

First-Generation Student Guide

Greetings!

Attending a college or university is a wonderful accomplishment and it is the start to a journey of lifelong learning. While the college experience is exciting, it is different from high school and it takes adjusting. You will meet new people from various backgrounds and encounter different perspectives on topics inside and outside of the classroom. You will encounter academic challenges and find interests you did not know you had. Many things may be new to you. No matter the achievement or the challenge, the University of Miami community is here to support you along the way!

Empower Me First, an academic support and diversity and inclusion initiative in the Office of Academic Enhancement, is dedicated to helping you succeed at the University of Miami. In addition to offering academic support, Empower Me First is providing you with a general guide that highlights some of our many campus resources, campus events, student organizations, common terms used at the university, and a few study tips.

The program staff hopes that this list encourages curiosity and discovery of the many things the university has to offer during your experience. While this resource does not illustrate all that UM has to offer, we hope it excites you enough to look further into the opportunities that are available.

Welcome to The U!

Sincerely,

Whitley M. Johnson
Sr. Academic Advisor for Diversity & Inclusion



About the OAE

- **The Office of Academic Enhancement** - The Office of Academic Enhancement (OAE) is a web of support systems promoting academic excellence, campus engagement, and professional development with a focus on serving underrepresented, low-income, and first generation students. The office includes residential college advising, diversity and inclusion advising, prestigious awards & fellowships and more.
<http://www6.miami.edu/provost/oae/>
 - **Diversity and Inclusion Advising** - Through advising and workshops, the Diversity and Inclusion Advisor provides academic advocacy and academic support for first generation and underrepresented students. Students may seek assistance with time management, study skills, and advice for adjusting to the academic and social spheres of collegiate life.
 - **Prestigious Awards & Fellowships** - The Office of Prestigious Awards and Fellowships provides undergraduate students with a range of services to maximize their candidacy for nationally competitive awards, fellowships, and scholarships. The office actively promotes awareness of scholarship and fellowship opportunities, while providing personal mentoring for applicants.
 - **Residential College Advising** - As a collaborative effort with Housing and Residential Life, residential college advising conveniently supports students in the dorms through Residential Advisors and First Year Fellows. The Residential College Advisor can address concerns related to academic and career exploration.

First Generation U

First Generation U is a student organization and support system to help first generation students navigate college. Through mentorship, fellowship, and programming, members work to create educational opportunities that will instill confidence for academic and professional success.

A message from Crystal Lam: Co-Founder of First Generation U

“Some advice I received recently is to make sure your relationships and networks form organically and involve a reciprocity of investment. Be as involved in the well being of others as they are of you. Get involved in the things you care about, for reasons greater than yourself, because your growth in college is an instrumental stepping-stone toward your success and happiness later in life.

First Generation U was founded on the premise of helping those who come after (you), promoting positive change in higher education. Leave behind a legacy of which you are proud. Remember where you came from (your personal narrative) and why you are doing what you do. This will be an unexpectedly powerful source of motivation throughout your college career.

You don't have to live your life the way everyone else is - go at your own pace, and don't let people tell you that your goals are not prestigious enough. Don't take setbacks as a sign you don't belong in college. There is no "sign" that you should not finish your college education and achieve your goals. These are just obstacles for you to overcome, and as difficult as they may be, there are first generation alumni and staff who are rooting for you. Take your family on the journey with you. There are many first generation students like you across the country and in this university - you are not alone!” ~Crystal Lam, Class of 2017

