Talk with Michele Shoresman about her varying duties as assistant dean for graduate and joint-degree programs at the School of Law, and you’ll quickly learn that her favorite part of the job is interacting with the international students she advises in the Master of Laws (LLM) program.

Working lawyers in their countries of origin, these adult students—who often travel to St. Louis with their families—benefit from Shoresman’s guidance as they become acclimated to American culture. She and LLM coordinator Erin Burress assist the students with housing, take them shopping, and arrange for social activities, ranging from attending a St. Louis Cardinals baseball game to regular potluck dinners.

Shoresman has learned not to take the experience of these students for granted. For instance, after she sent a Chinese student, who already earned an LLM in Scandinavia, to set up a checking account, she soon discovered that he was totally unfamiliar with paying bills by check.

“These are such smart people. Within two weeks, they’re almost completely acclimated.”

Shoresman joined Washington University in 1990 as associate director of international studies, becoming director of the University’s overseas programs in 1996. After joining the School of Law in 1998 as director of graduate and joint-degree programs, she was named assistant dean in 2000.

In her current position, Shoresman designs the curriculum and recruits students for the LLM program in intellectual property, the LLM program for international students, and the School’s joint-degree programs. She also matches international LLMs with judges for six weeks during the summer after graduation through the School’s Judicial Observation Program, one of the few such programs in the nation.

Prior to joining Washington University, Shoresman held several positions at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), the first of which solidified her interest in international studies. As director of UIUC’s Asian studies outreach program from 1976 through 1979, she was able to travel to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) for teaching and research. She served as a fellow at the Japan Institute for Social and Economic Affairs in 1980 and traveled to the PRC in 1988 via a Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activities award. She served as a Korea Society Fellow in 1995 and then traveled to Germany as a Fulbright scholar in 2000.

“I got hooked on East Asia,” says Shoresman, who focused her doctoral studies on China. “The culture is fascinating, as is the history that dates back 5,000 years.”

Shoresman would like to see more American students at the School of Law get excited about other cultures and interact with the international students. “The more exposure international students have to our culture, the better,” she says. “These people are their country’s future leaders in law, government, and education. We offer a fine educational product at Washington University, and these students greatly appreciate the interaction with faculty that is so different here than in many places abroad. I learn so much from our international students. I have the best job in the law school!”

Michele Shoresman (right) visits with Nicole Grieben (left), LLM ’00, and Regina Walker, LLM ’99, during a Fulbright-sponsored trip to Germany.