



## Crystina Harris

### 2017 Scholarship Recipient



Crystina is a 2017 Economic Club Scholar from Washington Math, Science and Technology Public Charter School. In May 2021, she graduated from North Carolina A&T State University where she earned double degrees: a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Political Science and Bachelor of Social Work (BSW). Ultimately, Crystina aspires to become a public defender in Washington DC. As a public defender, she hopes to represent disadvantaged youth in the criminal justice system and to join grassroots organizations focusing on community organizing and serving oppressed populations. Currently, Crystina is pursuing a graduate degree in Social Work at The University of Chicago.

As a first generation college student from Southeast DC, Crystina dreamed of attending college, but the more she researched, that dream faded as it became less attainable financially. Without the continuous support of her academic counselor, Crystina would not have applied for the David M. Rubenstein Scholarship. She mentioned that her counselor was invested in her beyond the classroom and was instrumental in helping her apply for the scholarship even though Crystina had limited free time as she was working in a part-time position outside of school hours. Crystina plans to continue to pave the way towards her future and further her education.

Not only did winning this \$20,000 scholarship reduce the amount of student debt, but it also connected her with a lifelong mentor, Economic Club Member Toni Bush of News Corp. When asked about her mentorship experience Crystina said, “Toni would read over my personal statement, and connect me with so many people in my career path. Having her as a mentor has had a long lasting effect on my career exposure and educational journey.” Crystina has also benefitted from other Scholars to Leaders Programs like the Economic Club Summer Internship Program. Crystina is a three time Economic Club/Urban Alliance intern, earning valuable experience at the Children’s Law Center, DC Volunteer Lawyers Project , and most recently, the Greater Washington Urban League. Each internship experience helped her grow personally and professionally while exposing her to parts of Washington, D.C. outside of her neighborhood.

While her summers were spent with the Economic Club’s internships, Crystina focused on her studies during the school year. She earned the right to be placed on the chancellor’s list throughout college, and graduated Summa Cum laude from North Carolina A & T State University – reflecting the greatest academic achievement the school offers. During her

undergraduate pursuits, Crystina was also inducted into the honor society Phi Kappa Psi. So inspired by the support the Economic Club provides, Crystina started her own scholarship fund “Legalizing Dreams” to support DC students. Last year, Crystina was proud to grant two scholars with \$500 scholarships each. In 10 years, Crystina imagines expanding her brand to a non-profit organization. She hopes to take low-income students on college tours and connect them with mentors and tools needed to succeed.

Although Crystina is very community driven and values helping others, in her spare time, she stays equally busy and enjoys participating in sports like football, lounging near bodies of water, reading, and playing the cello. One of Crystina’s favorite quotes is “Success isn’t about how much money you make; it’s about the difference you make in people’s lives” - Michelle Obama.

***Crystina’s advice for Scholars:** Take advantage of the Economic Club, the resources they offer can take you so far in life but you must be willing to read the emails and participate in programs.*