University Resources

- ❖ **UMX 100-** The University of Miami Experience is a graded, online, self-paced course which provides students with the foundational knowledge and skills to become independent problem solvers and develop meaningful connections with students, faculty, and the University of Miami community. It exposes Canes to leadership opportunities, academic and career planning, university traditions, study abroad opportunities, personal wellness programs, as well as advising and registration. The grade students earn on the course IS recorded on their transcript, but does NOT factor into GPA. If students are not automatically enrolled, they should email umx@miami.edu requesting enrollment.
- ❖ **‘Cane Success Center** – The Cane Success Center is staffed with advisors who work one-on-one with students that may be facing academic, financial or social challenges. The advisors can connect you to resources on and off campus regarding choosing the right major, researching additional financial aid, and discovering organizations that fit your interests.
http://www.miami.edu/index.php/cane_success_center/
- ❖ **Camner Center for Academic Resources** - The Camner Center for Academic Resources provides many resources for academic success including peer tutoring, learning specialists, and disability services for students. There are over 100 peer tutors available in nearly every subject!
<http://umarc.miami.edu/arc/Index.html>
- ❖ **Counseling Center** - If you want to talk to someone on any range of topics from homesickness to stress about exams or daily challenges, The Counseling Center has free individual and group sessions available. No concern is too small!
<http://counseling.studentaffairs.miami.edu/>
- ❖ **Dean of Students** – The Dean of Students Office interacts with students in ways that contribute to an exceptional and comprehensive sphere outside of the classroom. There are five primary DOSO units: Honor Council, Greek Life, Alcohol & Other Drug Education, Judicial Affairs, and Chaplains Association.
http://www.miami.edu/sa/index.php/dean_of_students/
- ❖ **Financial Aid Office** – The Financial Aid Office provides students with financial resources and related services. Counseling on grants, Federal Work-Study, loans, and scholarships are available to help pay for educational expenses.
- ❖ **Housing and Residential Life** – Housing and Residential Life provides support for students living on-campus. Resident Assistants, Live-In Faculty, and First Year Fellows are available to help students address any academic and social concerns. If you are considering moving off campus, the Off Campus online resource provides off campus listings, cost calculator, and comprehensive advice for your search.
- ❖ **LGBTQ Student Center** - The LGBTQ Student Center is a safe space for the UM community representing a spectrum of sexualities and identifications. The center offers peer mentorship, programming revolving around the LGBTQ community, a space to study, socialize and more.
http://www.miami.edu/sa/index.php/lgbtq_canes_and_allies/

- ❖ **Math Lab** - The Math Lab is staffed by graduate math students and undergraduate peer tutors. They are available for tutoring and homework help on a walk-in basis.
<http://www.math.miami.edu/resources/math-laboratory/>
- ❖ **Modern Language Lab**- This lab offers several types of support services to students enrolled in modern language courses including: Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish (to name a few).
- ❖ **Multicultural Student Affairs (MSA)** - The mission of MSA is to provide leadership and advocacy for underrepresented and ethnically diverse students at the University of Miami. MSA supports the university in its ongoing efforts to maintain a multicultural campus community, which supports, values, and celebrates its diversity. Throughout the academic year, MSA hosts various programs and events that include:
 - Culture Pop-up at the U
 - Diversity Week
 - Real Talk
 Learn more at <http://msa.studentaffairs.miami.edu>
- ❖ **Richter Library**- Richter Library is the main library on UM's main campus. Aside students having access to several individual and group study spaces, students are able to take advantage of various other resources, including:
 - The Writing Center
 - The Math Lab
 - The Digital Media Lab
 - Computers & Printers
 - Books, DVDs, Video Games
- ❖ **Study Abroad** - The Study Abroad Office provides resources and opportunities for students looking to enrich their college experience by studying outside the United States. The office can assist with questions regarding study abroad programs, scholarships, and application requirements.
http://www.miami.edu/index.php/study_abroad
- ❖ **Toppel Career Center** – The Toppel Career Center is a vital resource to help students explore academic and career options, connect with UM alumni, and engage in career counseling. In addition, Toppel offers various career services, including resume critiques, mock interviews, informational programs, and career fairs.
<http://hireacane.miami.edu/>
- ❖ **Writing Center** –From brainstorming to revisions, students are able to receive free one on one help with academic, professional, personal, and digital projects.
<http://www.as.miami.edu/writingcenter/>

