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## **University of Miami Student Named Finalist for the 2005 Florida College Student of the Year Award**

Gainesville, Fla. (03-28) – Minal Ahson, a senior in religious studies and microbiology at the University of Miami with a 3.4 GPA, is one of seven finalists for the 2005 Florida College Student of the Year Award.

Ahson and 19 other students from colleges and universities across Florida will share \$65,000 in scholarships and prizes and will be honored Friday, April 8 at an awards ceremony and press conference at the Capitol Building in Tallahassee.

Ahson was selected from 78 applicants in the annual scholarship program sponsored by *Florida Leader* magazine, SunTrust Education Loans, and Office Depot. The Florida College Student of the Year Award celebrates 18 years of recognizing outstanding Florida college students for their campus leadership, academic excellence, and financial self-reliance.

Ahson, 22, encourages involvement in minority cultural organizations. Her goal is to increase attendance at events like Black Awareness Month Fashion Show or International Week,

which generally draw only minority students. "Whether the cause is HIV/AIDS, dispelling Islamic stereotypes, increasing cultural awareness, or gaining support against disrespectful events, I get more people involved through word of mouth, advertising, working with more student groups, and fostering relationships with student leaders across campus," Ahson says.

Local efforts can impact people on an international scale, as Ahson proves. She serves as president of Council of International Student Organizations, an umbrella organization that coordinates events for international students. With the help of the UM Red Cross, COISO raised money for an international measles initiative during I-Week. "When student groups pool their resources, so much can be accomplished," she says.

Students at 86 colleges and nearly 550 high schools throughout Florida read *Florida Leader*, founding sponsor of the Florida College Student of the Year Award. Now in its 22<sup>nd</sup> year, Oxendine Publishing also produces the national leadership magazine *Student Leader*. See [www.floridaleader.com/soty](http://www.floridaleader.com/soty) for more details on the annual scholarship program and other finalists.