

Lalita D. Booth

PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY



As a child of poverty and former welfare mother, Lalita Booth has overcome tremendous adversity to achieve an exceptional level of success. At sixteen, Lalita was legally emancipated from her parents, and dropped out of high school to support herself. By seventeen she was married, and by eighteen she was a mother. Lalita struggled with poverty, homelessness, and single motherhood for four years before enrolling at Seminole Community College in 2004.

While attending community college, Lalita joined the Grindle Honors Institute, captained the National Academic Quiz Team and also the Debate Team, became a member of Phi Theta Kappa and Phi Beta Lambda Honor Societies, and participated in an intensive international study program in Salzburg, Austria. In 2006, Lalita became the first SCC student and one of just 38 students worldwide to win the prestigious Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship, which provided Lalita with \$30,000 a year to complete her undergraduate studies. Lalita received her Associate of the Arts Degree with Highest Honors and Honors Diploma in 2006, and matriculated to the Burnett Honors College at the University of Central Florida.

While at UCF, Lalita founded the Lighthouse for Dreams Financial Literacy Project, a not-for-profit program dedicated to helping teens and foster children learn how to manage money. She is also a member of the Order of Pegasus, which is the highest honor the university awards to students. Lalita's strong desire to effect positive social change inspired her to research empowerment-based antipoverty initiatives

as part of the Honors in the Major Program in Finance, and in 2008 she authored a one-of-a-kind guidebook for teaching financial education classes to the poor. This work, coupled with her extensive record of community involvement with organizations such as Junior Achievement became the basis for her recognition as UCF's first Harry S. Truman Scholar. The Truman Scholarship is the most prestigious public service scholarship in the United States. Lalita graduated from UCF in May of 2009 with degrees in accounting and finance. With a perfect 4.0 GPA, she was recognized as the College of Business Administration's Top Honor Graduate. She also received the UCF Alumni Association's Distinguished Student Award.

Lalita's other accomplishments include interning for two members of the Florida Legislature and one member of the United States Congress, being selected as one of Glamour Magazine's Top Ten College Women of 2008, and receiving the Governor Leroy Collins Distinguished Community College Alumni Award in the Against the Odds Category.

This year, Lalita was one of just 30 applicants worldwide to receive the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Graduate Scholarship, which provides her with up to \$50,000 a year for up to six years of graduate study. Lalita is currently a Rubenstein Fellow pursuing joint Master of Public Policy and Master of Business Administration degrees through Harvard Business School and Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Her long-term career goal is to implement a variety of creative, empowerment-based reforms to welfare that will stem the rising tide of poverty in the US.

Lalita currently resides in Medford, Massachusetts with her nine-year-old son Kieren and husband, Benjamin Brown.