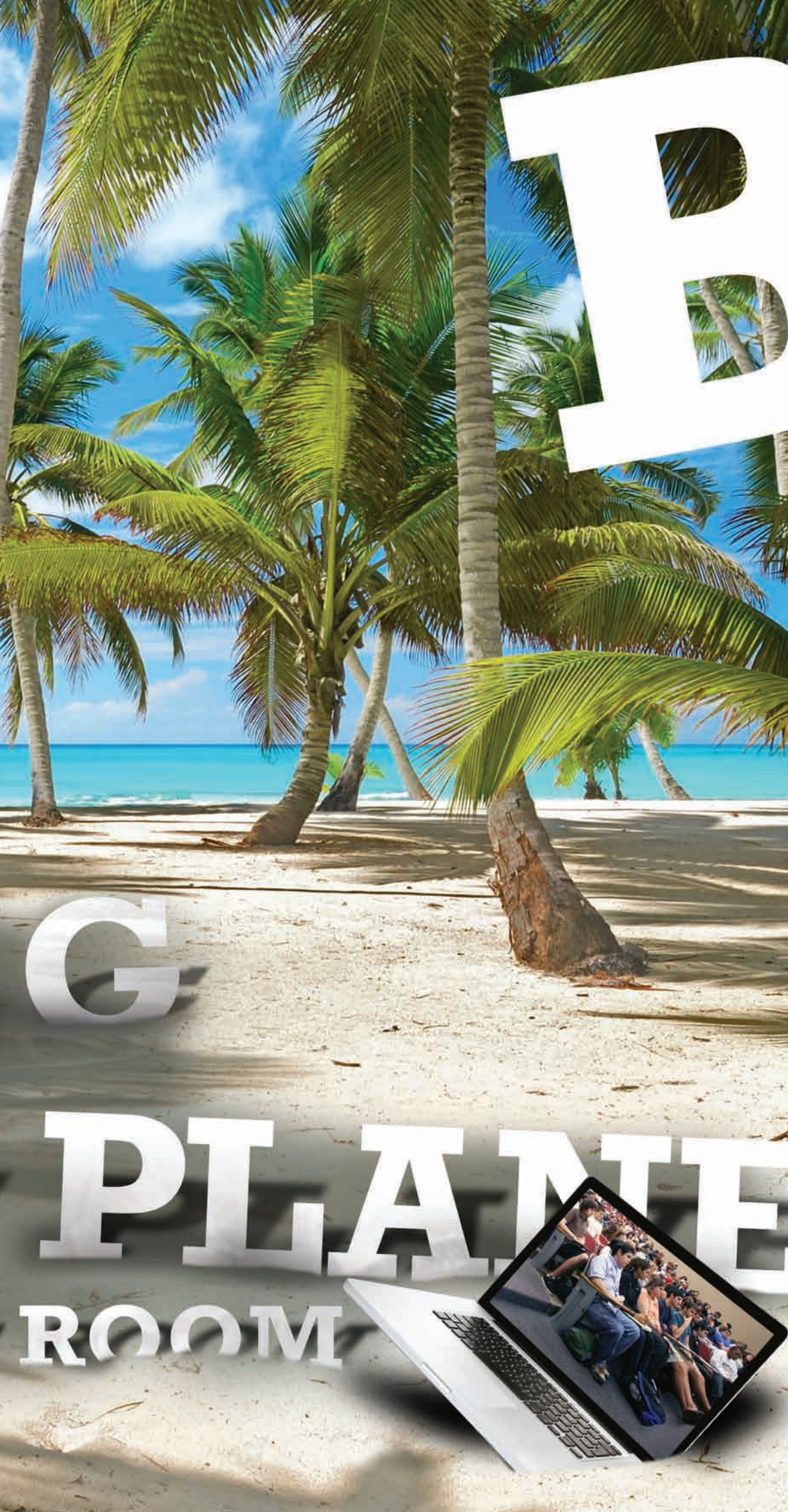


A vibrant tropical beach scene featuring several tall palm trees with lush green fronds. The trees are scattered across a sandy beach, with some leaning at angles. In the background, the turquoise ocean meets a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. The overall atmosphere is serene and idyllic.

LEAVIN' ON A JET

FROM THE CLASS TO THE CARIBBEAN



efore graduating in December with his MBA, Ty Findley wanted to get experience in international business. But the demands of the course load and an internship didn't allow for a semester-long study-abroad experience.

"A big part of the MBA program is studying globalization, and to be able to get international experience is invaluable," he said. "Studying internationally is something I really wanted to do, but not something I could do for an extended time."

When he learned of the Baylor in the Caribbean program, he knew it was the perfect fit.

"It was just a great opportunity," said Findley, who got his undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering from Baylor in 2008. "Being a mini-semester, I could travel after the spring session, but before my summer internship started. Plus, I had a little travel experience but never to Latin America. And with companies like Microsoft and Pitney Bowes expanding that way, it makes sense."

