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Press release : 2010 : 04 : 12 : Environmental Science Student Earns National Hollings Scholarship

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Environmental Science Student Earns National Hollings Scholarship

Posted [April 12, 2010](#) at 9:19 am by [Melanie Marquez](#)

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(St. Petersburg, Fla.) April 12, 2010 – During her childhood summers, Kira Barrera often floated and swam in Florida's natural springs. She loved the water, the wildlife and the plants. And now, as a junior majoring in environmental science and policy at USF St. Petersburg, Barrera earned a scholarship that gets her closer to her dream career of saving the springs she loves so much.

Barrera is the first USF St. Petersburg student to earn the Hollings Scholarship, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) program. Barrera also earned an honorable mention from the Udall Scholarship and was one of five students nominated by the USF System for the prestigious Truman Scholarship.

Barrera will join all 100 Hollings Scholars in May for a one-week orientation at the NOAA headquarters in Maryland. Next summer she'll intern with the agency.

"This will give me the skills necessary to achieve my goal of preserving the distinct flora, fauna and economic resources inherent and unique to Florida springs," Barrera said. "More research is needed in order to develop effective policy protecting the intrinsic and economic value of these distinct natural resources."

Barrera lobbies for environmental protection of Florida's resources and participates in the Student Environmental Awareness Society. She earned a spot on the Chancellor's Honor List, participated in coastal clean-ups and has volunteered at local parks to restore native plant species. After she finishes her undergraduate program, Barrera plans to earn a master's degree at USFSP in the same discipline, environmental science and policy.

"I see myself as an environmental public servant and the Hollings award prepares me for that career," Barrera said.

Barrera's application was supported by Linda Lucas, the USF National Scholarship Adviser, and Steve Ritch, the USFSP liaison for the USF Office of National Scholarships. One of her professors, Deby Cassill, wrote a recommendation letter for Barrera. Cassill taught Barrera in a biology course during the fall 2009 semester and has her in a course for the spring 2010 semester.

"She's motivated and she's passionate about environmental science," Cassill said. "She's the kind of student we want to attract because of our small classrooms and the ability to engage our students in community projects."

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