

FIU's Briana Harris first H.T. Smith Legal Studies Scholarship recipient

By Community News Releases



Briana Harris

As law firms across the country put added emphasis on minority hiring and diversity in the legal profession, South Florida's preeminent litigation firm Kluger Kaplan Silverman Katzen & Levine has awarded Briana Harris with the firm's inaugural H.T. Smith Legal Studies Scholarship for the 2021-22 academic year.

Harris is a second-year student at Florida International University (FIU) College of Law.

Named after H.T. Smith, founding director of the Trial Advocacy Program at FIU College of Law, Kluger Kaplan launched the scholarship to support minority law school students who have a strong connection with the South Florida community. Harris was selected from a pool of law school student applicants from across Florida.

"Law firms everywhere are realizing that the legal profession has not done enough to create career opportunities for minority students," said Alan J. Kluger, founding partner at Kluger Kaplan. "Our goal is to attract qualified candidates to the scholarship, and to encourage other firms to create similar initiatives. Briana's leadership qualities and dedication to her studies and community made her an excellent candidate. We look forward to watching her accomplishments in law school and beyond."

While in law school, Harris has received numerous awards for her work, including the CALI Excellence for the Future Award in Legal Skills and Values and Future Award in Contracts. She recently served as a summer law clerk for the Florida Health Justice Project, which engages in comprehensive advocacy to expand healthcare access and promote health equity

for vulnerable Floridians. Previously, she assisted at Memorial Hospital in Pembroke Pines. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Medicine, Health, and Society from Vanderbilt University.

Earlier this year, the Kluger Kaplan law firm and Smith collaborated to launch the scholarship with the goal of creating a more diverse workforce and South Florida legal community. A legend in Miami's legal community, Smith was Miami's first African American assistant public defender, first African American assistant county attorney, and the founding president of the Black Lawyers Association. Smith's entry into private practice marked the launch of Downtown Miami's first Black-owned law firm.

"Briana Harris is an exceptional student who is well deserving of the legal studies scholarship," H.T. Smith added. "This scholarship is a step in the right direction to promote meaningful diversity in the legal profession, and Kluger Kaplan is providing a blueprint for other firms to create similar programs."

The H.T. Smith Legal Studies Scholarship will be awarded to one student annually. Scholarship recipients will receive \$10,000 in financial assistance to attend eligible law schools in Florida and are considered for a four- to six-week clerkship at the Kluger Kaplan law firm as well as an attorney position upon graduation from law school and completion of the Florida Bar.

Eligible universities include the University of Miami, Florida International University, Nova Southeastern University, St. Thomas University, Florida State University and the University of Florida.

To learn more about the annual H.T. Smith Legal Studies Scholarship, contact Laura Klein Recondo at lklein@klugerkaplan.com.