That business expansion was exactly the reason the Baylor in the Caribbean program was started, according to Kendall Artz, director of the Baylor Entrepreneurship Program and chair of the Management and Entrepreneurship department.

"We had three programs at the business school, all focused on different students and different areas of interest: the China program focuses on technology; Africa looks at poverty reduction; Europe is about global expansion," Artz said. "But we'd never had a program dealing with Latin America. We wanted to develop a program that looked at the Latin culture, but also addressed environmental concerns."

A team from Entrepreneurship began to look at options for countries to visit with specific needs in mind.

The first trip to the Caribbean was in 2002, when the program began in Cuba.

"When we started the Cuba trip, we did so because we realized there was a lot to learn about what works, and mainly what doesn't work, in a Marxist system," said Leslie Palich, associate professor of Management and Entrepreneurship. "We had a connection with a consultant there, and had a successful program."

"For our students, the opportunity to get experience in that region of the world is very, very important," Artz said. "It's important to anyone doing business, but especially in Texas. Chances are, our graduates will work with business leaders in those countries, and it is very, very different from the United States."

However, when travel restrictions put an end to study programs that lasted less than 10 weeks, it became impractical for the Baylor program. In 2006, the program shifted to the Dominican Republic.

"When we started going to the Dominican Republic, it gave our students the ability to see the problems in their economy and how they do business, as well as the good side of how people do business outside of the United States," said David Allen, director of Baylor's John F. Baugh Center for Entrepreneurship. **"We visited companies owned by Dominicans as well as people from foreign countries. And it really opened the students' eyes."**

Before leaving for the trip, Allen gives the students a political history of the places they will be visiting.

"We want students to have a perspective on what the people of that country went through," Allen

said. "It helps them to understand how and why things are different from the U.S. For example, how businesses deal with a blatantly corrupt system. It's a very different experience."

Trips to the Dominican Republic ended last year when the earthquake in Haiti, which shares the island and a long border with the Dominican Republic, created too many health and safety risks. In May, the program moved to Costa Rica.

"When we were looking for another place, I recalled a conversation I had with a former graduate student who returned to Costa Rica," Palich said. They made contact with that student and began setting up the new program.

Prior to leaving for the trip, students must spend at least 10 hours (mostly accomplished in three evening sessions) preparing through orientations and briefings. Students must also complete 20 hours of post-trip coursework to earn academic credit.





Photo courtesy of Marlene Reed Adlind Professor of Entrepreneurship

addition to

Allen's political history lesson, students learn about the host country's history, language and culture from Manuel Ortuño, a professor of Spanish at Baylor, who accompanies students, along with Palich, on the trip. (Allen was unable to make the trip in 2010, but plans to return in 2011.) Palich gives students an overview of the country's commerce and economy.

The program in 2010, Palich said, consisted of two parts. The first half of the trip was spent in and around the capital city, San Jose, where students visited a variety of enterprises and historic sites.

"We were able to visit an independent language school that was started by an American businessman and his wife," Palich said. "They have been there for about 25 years, and were able to give the students an idea of what things were like when they started the business and the challenges today to keep going, as well as an overview of the Costa Rican economy."

Students also visited a coffee factory and a snack factory, which made an impression on senior Finance and Entrepreneurship major Davis Hudiburg.

"It was interesting to see the whole process in a Third World country," Hudiburg said. "We got to see it from the beginning in the gardens, to bringing the raw fruits and vegetables into the factory, to processing, to snacks going out the door."

He was also impressed by the people working in the facilities.

"It was eye-opening for a lot of us to see first-hand the way business is done, not just by the laborers, but the CEOs and CFOs," Hudiburg said. "It was interesting to see the differences in the economic things we take for granted here."

Students also visited a cigar factory, where they had an opportunity to view the processes and working conditions, and learn about how Costa Ricans view their jobs.

The first week ended with a visit to a business school at the University of Costa Rica, where they met with the dean who gave them a briefing on the Costa

Rican higher education system, and on hiring processes in their economy. The second half of the trip was spent studying eco-tourism.

"Eco-tourism is very important to the Costa Rican economy," Palich said. "They are very sensitive to environmental impact. They are trading on something already very important to them, and it's become a big source of income for their economy."

Students spent one night in Arenal Volcano National Park, and hiked the following day into the park where an active volcano draws tourists. Students were able to speak to many people impacted by tourism, including guides and cab drivers.

They also visited Montverde Cloud Forest Reserve, where several students tried zip-lining, a huge part of the tourism industry in the country.

"We asked students to think about what local companies do to get people to go there, and what do they do once people are there to convince them to come back," Palich said. "They even looked at things like how recycling and building design factored into environmental preservation and tourism."

Their last stop was Manuel Antonio National Park to see some of the Costa Rican wildlife and observe how local residents become part of eco-tourism as guides, etc.

"They certainly had a lot of fun," Palich said, "but there's no doubt they learned a lot."

Findley couldn't agree more.

"It was a learning experience from the time we stepped off the plane," he said. "There's just no way to learn those things from a textbook or a lecture. The experience was invaluable."

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