

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

KRIS KULLY

Partner
Mayer Brown



1. Hometown

York, Nebraska

2. Fun Fact

Always the hardest question! I know how to play an inordinate number of woodwind instruments (clarinet & bass clarinet, flute & saxophone, oboe & bassoon).

3. Employer and Position

Mayer Brown, Partner

4. Describe your journey in the financial services industry and how your career has evolved to your current position.

My part-time job in college was as a bank teller in the “drive-through” – all these years later, I still straighten my dollar bills, so they face the same way. My branch manager and many of my colleagues were women, so I learned early on that the financial services industry is a great place for smart women.

After law school I joined the Office of General Counsel at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), focusing on the areas in which HUD promotes and regulates the housing finance industry. I enjoyed the intersection of housing policy and finance, and worked with and learned from many smart and dedicated lawyers and other professionals.

After six years at HUD, I joined a law firm group focusing on mortgage banking and other consumer financial products and services. The lawyers in my group advise the housing and consumer finance industry from every angle – compliance, transactional, enforcement, litigation, and structured finance and securitization. My clients range from relatively small community banks and credit unions to global financial institutions.

5. What do you love most about what you do?

I love a lot of things about being a lawyer in the consumer financial services/mortgage industry. Primarily, I love that almost every day, I learn something and I teach something. My clients and my colleagues are among the smartest people I’ve ever met, and it is a fantastic challenge to try to stay one step ahead. I’ve never had a boring day.

6. Hobbies?

Making quilts, running, and going to amusement parks with my son.

7. How long have you been a member of WHF?

I joined WHF in 2000.

8. Please describe your involvement with WHF.

Over the years, I have been involved in WHF in several ways. In addition to attending many of the events, I served a few terms as counsel to the WHF Board of Directors and to the WHF Foundation. I also then was honored to be elected as Vice President, President-Elect, and then President. Through those roles, I served as Chair of the Programming Committee, helping to plan valuable and interesting speakers and other events. I led the Symposium Committee, spearheading WHF's premier day-long event with leaders and innovators in housing and finance. I now serve as the President of the WHF Foundation (after having served a year on the Board of that organization).

9. Please describe your involvement with WHFF and your vision for this upcoming year.

As I mentioned earlier, this is my second year on the Board of Directors of the WHF Foundation, and I currently serve as President. Over the years I have volunteered with the Foundation's partner organization Calvary Women's Services of DC, leading financial education courses and participating in birthday parties. I have also liaised with Foundation partner Doorways of Arlington, seeking to promote that organization's activities and fundraising efforts. This year I hope to encourage WHF members to increase their participation with our partners, through volunteer activities and donations. It is one of the best aspects of WHF membership!

10. What have you gained from being a member?

When I first joined WHF as a relatively new lawyer in DC, I valued the opportunity to learn about the variety of professionals in our industry. I met other lawyers, economists, journalists, consultants, lobbyists, nonprofit directors, housing specialists, secondary market investors, and congressional staff. I also was thrilled to learn that many of those experts are women!

As I moved from the public to the private sector, I attended many lunches and other events, learning from high-profile speakers like Cabinet officials, senators, and even Fed Chairmen! Also, I have really valued participating in several efforts by the WHF Foundation to support local women through financial literacy, economic empowerment, support and protection. Over the years, however, my favorite part of WHF has simply been the relationships. I've met so many women and men from diverse backgrounds and specialties, who have helped me shape my professional life and become my friends.

11. How do you make the best use of your day?

Early morning exercise really helps me feel productive and energetic. I also am frankly enjoying the return to the office – I find I use my time more efficiently there than when I'm working at my kitchen table!

12. Who or what inspires you?

I am inspired by people who are creative, analytical, and curious.

13. What is the best advice you have ever received?

A mentor/friend reminded me once when I was plagued with imposter syndrome that I know more than I think I do.

14. Who do you look up to the most and why?

Many people, for different reasons. My mother, because of all her encouragement. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson for achieving excellence in her legal profession. Katie Ledecy, because she just keeps getting better!