

Set Up for Success

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Picture this: you're at the dinner table, recounting your semester with relatives, when someone asks you the dreaded loaded question, "What will you do after graduation?" Maybe you have it all planned out, and perhaps you don't. Either way, wherever your career development journey takes you, you will need some help. Luckily, the University of Miami provides students with many resources to find jobs, network, and position themselves to potential employers in the best way possible.

Handshake:

Handshake is a platform students and alumni use for career development, whether they are registering for career fairs, networking or applying for jobs. Over 200,000 employers use the platform, and all UM students automatically have an account created for them upon enrollment. Often, employers use the platform to identify and connect with students whose qualifications align with the roles they post.

Rachel Amezcua Bahadue, Assistant Director of Career Connections at UM's Toppel Career Center, says she recommends students take time to complete a full profile.

"Having a fully completed Handshake profile is super important because Handshake curates the opportunities it shows on your landing page based on the information included in your profile," said Bahadue. In completing a profile, Bahadue recommends students include a professional headshot atop the inclusion of their work experience and upload their resume.

As for Handshake's job opportunity database, Bahadue has tips for students who want to stand out and reach out to whoever posted the job listing.

"When you see a post on Handshake, if there is someone listed on the profile for that job as a contact, find them on LinkedIn or Cane2Cane and try to interact with them."

LinkedIn:

One cannot speak of career development platforms without mentioning LinkedIn, which is basically social media but for professional purposes. LinkedIn allows professionals across all industries to connect and share their insights and accomplishments and even shows job listings catered to users' areas of expertise.

"I recommend you follow the companies you are interested in working for on LinkedIn," said Bahadue to students looking to use the platform to connect with prospective employers.

In addition to connecting with companies on a larger scale, students can use LinkedIn to leverage UM's alumni network, with the ability to view and direct message UM alums who work at their dream companies they envision themselves at.

"I have tried to reach out to UM alums over LinkedIn and ask about job openings," said Logan Tridel, a junior triple majoring in business technology, legal studies and human resources management. Tridel says that many alums have been able to connect her with recruiters for the positions in which she is interested.

"Using LinkedIn is hit or miss with responses, so a lot of times I look up the companies' email codes and email alums to say 'hi, I'm a UM student and saw you were an alum,'" said Tridel.

Cane2Cane:

For students looking for a more "U" centric networking experience, Cane2Cane provides a virtual network of exclusively UM students, alumni or friends of the U. Students can create profiles with the option to sync data from their LinkedIn profiles so they don't have to re-input their information. From there, they can also input more personal information, like their hobbies and key motivators.

Using the Ask-A-Cane feature, students can ask career-related questions, which will be sent to real professionals with relevant expertise within Cane2Cane's network. Need help coming up with a good question? The Ask-A-Cane features AI-generated question templates to make the process simpler.

"Cane2Cane is specific to the UM community as opposed to LinkedIn, where you are with the entire world," said Bahadue. "Using Cane2Cane, you are more likely to get a response or specific feedback and information."

Career Fairs:

Looking to network face-to-face? Through Handshake, students can register for career fairs where they can connect with prospective employers with the opportunity to pitch themselves as qualified candidates and learn more about how to position themselves to land the job. Along with career forums geared towards specific career paths, Toppel hosts a larger-scale career fair in the fall and spring.

"We bring in recruiters from top companies to meet with students so they can ask for feedback on their resumes, LinkedIn profiles and elevator pitches," said Bahadue. "We even have an event called Employer Practice Interviews and Critiques — EPIC — which happens each semester a couple of days before the career expo and helps students to prepare."

With nearly 100 top employers at the Fall 2024 Career Expo, students can form lucrative connections and receive valuable feedback from recruiters on their resumes and elevator pitches.

"We try to make our career fairs very open to all majors and career standings," said Daniel Perez, a senior majoring in international studies and political science. "You could be a sophomore, and we have things in terms of internships. You could be a senior, and we have options for full-time employment," added Perez, who has worked as a career coach for Toppel for two and a half years.

"I recommend attending career fairs, even if just to look around. When you go, take note of how your fellow students are approaching employers. If there is an employer you would like to work for, approach them so when it comes time to apply, you already have a relationship with them," said Bahadue.

Drop-In Advising:

Toppel offers drop-in advising in-person or via Zoom, Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for students with a pressing question about their professional development. Whether it's about resume help, double-checking an application to their dream job or conducting a mock job interview, the Toppel career coaches are there to help.

"By coming in [to Toppel], we maximize our time with students just by giving them all the input they need — from skills to achievements to how to position themselves as a good applicant on their resume," said Perez.

"You can meet with a career coach who can help you with your resume" said Bahadue. "These sources are all trial and error. We are always here to help the students. There may be a mistake with the length of your resume and how to word your accomplishment statements, so it is important to have people review them before applying for opportunities."

Interview Prep:

Toppel provides students access to Big Interview, an online platform where students can access thousands of mock interview questions, view a curriculum detailing the job-landing process, and use the Answer Builder tool to build answers step-by-step.

The platform also has a practice interview feature where students can film a mock interview from their chosen industry and get feedback from a career coach in three to five business days. Students who prefer to simulate their big interviews in person can visit Toppel during drop-in hours, where a career coach will conduct a simulation interview.

About the mock interviews he conducted, Perez offered advice to students going through the job interview process.

"Just be yourself, think of the interview as a normal conversation, and a lot of people over prepare themselves for an interview and sound like a radio," said Perez.

Forage:

Looking to get ahead? Through Toppel, UM students can gain industry experience by completing short, real-world company-backed online projects.

"These virtual experience programs range from 3-7 hours in total and help students build valuable career skills and give students an idea of what it would be like to work for that specific company within that industry," said Bahadue.

This article only scratches the surface of the career-development resources offered by the school, but these are some of the most valuable ones. If this article listed each and every resource on HireACane.com, it would be more like a short novel. For more information, go to HireACane.com or stop by Toppel Career Center from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays.