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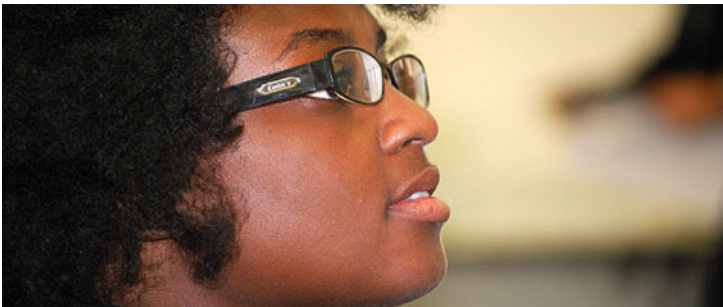
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LawWithoutWalls, Breaking Barriers Across the World

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Ashley Matthews, a third-year student at Miami Law, had never been overseas before her trip to Switzerland. (Photo: Miami Law) [Full-Size Photo](#)

By Nick Madigan | **Posted:** February 10, 2012

Now embarked on its second year, Miami Law's revolutionary LawWithoutWalls program – tasked with discovering far-reaching innovations for the legal profession – is challenging the talents and vision of 35 students from around the world.

Meeting in once-weekly virtual sessions that are linked by advanced Internet technology, students from China, Britain, Colombia, the United States and other countries are immersed in the intricacies of legal concepts that question conventional notions of how the law is taught and practiced. As the LWOW

website says, "These sessions are a time for open and collaborative exchange among people from different disciplines about hot topics facing the legal marketplace."

Not every connection is virtual. For the launch of this year's program, the students and their academic mentors – as well as the legal practitioners, business professionals and entrepreneurs who are "thought leaders" in the program – met for an intensive two-day session on the campus of Switzerland's University of St. Gallen, one of the participating schools.

"It was exhilarating and inspiring," said Miami Law Dean Patricia D. White, who attended the kick-off as one of LWOW's academic mentors, along with several other members of the Miami faculty.

One of the primary benefits of the session in Switzerland, several participants said, was that it enabled them to get to know each other personally before returning to their home countries and using technology such as Adobe Connect and Google+ to share their ideas and projects. The sessions are led by LWOW's founders, Miami Law Associate Professor Michele DeStefano and Michael Bossone, Special Advisor to Dean White.

"LawWithoutWalls could not happen without really cool tech tools," Bossone and DeStefano wrote in an e-mail to the program's mentors and advisors in December, before the launch. "We have spent hundreds of hours over the past 18 months researching and testing dozens of products to find the ones that would best meet our collective needs, tweaking and customizing them, and creating processes around them to help us all work collaboratively and efficiently while having a lot of fun."

Erika Concetta Pagano, a second-year Miami Law student who worked in broadcasting in Shanghai before starting law school, said LWOW is providing "an invaluable, enlightening environment to explore how my skills and goals position me to enact change in the evolving legal profession."

Just after returning from Switzerland, Pagano – one of six Miami Law students in the program – said the LWOW launch "was the most fun two days of my entire educational experience, but I'm now exhausted!"

Another second-year Miami Law student, Brian Spiro, said his immersion in LWOW is "the beginning of what will surely be a life-changing experience and opportunity."

Spiro, who despite getting married just two weeks after the launch has yet to miss an LWOW session, said he sees the program as "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work with students from around the world, sharing culture, knowledge and abilities to put together a creative solution to problems and issues plaguing legal practice and education."

Looking ahead to the program's culmination – an event in April at the University of Miami called the ConPosium, at which the students will present their findings and conclusions – Spiro sounded optimistic. "I am excited for the ride that gets us there," he said. "The next three months will be something special."

The findings to which Spiro referred are part of what LWOW calls its Projects of Worth, under which students from the various schools are teamed up and assigned a controversial or unsettled topic in legal education or practice. As the LWOW website explains it, the student teams read relevant scholarship, connect with mentors and subject experts, and interview professionals in the relevant fields. The teams identify a specific problem within the broader topic, brainstorm with their mentors to find a solution to the problem, and develop the solution into an action plan, ultimately presenting it at the ConPosium.

"I hope to be a part of a project that will leave a lasting impression on the legal community and to somehow help to raise the bar with my final project," said Rico Williams, a Miami Law 2L. "I believe that the movement that began in Switzerland will prove to be a continuum of innovation throughout the semester. I was impressed by the level of commitment to change shared by the LWOW community."

Then, in a reference to the launch at St. Gallen, he said, "I didn't think it was possible to be any more excited about LWOW until I participated in the kick-off event."

Ashley Matthews, a third-year student at Miami Law who grew up in Houston, had never been out of the United States before her trip to Switzerland with the other Miami students. "The flights were really long," she said. "I never would have thought I'd go to St. Gallen as my first trip overseas, but I'm happy I got to see such a beautiful place and experience the city with students from all over the world."

Matthews, who worked as a legal intern for the Georgia Justice Project and participated last summer in Miami Law's Capital Defense Project, said she was looking forward to "building an innovative and game-changing project that, hopefully, will bring more efficiency to legal education and practice."

What most surprised her about the students at the launch, she said, was that they were "able to accomplish so much and connect as well as we did in such a short time span."

Joel McNabney was of similar mind. "I was amazed at how, by the end of the kick-off, 30 students who were complete strangers to each other at the beginning of the weekend became such good friends so quickly," said McNabney, a second-year student at Miami Law who grew up in Indianapolis. "All of the other students I met were interesting, bright, and in many cases hilarious."

He described the two days in St. Gallen as "one of the most fun and engaging weekends of my life."

Besides Miami Law and St. Gallen's Executive School of Management, Technology and Law, the participating institutions are Fordham Law School, Harvard Law School, the IE Business School in Madrid, Indiana University Maurer School of Law, New York Law School, Peking University School of Transnational Law, Stanford Law School, Sydney Law School, Universidad de Los Andes Facultad de Derecho in Bogotá, and University College

London's Faculty of Laws.

Liz Rieser-Murphy, who was one of Miami Law's student members in LWOW's first incarnation, returned this year as an advisor to the current crop, and said the launch was "wonderful on many levels."

"The kick-off stitched the seams of our virtual community," she said after it was over, "and provided the fabric necessary to creatively brainstorm the problems facing the legal global community."

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Miami Law's Liz Rieser-Murphy, 3L, who is advising LWOW's students this year, at the kick-off in Switzerland. (Photo: Miami Law) [Full-Size Photo](#)

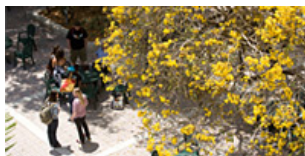



Second-year Miami Law student Brian Spiro with Victoria Broomfield, from the University of Sydney. (Photo: Miami Law) [Full-Size Photo](#)

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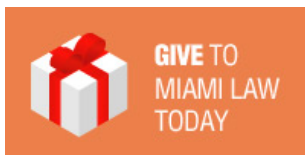
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