

EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION

thrive
Succeeding in Law School & Beyond

THRIVE
Raleigh, N.C.

Two months before the coronavirus pandemic shut down large gatherings, North Carolina's chief justice addressed more than 50 minority students in Parker Poe's Raleigh office.

"I can't say I was sitting where you are because when I was in law school there weren't these kinds of programs – once upon a time, I would have loved to have heard from a chief justice who looks like me," said then-Chief Justice Cheri Beasley, the first Black woman to serve as North Carolina's chief justice.

"The people here today care about you and will give you some really important tips on how to start thinking about what your career will look like," she continued. "The only thing that will limit you is the way that you limit yourself."

With that, another edition of **THRIVE: Succeeding in Law School & Beyond** began. Parker Poe designed the program to help minority law students navigate law school, make a successful transition into the practice of law after graduation, and thrive as they pursue the different paths a legal career may take. More than 750 students have now attended the daylong program since its inception in 2007, when it was called Life in a Law Firm.

Toni-Ann Hines was in her first year of law school at Wake Forest University and received a hug from the chief justice.

"You don't see a lot of Black women or minorities in power," Toni-Ann said, "so being able to walk up to the chief justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court and give her a hug is kind of like – it's phenomenal, it's amazing, it's unbelievable."

She said that the entire THRIVE program meant a lot to her.

"To have a firm take such steps towards being an inclusive and diverse community means that firm has an environment I would want to be a part of," Toni-Ann said.



Then-Chief Justice Cheri Beasley & Toni-Ann Hines

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First-year UNC School of Law student Dreshawn McFadden added, “Making sure that students of color have an opportunity to see what it’s like at a private law firm, learn more about gaining practical experience and finding opportunities for advancement – it is definitely much appreciated and shows Parker Poe has a passion for diversity and inclusion.”

“These opportunities are priceless,” said Christopher Rhodes, another first-year UNC School of Law student.

“I’m the first in my family to aspire to be a lawyer, and to just see someone who looks like you has been profound in helping me conceptualize how possible it is for me,” Christopher continued. “In an implicit way, who you see in positions of power definitely affects what you think the possibilities are. It really is affirming to see Chief Justice Beasley and other lawyers in the Parker Poe firm commanding the room and inspiring all of us.”

Additional Law School Outreach

As an extension of THRIVE, the Diversity & Inclusion Committee implemented a Law School Outreach Program to reach additional law students. The program was largely virtual because of the pandemic and included trainings and meetings with law schools in the Southeast and their affinity groups.



Shalanna Pirtle, Then-Chief Justice Cheri Beasley & Chara O’Neale