

The Kovner Opportunity Scholarship

OLIVIA PEREZ: In the first cohort of Kovner Scholars, Olivia graduated from Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts and went on to study at The University of Notre Dame. She graduated from the College of Science with an honors degree in Biochemistry in 2021. She is currently enrolled at The University of Miami Miller School of Medicine and is interested in surgery



How would you define your overriding experience at Notre Dame and what were some of the formative highlights?

Above all, my experience at Notre Dame was transformative. In just four years I grew academically, emotionally, and spiritually into the person I am today. Academically, I was privileged to learn from some of the most intelligent professors and hard-working students I have ever met. My very last academic experience in senior year was actually taking a grueling analytical chemistry final exam, only to be followed by a class de-stress event at the bar down the street where our professor joined and apologized for the exam! I feel like that captures my experience in one picture- intense academics complimented by comradery and fun with both my peers and professors.

Did you always know you wanted to go into medicine and what influenced that path? After your freshman year, at UMiami what interests you most about the study and practice of medicine and opportunities at the Miller school?

A career in medicine was always on my radar, however, I told myself to keep an open mind throughout college as I studied different subjects. Perhaps the most influential factor in my eventual decision to study medicine was the experience I had through a Notre Dame sponsored Summer Service-Learning Program (SSLP) where I lived and volunteered in rural Michigan at a clinic for migrant Hispanic farmworkers. This experience, compounded by the captivating courses I took within the college of science solidified by interest and enthusiasm for the field of medicine.

After completing my first year of studying at the Miller School of medicine I can confidently say it has been a fantastic experience. Complete with the stereotypically difficult curriculum but also hands-on learning and community activities. One thing in particular that I have been very involved in is the

Department of Community Service (DOCS) student run free health clinics and fairs. Volunteering with DOCS reminds me of the memories I made at the SSLP and continually reminds me why I feel in love with medicine from the beginning.

How did your experience with the Kovner Scholarship program support your goals and dreams?

The Kovner Scholarship Program has been supporting me since my senior year of high school and I could not be more grateful. I will never forget the late-night phone calls with Ria Coyne meticulously going over my common app essays and the time both Ria and Roger Lehecka spent with me and my family going over financial aid packages. As the oldest child in my family, much of the college application and registration process was uncharted waters. I was fortunate enough to have the Kovner scholarship program in my corner navigating the waters with me.