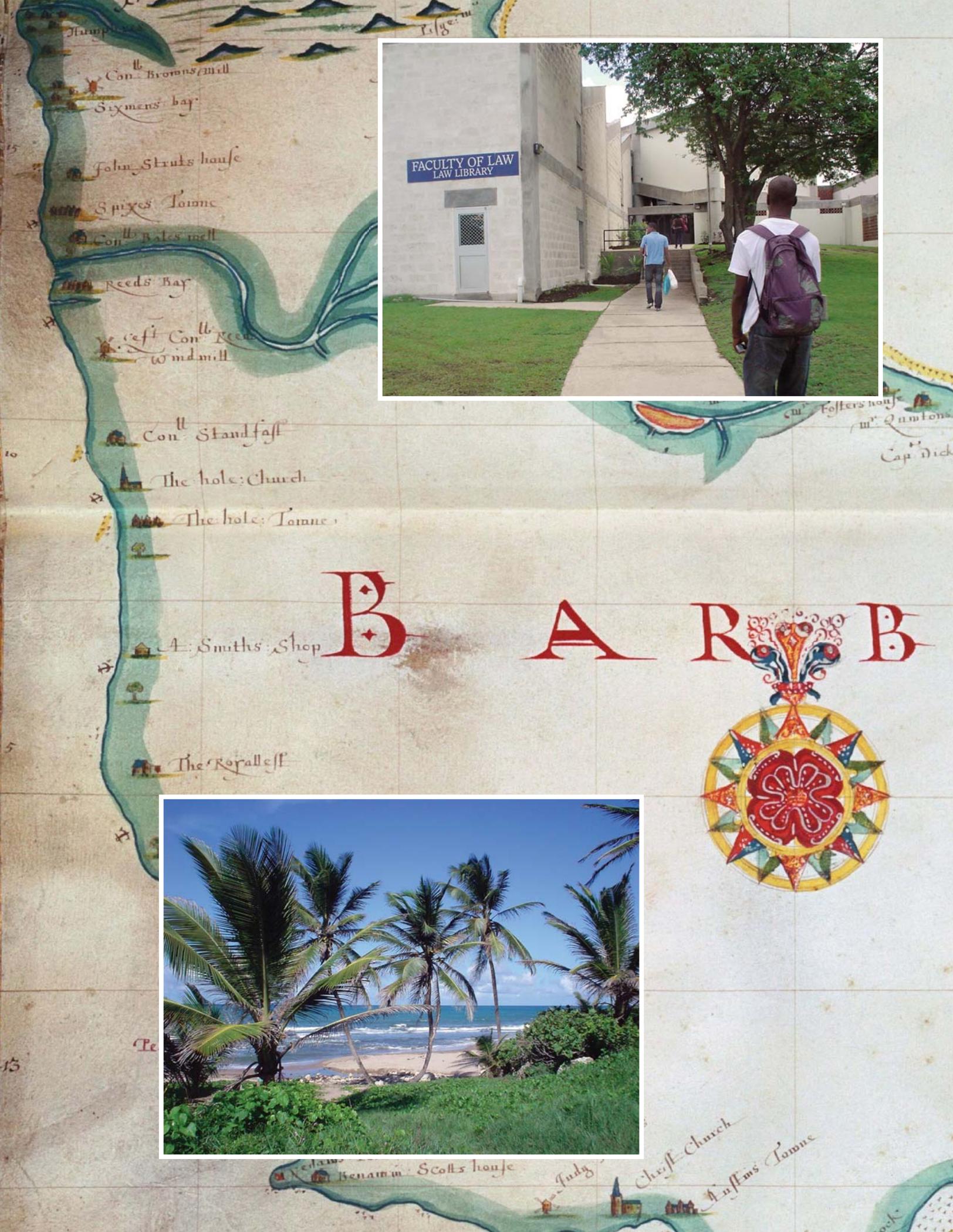


Second-year law students Lauren Tevis and Jessica Dotter were two of 17 students who participated in the 2010 Summer Study Abroad Program on Barbados. Another 12 Washburn Law students are participating in the 2011 program.

