

Press Release

Akerman Lawyers Receive 2024 Burton Award for Distinguished Legal Writing

March 18, 2024

Top national law firm Akerman is pleased to announce that Higher Education and Collegiate Athletics Practice Chair [LaKeisha Marsh](#), Partner [Montoya Ho-Sang](#), and Associate [Sommer Sharpe](#) have been selected as recipients of a *Law360* Distinguished Legal Writing Award from the Burton Awards. Their article, “[What You Need to Know About Brand Protection in NIL Deals](#),” published in LEAD1 Association’s 12th Edition, is one of just 20 selected in 2024 from submissions provided by the country’s top 1,000 law firms.

Established in 1999, the Burton Awards annually honor distinguished writers and leaders in law across America’s most prestigious law firms. In association with the Library of Congress, the award is presented by lead sponsor *Law360* and co-sponsored by the American Bar Association.

William Burton, founder and chair of the awards program, said: “The recipients are truly exemplary, skillful, and effective writers. The highest standard of excellence in legal writing.”

Akerman Chairman and CEO [Scott Meyers](#) said: “We congratulate LaKeisha, Montoya, and Sommer on this well-deserved honor. The Burton Award reflects their outstanding abilities as Akerman lawyers, excelling in providing sophisticated advice to clients on novel and complex legal issues, and also in

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translating that advice into actionable strategies for our clients nationwide.”

The article outlines what student-athletes, athletic directors, and institutions need to know about brand protection in name, image, and likeness (NIL) deals. The authors wrote: “The NIL era has created exciting opportunities for student-athletes to capitalize on their right of publicity. At the same time, NIL opportunities present several complexities that student-athletes and institutions must navigate to safeguard their interests, including protecting their intellectual property and avoiding trademark infringement liability. Although NIL commercialization may be unfamiliar territory for many student-athletes and institutions, athletes should consider protecting their brands by implementing effective trademark strategies, and institutions need to be aware of copyright and intellectual property right laws to ensure that their NIL-related policies are within the confines of the law.”

The Akerman lawyers will be honored during an awards ceremony on May 20 at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

About Akerman

Akerman LLP is a top 100 U.S. law firm recognized among the most forward-thinking firms in the industry by *Financial Times*. Its more than 700 lawyers and business professionals collaborate with the world’s most successful enterprises and entrepreneurs to navigate change, seize opportunities, and help drive innovation and growth.

Akerman’s Higher Education and Collegiate Athletics Practice delivers institutions of higher education a comprehensive range of litigation, transactional, and counseling services. Its dedicated team has the hands-on experience and background to guide clients through the complex web of state and federal regulations.