

# young alumni LEADERS COUNCIL

# 2023



University of Miami  
**30 UNDER 30**

UNIVERSITY  
OF MIAMI



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**Adam Roberti, B.A.M.A. '18, M.P.S. '19**

**Executive Director, Xavier Cortada Foundation**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moment at the U was successfully defending my Master of Environment, Culture, and Media degree and celebrating with friends and family at The Wetlab afterward!

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

I learned about the incredible importance of art, storytelling, and an interdisciplinary approach in effectively addressing the climate crisis, especially in a place as vulnerable as Miami.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

As the executive director of the Xavier Cortada Foundation, I have given internships to dozens of undergraduate and graduate 'Canes as a way of helping them gain the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to to succeed upon graduation.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

My most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation has been helping Miami-Dade County's inaugural artist-in-residence Xavier Cortada launch "The Underwater," a socially engaged art campaign that reveals the vulnerability of our community to rising seas, sparks climate conversations, and catalyzes civic engagement through elevation-driven public art installations.



**Alana Dombrosky, B.A. '15**

## **Support Engineering Manager, Microsoft**

### *What was your brightest moment at the U?*

One of my brightest moments at the U was not actually when I was a student but rather when I returned a year and a half later with my fiancé, also a 'Cane, to get married at the Shalala Student Center. Having both been members of the band, we were able to arrange the pep band to play the Miami fight song right as we said 'I do!' Sebastian was at our reception and, of course, the colors were orange and green.

While a student, one brightest moment was getting to record with other members of the drumline with Billy Corben for "The U Part 2." I quickly became a huge fan of part one of "The U" after I was accepted and it was a huge honor to be able to represent the Frost Band of the Hour in Part 2.

### *What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

The multidisciplinary approach the University of Miami takes allowed me not only to double major in math and computer science and double minor in music and secondary education, but also take full advantage of ensembles at Frost and classes outside my majors, in psychology and business. I truly believe that the wide range of classes and activities that I was able to participate in at the U fully prepared me for the ever-changing corporate world. Despite only being a music minor, I had the chance to learn from incredible conductors and composers at Frost. I was exposed to pieces and techniques that I had never been exposed to before and experience truly shaped me as a musician.

### *How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

Immediately upon graduation, I connected with the Dallas Fort Worth 'Canes Community and Miami Circle. In doing so, I was afforded the opportunity to speak to prospective students at college fairs, admitted student events, and send-off events. This developed a

passion not only for encouraging high schoolers to seek out the best college experience, at the U, but also coaching and mentoring students throughout college and in their post college career. At Microsoft, I have been able to participate in university recruiting and hiring efforts, often mentoring new grads for years to follow. As the current DFW 'Canes president I seek to also engage with recent graduates and welcome them the Dallas.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

In 2022 I was one of only a handful of people in my nearly 40,000-person organization to receive Microsoft's prestigious Gold Award. This award was a culmination of multiple different projects throughout the year, including leading and coordinating my technology as the first to migrate CRM tools, developing working sessions for identified future leaders focused on the foundations of Extreme Ownership, adopting the connected customer support delivery model as a customer aligned manager and Northeast Customer lead, and ensuring accountability for staffing, training, communication, and delivery of support for our most strategic customer segment within Modern Work technologies.

This work helped me to arrive at my current position as worldwide engineer experience lead for Modern Work, a role that had not previously existed. I am currently leading the rollout of six major (and several minor) tooling changes and am responsible for the day-to-day experience of nearly 10,000 support engineers. Having started as a support engineer myself, it is a privilege to now focus solely on tooling that can improve their day-to-day work and enable them to provide the best customer support possible.



**Alissa R. Musto, M.M. '19**

**Musician | Singer | Actor**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moment at the U was having my work published in the national Music Business Journal after my Frost professors encouraged me to submit it. This opportunity was special because it reflected a combination of my unique experiences and accomplishments in the music industry along with the academic rigor and demand of my business classes.

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

So many of my professors had impressive resumes and positions in the entertainment industry that allowed them to teach coursework using their real-life experience rather than just examples from a textbook. The music business is such a unique and unpredictable field that the first-hand experience is crucial in preparing students for a career in the industry. I know that the practical skillsets and tools I learned and I use every day as an artist are something I could have only learned at the U.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

The 'Canes Care for 'Canes legacy is all about supporting, encouraging, and inspiring your community and using your talents to lift others up. In 2020, I was performing on a cruise ship when COVID brought cruising to a halt, greatly affecting the maritime and South Florida communities. I was lucky enough to get sent home, but for several months, hundreds of thousands of crew members were stuck onboard, unable to return home, while the ones who managed to get home were jobless. "Canes Care for 'Canes" means taking care of your own, and in the spirit, I advocated for crew repatriation in the media, to my political representatives, and through my music. I wrote, recorded and released my single "How Still" from home and produced a music video featuring crew members around the world vocalizing their concerns and sentiments while being stuck at sea.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

I think my most noteworthy accomplishment post-graduation has been independently building my brand and show as a solo artist, booking venues around the U.S. and world, being featured in household-name media publications, and working on a number of music education initiatives to inspire the next generation of performers. Some personal highlights for me include opening for Maren Morris at the 2023 Hilton Tournament of Champions, singing the national anthem at a Major League Baseball game, and being asked to contribute to The Washington Post.