Common Terms at UM

- **Academic Advisor** - This person will review course requirements and help select appropriate courses based on your field of study. First year students are required to meet with their advisor in order to get an idea of what their major entails to remain on track for graduation
- **Add/Drop Period** – During the first week of classes, you will still have the opportunity to add and drop courses freely, allowing you the opportunity to read the syllabus and explore different interests before your schedule is finalized.
- **BlackBoard**-The Blackboard Course Management system is essentially a course website for your UM courses. Students and faculty are automatically enrolled in their course websites. Faculty often uses the course web site to post PowerPoint slides, lecture notes, examples of previous exams, grades, links to online material, and out-of-class discussions may also be posted on blackboard.
- **Canelink** – A University Information System used to search for various parts of student life such as job hunting on Job X, housing, meal plans, magna cum laude requirements, ALEKS placement testing, financial aid, classes; course schedules, grade history, class rosters, registration carts and more. Your academic advisor's name is also listed in Canelink.
- **Cognates** - University of Miami's general education requirements are a bit different from most schools. To fulfill the requirements, students must complete a "cognate", or set of at least 3 interrelated courses. The three areas of studies are: Arts & Humanities, People & Society, and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Your major and minor may each fulfill one cognate and the other must be completed by taking pre-approved groupings of classes. You can also speak to your academic advisor about grouping classes in a way that has never been done. More information on available cognates is available through the Cognate Search Engine: <https://cognates.miami.edu>.
- **Expected Family Contribution (EFC)**- EFC is the amount your family is expected to pay for tuition and fees, calculated by FAFSA and other financial institutions.
- **First Year Fellow**- First Year Fellows are live-in peer advisers extensively trained to answer questions on majors, minors, cognates, or University policies. First Year Fellows serve as a liaison between campus resources and first year students.
- **Full-Time enrollment**- In order to be a full-time student eligible for certain scholarships, programs, and activities, you must be enrolled in 12 or more credits per semester. Students taking less than 12 credits a semester are considered part time students.
- **GradesFirst** - GradesFirst is the system used at UM to schedule appointments for advising and tutoring at UM.
- **Midterm**- An exam typically in the middle of the semester. Professors may schedule a midterm worth a significant portion of the grade. Certain courses may have more than one midterm.
- **Prerequisites/Requisites**- Prerequisites are academic requirements that must be fulfilled before enrollment in certain courses, while requisites are those that must be fulfilled while enrolled. These may take the form of upper division standing, other courses, or minimum GPA.
- **Registration Schedule**- This schedule indicates what time you can begin registering for courses. The schedule is contingent on your number of earned credits.
- **Resident Assistant** – Resident Assistants are peer leaders who not only supervise the floor they live on, but provide social and academic guidance for students living on-campus in the residential colleges.
- **Shopping Cart**- Validating courses in your Shopping Cart on Canelink allows you to check for any conflicts or pending requirements.
- **Withdraw (from a course)**: - After a specified date each semester, dropping a class will result in a "W", which stands for withdrawal notation on your transcript. While this means the class will

not affect your GPA, it is still important to consider that this is visible on your transcript when applying to postgraduate programs

Study Tips

- **Syllabus** - At the start of each semester, the professor for each of your classes will provide a syllabus, which is an academic document that communicates course information and defines expectations and responsibilities. It is important to pay attention to the syllabus because it provides course deadlines, grading policies, and expectations.
- **Office Hours** - Office hours are a time all professors set aside each week in order to meet with students outside of the classroom. Students may visit their professor during office hours to ask questions about course material, request feedback on assignments, or even get to know the professor in a one-on-one setting.
- **Technology/ Apps** - There are many apps that help with time management and studying including:
 - **Google Calendar**- A fantastic tool to manage time and assignments. Combat procrastination by setting multiple alerts leading up to due dates and sharing your calendar with project partners, teachers, and coworkers.
 - **Quizlet** - An online and mobile study platform through which you can create flashcards, play memory games and test yourself. It is convenient as you can study on the go.
 - **SelfControl/Cold Turkey**- Mac and Windows apps, respectively, that keep you focus by blocking distracting websites (for example, Facebook). The websites and amount of time may be customized to your needs.
 - **Trello**– A project management tool that makes collaboration more seamless with the ability to create team boards, invite others to edit to-do lists, assign tasks, and much more.

Athletics

- The university houses 15 athletic teams for 17 varsity sports. Support your fellow Canes and show school spirit by attending our athletic events!

