Lisa Ladas ’18 Shares Passion for Communications, Music and Culture on the Radio
Commonwealth Honors College senior Lisa Ladas ‘18 remembers listening to the radio every day when she was young. At seven years old, she wondered: “Is there anybody inside the radio?” Curious, she decided that one day she would be on the air, too.

Today, Ladas hosts the Caribbean Blend show at UMass Amherst’s student-run radio station, 91.1 WMUA. “I have so much fun being on-air,” she said. “I beam and feel authentic in this world of radio personality.”

Ladas’s passion for music and culture, work experience in business and event planning, and interdisciplinary academic interests have led her to pursue a Bachelor’s Degree with Individual Concentration (BDiC) at UMass. She has designed a Corporate Media Communications major that delves into journalism, public relations, marketing, and management.

On her radio show, Ladas draws on these studies, as well as her background in public relations and marketing. She plays musical genres ranging from reggae to sax, interviews Caribbean musical artists, and promotes community events. Ladas grew up in Guyana in South America, where she says she felt connected to Caribbean music and culture, and now seeks to share that here in the U.S. She first became involved in radio locally by volunteering to organize a series of events for the Caribbean Heritage Month Carnival. After helping to plan the event and make arrangements for music and food vendors, Ladas was invited on the air to promote it.

“I had fun with it,” she explained. “And afterwards, the radio manager said to me, ‘You have a great radio voice. Would you like to join our team on the Caribbean Culture show?’”
From there, her radio career took off. Ladas began assisting the host of the Caribbean Culture radio show at Springfield Technical Community College, and later began hosting her own show when she was a student at Holyoke Community College. After graduating with a dual associate’s degree with honors, Ladas was admitted into Commonwealth Honors College at UMass Amherst in fall 2016.

As an Honors student, Ladas completed her thesis a year in advance, using her love for radio and audio reporting to tell the story of Jamaican reggae musical artists. Ladas explained how she worked with an Honors advisor throughout the process to produce a thesis project that interested her and accommodated her learning style.

“His help is an example of how the UMass Amherst community works,” explained Ladas. “There are folks who are willing to help you broaden your horizons, to help you succeed because you let them be a part of your village and, more broadly, your world.”

Over the years, Ladas said she had forgotten about her childhood dream to be on the radio, but today, she is immersed in it. “Aim high,” Ladas advises other students. “And wish for good things. My wish really did come true.”