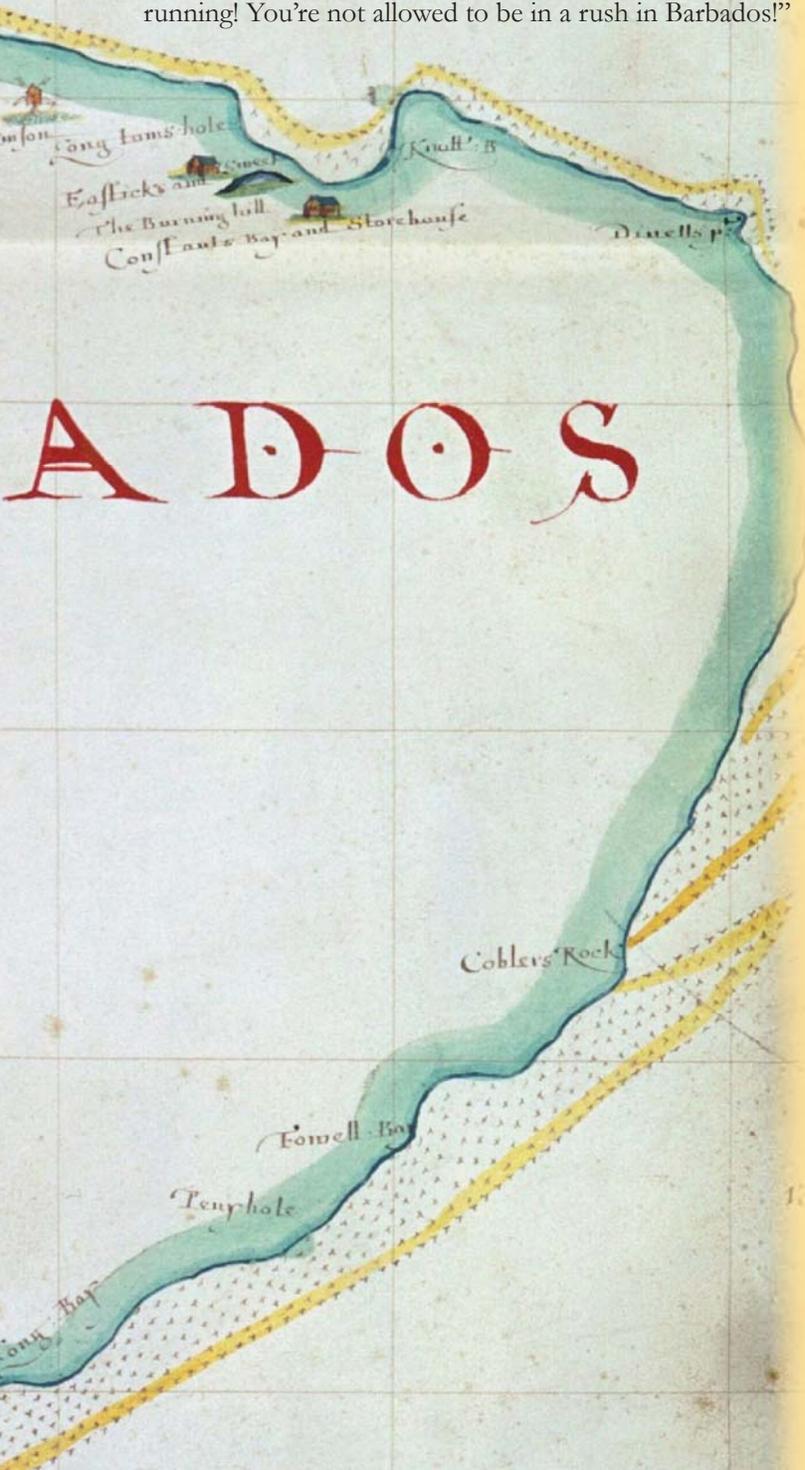
I decided to study abroad in Barbados at the spur of a moment. Professor Nancy Maxwell, the study abroad coordinator, had walked into the informational meeting wearing a bright dress, sunglasses, and a sun hat while dancing to island music. After seeing a few pictures of the beautiful Caribbean island and learning a bit about the program, I conferred with my friend, Jessica Dotter, and we decided this was an opportunity we couldn't pass up. We immediately ran up to the dean's office, registered, and wrote checks to secure our spots. We were the first two on the list. During the rest of that semester I imagined how in just a few months I would

be on a beach, studying, with a fruity drink in hand. I'm pretty sure it was the only thing that got me through my appellate brief.

Other than thinking about the beach, I was not sure what to expect. Professor Maxwell had given us a student handbook, but it mostly contained information about what to pack and different facts, like it is illegal to wear camouflage in Barbados. This was the first year for the Washburn Law Barbados program, and there being no other study abroad programs in the Caribbean, we were true guinea pigs. For me, that added to the experience



of being immersed in a new culture. We had to figure everything out for ourselves, including where to eat dinner every night (the campus cafeteria closed at 4 p.m.), the bus schedule (there isn't one), and of course, locations of the best beaches. None of these challenges were hard to overcome because the locals were always willing to help. I was often reminded of the Midwest culture that I love so much. I never encountered anyone who was too busy or in too much of a hurry to give directions or answer a question. Perhaps it was because everyone in Barbados runs on "island time," where everything can always wait. One time I was racing across a street to avoid oncoming traffic and a local Bajan (what the people of Barbados call themselves) yelled out, "Stop running! You're not allowed to be in a rush in Barbados!"



When I was not rushing to a beach, I did actually study, despite what my parents may think. I tried combining beach time with studying, but quickly learned the wind, sand, and irresistible ocean waving for me to come and enjoy were not conducive studying conditions. I attended class from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Thursday and read one to two hours per night. The first three weeks, Professor Rory Bahadur taught Products Liability, and the last three weeks, Professor Amy Deen Westbrook taught International Economic Law. Both classes were co-taught by University of West Indies professors, which was an interesting experience. They taught in lecture style rather than the traditional law school Socratic style. Not only did we receive a quality academic experience, but the students got to know the professors on a more personal level. Office hours were held at Scotty's, a restaurant at the bottom of the hill from the campus, and the professors would buy refreshments for everyone to share while we asked questions.

Another unique aspect about the Washburn Law Barbados program is that there is no other law school study abroad program on a tropical island, and not many in developing countries. It was an interesting experience living in a country where the standard of living is much lower than that in the United States. Most people live in chattel houses, which are wooden structures built on blocks rather than anchored into the ground. They are small and have no air conditioning. Although one might equate poor neighborhoods with a higher crime rate in the U.S., this is not true for Barbados. The country has an extremely strict gun policy to help protect its tourism industry, and I never felt scared or threatened walking through the neighborhoods at night. Ninety percent of the people of Barbados are of African descent, and although at no time was I treated as an outcast or looked down upon, I definitely experienced what it's like to be a minority. June is not a high-tourism month, so it was rare to see other Caucasians. The other students and I were well-known at the establishments and beaches close to campus and were often referred to as "Kansas" rather than our names. When we said good-bye to our new friends, some of them insisted on taking pictures with us for remembrance.

Although I was in Barbados for only six weeks, I learned a lot about myself. I encountered situations that were unfamiliar to me but learned how to adapt. I grew as a person as I embraced a culture that is very different from my own, and learned that I am more independent than I initially thought. The spontaneous decision to study abroad turned out to be a spectacular life experience.