Men's Athletics		Women's Athletics	
Baseball (Feb-May)		Basketball (Nov-Dec)	
	Basketball (Nov-Dec)		Cross country (Sep-Nov)
Cross country (Sep-Nov)		Golf (Sep-May)	
	Diving (Sep-May)		Rowing (Sep-May)
Football (Sep-Nov)		Swimming & Diving (Sep-May)	

Tennis (Sep-April)

Tennis (Sep-April)

Track and Field (Jan-Jun)

Track and Field (Jan-Jun)

Volleyball (Aug-Nov)

Campus Events

While this list is not exhaustive of all the on-campus events offered, the list below highlights just a few of the campus events the University of Miami has to offer.

- **Homecoming Week:** Homecoming is the most spirited time of the year. Throughout the week, student organizations compete in competitions such as the King & Queen pageant, O-Cheer, and Alma Mater. The various events that take place during Homecoming are as follows:
 - **Homecoming Concert-**Hurricane Production hosts the concert of the year featuring popular artists. Information on free tickets can be found at: www.hurricaneproductions.org/homecoming
 - **Hurricane Howl-** This event takes place the Friday night before the homecoming football game. It features food trucks, rides, a parade with floats by student organizations, ending with the annual boat burning tradition - The boat burning tradition holds that the mast must sink before the boat for the Hurricanes to win the Homecoming football game and fireworks around the Lake
 - **Hurricanes Help the Hometown-** is one of the oldest service days on campus. Students and alumni come together to give back to their community. Free breakfast, lunch, and T-shirts are provided.
 - **King & Queen Pageant-** Students represent their student organization to win homecoming court. Contestants are judged on their Canes spirit, talent, and poise.
 - **Opening Ceremonies and Alma Mater Competition Preliminaries-** the competition is tangible as different student organizations perform to kick off homecoming. Points are awarded for the best performances throughout the week.
 - **Organized Cheer Competition-**In a competition commonly referred to as O-cheer, teams dance and lip-sync their favorite tunes. As one of the most popular events of Homecoming, you don't want to miss it!
- **Cinematic Arts Commission Screenings:** Every Wednesday and Saturday night at Cosford Cinema (UM's on-campus cinema), The Cinematic Arts Commission hosts screenings of popular films, many of which are recent releases, Oscar nominations from the year, or classics.
- **Canes Carnival:** During the spring semester before finals week, Hurricane Productions brings food trucks, giveaways, carnival rides, and a concert.
- **Canes After Dark:** As a monthly UM tradition, Hurricane Productions hosts a themed event with free food, giveaways, performances, and more. This fosters a unique environment for responsible socializing and student club connections.

- **Drag Out:** Every year, SpectrUM, the UM LGBTQ student organization, puts on a drag show to bring awareness to LGBTQ issues, while also raising money for local LGBTQ nonprofit organizations. The event features both professional drag queens from Miami and UM students.
- **International Week:** The Council of International Students and Organizations (COISO) organizes International Week, which gives UM's cultural student organizations a chance to represent different parts of the world. Each night includes free food, performances, and interactive cultural events.
- **Black Awareness Month:** Throughout the month of February, the Black Awareness Month Committee along with Multicultural Student Affairs, United Black Students and other organizations host several events celebrating Black history.
- **Women's History Month:** Every March, organizations across the school, including the National Organization of Women, Yellow Rose Society and more, host events celebrating Women's History Month.
- **Service Days:** Orientation Outreach, Gandhi Day of Service, MLK Day of Service, and FunDay are a few of UM's annual community service events. Students are typically bused to different agencies around Miami to give back to the community with activities such as serving the homeless, cleaning playgrounds, and sorting donated goods. For Fun Day, special needs citizens are partnered with students for a day of fun on campus that consists of arts & crafts, petting zoos, karaoke, and bounce houses. The schedule for Service Days is as followed:
 - **Orientation Outreach-** Saturday, Aug. 25, 2018
 - **National Gandhi Day of Service-** Saturday, Oct. 13, 2018
 - **Hurricanes Help the Hometown-** Saturday, Oct. 27, 2018
 - **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service-** TBD
 - **FunDay-**Saturday, February 2, 2019
 - **Black Awareness Day of Service-** February 16, 2019

Establish a Community for Yourself

The University of Miami provides numerous opportunities for students to become involved on-campus and in the greater Miami-Dade community. From student organizations to service-based projects, students are able to build a community for themselves that is based off personal interests and talents.

