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Up Close: The Rainmaker

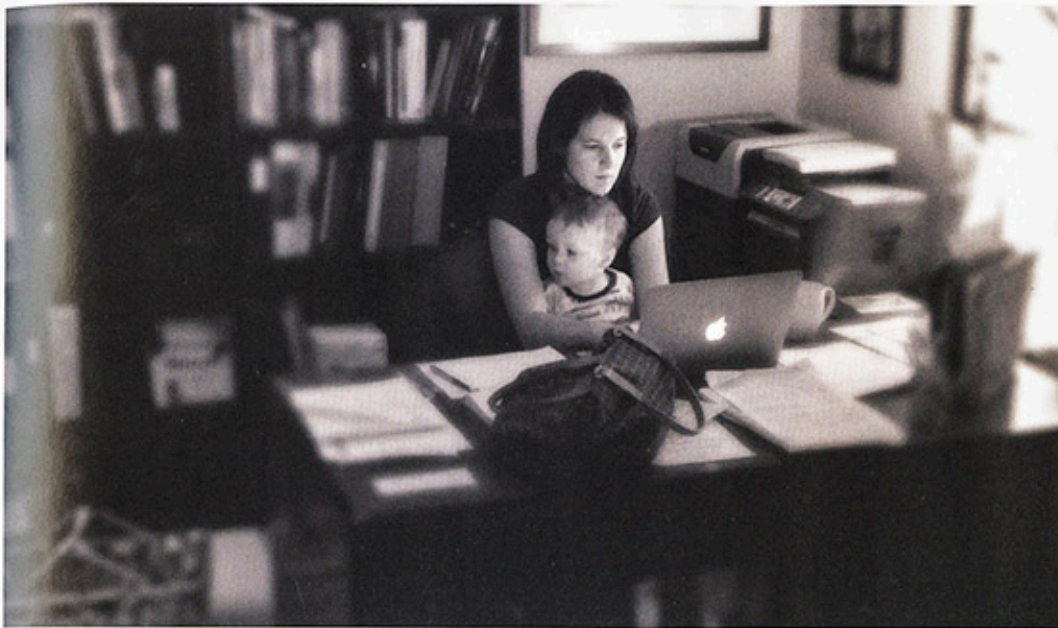
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UP CLOSE

The Rainmaker

The political sphere has a secret weapon with this former sociology major.

Brice Barnes '04 was having a good week. As the recently named finance director for the Florida Democratic Party, she was celebrating the Supreme Court rulings that affirmed the legality of the Affordable Care Act and same-sex marriage in all 50 states. She was also on day 68 of her new gig, which in April had moved her from North Carolina, where she spent the last decade blazing her way through the state and national political scene.

In fact lately, Barnes has been on a roll.

In spring, the 33-year-old was named by the American Association of Political Consultants (AAPC) as one of the 40 best and brightest campaign professionals under 40 years old currently working in the United States. Not a bad feather in the cap for a

sociology major who originally thought she was headed for law school.

Barnes got her fundraising start at Duke University, where she worked in the development office after graduating from Furman. It was while studying for the LSAT that she decided to get involved with local politics "because I always heard that helps with being an attorney," she says. But when she got a job working for then-Lieutenant Governor Beverly Perdue, the law school idea became a thing of the past. "I just never left," she laughs.

Barnes went on to serve as the national deputy director for Perdue's campaign for governor, which Perdue won—a source of pride for Barnes since Perdue became the first female governor to take office in her home state. "I believe that taking those leaps of faith

is sometimes what makes you most successful," she observes.

Cracking the glass ceiling has become somewhat of a hallmark for Barnes, who, as a senior adviser to North Carolina's Kay Hagan, helped her leap a gender barrier as the first female Democrat elected to the United States Senate.

In sports, Barnes would be known as "clutch." Her clients have won more than 86 percent of their elections and raised 172 percent more campaign contributions than their respective opponents. Barnes reports helping to raise more than \$30 million throughout her career. With talent like that, one might wonder why Barnes does not take her acumen to the political nerve center of Capitol Hill.

"I went to high school in D.C. and just didn't have the bug to go back. To me, so much

more is done in the state and local districts and you can help more people with the work you are doing," she explains. But being far from the heart of government has not kept her from meeting key leaders. "I've been fortunate to interact with Vice President Biden, former President Bill Clinton, and other key leaders for fundraising events. It is always special to meet the leaders of our country shaping our laws and policy," she says.

Before moving to Florida, Barnes created her own political firm, Greenprint Strategies, to help brand herself and build teams for North Carolina candidates. "The firm is shifting now that I am in Florida, but I will still keep it active," she says.

Greenprint enabled Barnes to build a niche opening up the field, for women in particular. "I never came out and said I wanted to focus on helping other women run, but it happened naturally and I am glad because we need to figure out how to recruit and engage other women more effectively. Women have such good perspectives to contribute."

Now, Barnes is responsible for leading the party's fundraising efforts for all of Florida—from presidential races to city council elections. As a key electoral state, and one poised for another presidential election, Florida will keep Barnes busy. "We do the bulk of our fundraising for the party during presidential election years," she explains.

Which begs the question: For someone who has been so successful putting others in office, what's the likelihood of Barnes putting herself there? "You never know, but at this point I don't foresee it," she says. A politician couldn't have said it better. **F**

—Kate Dabbs '09