

Send to Dr. Anthony Fisher, for the UWI Notebook

Danielle Donnelly, June, 2011

The Barbados Interdisciplinary Tropical Studies (BITS) Summer Programme is Underway!

An international group of students with varied backgrounds, from diverse countries, are participants in the Barbados Interdisciplinary Tropical Studies (BITS) summer 2011 programme. This 14-week-long session began May 23 and is jointly coordinated by the UWI Cave Hill Campus, the National Conservation Commission, and McGill University (Montreal, Canada). An MOU, orchestrated by the Cave Hill International Office Director, Dr. Anthony Fisher, and signed by all three partners in 2009, was a landmark agreement to provide collaboration in teaching, research, and community service. This has evolved into a bilateral agreement between the two universities that comes into effect this January 2012; enabling undergraduate and graduate student exchanges, recognition of each other's courses, and in particular, full participation of UWI Cave Hill students in the next BITS session (summer 2012).

Participants take three consecutive, intensive courses, co-taught by McGill and UWI faculty. These courses introduce students to local food production and nutrition as well as alternative energy issues. Students also participate in nationally-important project work with local mentors in industry, governmental, and non-governmental agencies. This summer, BITS project students are focused on various aspects of Giant African Snail control. They will be mentored by research scientist and mollusk expert Dr. Angela Fields (UWI), mollusk control expert, Mr. Ian Gibbs (Ministry of Agriculture) and well-known local agriculturist, Mr. Keith Laurie, as well as other UWI and McGill professors. Dr. Danielle Donnelly (McGill BITS Director and Project Coordinator), Dr. Rajendra Maurya and Mr. Jeff Chandler (UWI BITS Co-Directors) note "the global need for experienced international professionals that can take on incredibly daunting problems, such as the Giant African Snail invasion, by networking and acting in coordinated and innovative ways. It is essential that BITS trainees learn to interact with various levels of government, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector." For the BITS students, this programme is a life-changing experience.



BITS Programme “Horticulture” students taught by R. Maurya, J. Chandler, and D. Donnelly:

Top left: Participating in horticulture lab activities at the Dept. of Biological & Chemical Sciences, UWI.

Top right: Learning about Anthurium production from local expert Mr. Trevor Hunte at C. O. Williams Flowers.

Lower left: Introduction to tropical soil sterilization from avid horticulturist Mr. Edme Henry at the Soil Conservation Unit at Haggatts.

Lower right: Early morning visit to Cheapside market nets students a fascinating introduction to tropical fruit & vegetable products.