2022 Year in Review

From welcoming the largest freshman cohort in our program’s history to celebrating the graduation of 13 scholars, 2022 was our best year yet.

A few highlights include:

- Through the Let’s Have a Smile Scholarship Fund, an anonymous donor committed $6.4 million to the Kelly/Strul Program, doubling an initial $5 million investment in 2019 with a $5 million legacy gift for a total of $10 million to this program. The donor also expanded his annual commitment and will now sponsor 22 Kelly/Strul scholars for four years, totaling $1.4 million in additional annual support.

- Alumna Shyra Johnson ’21 became one of the youngest certified NBA agents and founded her sports agency, Team Empire Sports.

- The FAU Foundation selected the Kelly/Strul Emerging Scholars Program as its featured scholarship for Giving Tuesday, introducing our program to new supporters.

- The Kelly/Strul program website experience became significantly better following a redesign, which included the addition of graduate profiles and programmatic successes.

- Flutist and freshman scholar Zhaira Rodriguez was selected to perform as an FAU Marching Owl, fulfilling her lifelong dream to perform at collegiate games.

- Alumnus Virone Devine ’22 was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps.

We’re so proud of what our scholars, alumni and program directors have accomplished this year, but there’s so much more in store for 2023. We hope you join us as we welcome fresh faces, celebrate new milestones and reach for even loftier goals.
Feeling Three Times the Pride for Our Newest Grads

We recently celebrated a talented trio of graduates as they turned their tassels during the winter commencement ceremony. Though Michel Issac, Gema Cervantes and Emily Seymour have officially transitioned into Kelly/Strul alumni, their stories are just beginning.

Michel proudly graduated with a Bachelor of Science in economics and plans to kickstart his business career this summer.

In less than three years, Gema graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in biological sciences. She will begin her career as a medical scribe while studying for the Medical College Admissions Test.

Emily also completed her Bachelor of Arts in history with a minor in women, gender and sexuality studies in three years. After graduation, she plans to become an AmeriCorps success coach with the goal of supporting future first-generation students.

With the addition of Michel, Gema and Emily, our alumni network now boasts 25 graduates who are flourishing in a variety of industries, including higher education, business, sports management, medicine and more.

Calling All First-Gen High School Seniors!

As our application deadline of February 15 approaches quickly, we encourage you to share program details with Florida’s deserving, first-generation high school seniors. We look forward to welcoming the seventh class of Kelly/Strul Emerging Scholars in the 2023-24 academic year.
Farewell to Jorene Jameson, Ph.D.
Since the Kelly/Strul Emerging Scholars Program launched in 2017, Jorene Jameson has played a pivotal role in its growth and development. Five years and many successes later, Jameson has retired to spend quality time with her husband. A true advocate for first-generation students, she plans to remain involved in the program and continue supporting the students who brought meaning to her professional career.

Hello, Haki Halisi
Please join us in welcoming Assistant Vice President of Scholarships and Annual Giving Haki Halisi. With more than 25 years of higher education philanthropic experience, Halisi will lead the university’s scholarship fundraising initiatives, including our Kelly/Strul Emerging Scholars Program. We are thrilled that he has joined our team.

Announcing President Emeritus John Kelly, Ph.D.
After eight successful years leading as FAU’s president, John Kelly has transitioned to the role of president emeritus. In this new role, he will continue focusing on important projects that prioritize student success and remove barriers to access for low-income and disadvantaged students. Kelly states that the Kelly/Strul Emerging Scholars Program “lies close to [his] heart,” and plans to remain involved in its continued success.

Introducing Adrian Minor
Adrian Minor has joined the Kelly/Strul team as our newest board member. He emigrated with his family from Uruguay at just 11 years old. Through hard work and dedication, his family established themselves in America. As an adult, he found much success in nurturing relationships with mentors. He is eager to economically and emotionally invest in our scholars to help them unlock and harness their own inner drives, grit and achievement.

Show your support for our Kelly/Strul Emerging Scholars as they work toward achieving their goals. Contribute to our program today:

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