- **Butler Center-** The Butler Center focuses on service and leadership opportunities to increase engagement among students, faculty, and the greater Miami-Dade community. The office coordinates service days, programs, and houses many service-based student organizations.
- **Canes Fest & Spring Involvement Fair-** At the beginning of each semester (Canes Fest in the August and Spring Involvement Fair in January) hundreds of student organizations gather to table and promote their organizations. This gives students the opportunity to talk to representatives and learn about all the different organizations on campus
- **OrgSync-** A website to find and connect with organizations on campus. Through Orgsync, students can register for programs, find volunteer opportunities, and communicate with organization members.
<https://orgsync.com/login/university-of-miami>

- **Student Government-** Student Government plans and implements campus-wide initiatives that affect student life including academics, campus life, and dining. There are three agencies that operate under the Student Government umbrella:
 - **Category 5 (Cat 5)** works with UM Athletics and is the spirit programming board of Student Government.
 - **Environmental Conservation Organization (ECO)** builds an environmentally friendly campus through student-led initiatives.
 - **The Elections Commission** is responsible for coordinating and officiating free and fair Student Government elections.
- **Student Media-** UM has a wide range of different publications and media organizations that are student-run and provide great opportunities for students interested in writing, graphic design, broadcast journalism, photography, film and more.
 - **The Miami Hurricane**– The Miami Hurricane is an acclaimed student-run newspaper published weekly. The paper features national news, campus events, sports and culture in Miami, as well as opinion pieces. Students are able to become involved as writers, photographers, editors and more.
 - **UMTV-** UM's television station has news shows in English and Spanish, a pop culture news show and a sketch comedy show. The shows are student-run, which gives students the opportunity to hone their skills- both on camera and behind the scenes.
 - **WVUM Radio Station**– WVUM is a not-for-profit radio station that broadcasts throughout the Miami-Dade area. WVUM offers many ways for students to get involved, including being an on-air DJ, writing for their culture blog, and assisting with on and off-campus programming.

Cultural Organizations

Cultural organizations are a fantastic way to broaden one's horizons and be part of a supportive network. There are over 34 cultural organizations at the University of Miami. A list of these clubs can be found at: https://orgsync.com/browse_orgs/571. A few notable cultural organizations include:

- **Council of International Students and Organizations (COISO)** - COISO serves as the umbrella organization for all cultural student clubs and coordinates campus wide activities such as International Week and United Nations Day.
- **United Black Students (UBS)** - UBS aims to expose all members of the University of Miami community to the many facets of African American culture. Concurrently, UBS serves to unite, empower, and uplift African Americans through cultural, professional, and personal events and initiatives.
- **Federación de Estudiantes Cubanos (FEC)**- The purpose of FEC is to increase campus awareness of the many aspects of Cuban Culture. FEC strives to foster leadership and school spirit while creating a social and service-oriented network at the University of Miami for Cuban and non-Cubans alike.
- **Planet Kreyol-** The purpose of Planet Kreyol is to unite and represent Haitian students at the University of Miami. Planet Kreyol promotes active participation in academic, cultural, social, and political activities of Haitian students at the University of Miami.

Greek Life

The University of Miami Greek community is home to over 30 different fraternities and sororities. Becoming a part of the Greek community is a wonderful way to foster personal and community development, build and enhance leadership skills, and serve the greater community within the shared

value and vision of brotherhood and sisterhood. The University of Miami Greek Community is comprised of 4 councils:

- **Interfraternity Council**
- **Multicultural Greek Council**
- **National Panhellenic Council**
- **Panhellenic Association**

There are also professional Greek organizations that focus on ambitions and careers such as pre-med, cinematic arts, business and more.