**Andrea Ochoa Lozano, J.D. '21**

**Associate Counsel, Analytic Partners**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moment at the U cannot be narrowed down to one occasion, but rather it is a collection of moments during my time in law school during which I met life-long friends and mentors.

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

The biggest lesson I learned at the U was the importance of creating and being open to expanding your network. Knowing that I wanted to stay in Miami after graduation, the law school and many of its faculty members assisted me in making connections that would strengthen my opportunities for personal and professional growth.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

I have carried on this legacy by continuing to offer my time and experience to younger alumni and current students who are learning to maneuver the uncertainty of life after graduation. I have assisted current law students in their journey of exploring career opportunities by being available to review application materials and sharing the lessons I have picked up during my own professional journey.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

I think my most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation has been becoming part of the legal team at Analytic Partners, a company that not only encourages my professional development but also supports my wellbeing and happiness. I attribute this opportunity to maintaining the relationships I formed during my first year of law school with individuals who went on to become my mentors and confidants and who have continuously supported me throughout the years. They know who they are, and I want to take this opportunity to thank them for their contributions to the person I am today!





**Antonella Valdivia, B.B.A. '18**

**Assistant Director of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives,  
Vanderbilt Career Center**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moment at the U was in August 2017, when I stood on stage at 'Cane Kickoff Orientation, as one of the student orientation program coordinators. This was a full circle college career moment for me, because I had the opportunity (as a senior) to be a part of the formal program that was welcoming incoming first-years. So many thoughts ran through my head in this moment, from the incredible student involvement opportunities I had been given, to the countless experiences I had encountered as a 'Cane. I was so thankful to be able to give back a little bit of school spirit, pride, and wisdom as a student leader during the orientation program. This is a moment I still remember fondly to this day, and reminds me constantly of both the support I was given from the U and the amazing lessons I took away. The energy within the room that buzzes with 'Cane pride is something I will never forget, and to be able to lead the program with a few peers was an experience that I will always deeply value. Being part of orientation at the U is by far my brightest moment!

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

The U taught me the importance of valuing community. I grew up in Miami and when I decided to attend the University of Miami, it was a conscious decision that I felt was best for me because of my career choice, closeness to family, and school pride I was looking for in a post-secondary experience. When I arrived at UM, being surrounded by the cultural immersion, and the feeling of school pride, spirit, and community, really instilled in me a value of holding these aspects of life close. I think within this value of community, I also found the importance of hard work and a resilient work ethic. Having community to lift you up and help motivate and support a hardworking mentality was critical to my success. I strongly believe that the passion and love that students have for the U is unmatched and it is a sense of community that brings all of us together. Knowing the positive impacts and outcomes that this can have on a person is the best lesson from UM

that I could have hoped for. As an alum, I seek out community anywhere I go, and where I find it lacking, I seek to create it, because UM taught me that community is essential, and valuing, developing, and empowering it can make life all the richer.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

As a higher education professional, I have carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes in a variety of ways. When I first moved to Nashville, Tennessee, to pursue my master's degree, it was my first time ever leaving Miami. I found the cultural shift in environment to be a difficult transition at first, but I always remember that I had friends, mentors, staff, and countless others with UM connections to help me along in my journey. Whether a 'Canes check-in or hangout, a football watch party, a professional connection or support system, there have always been 'Canes along the way to uplift me in my personal and professional journeys. In being aware of this incredible blessing, I made it part of my own life to ensure I gave back to my 'Canes community in the same ways.

Since graduating with my master's degree in higher education administration, and being hired full-time to work at Vanderbilt University, I have been committed to seeking out fellow 'Canes who are just starting their own paths, and supporting them in the same ways I was when I was just starting out. I've continually uplifted the 'Canes around me by supporting others, mentoring, providing professional opportunities and connections, and at a very basic level, providing a feeling of community and "home" to 'Canes who find themselves in my chosen field or current location. My work in higher education has been incredibly fulfilling thus far, and being a proud 'Cane while supporting college students has made my professional experience all the more special.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

I think one of my most noteworthy accomplishments after graduation has been having the opportunity to give a TED Talk at the TedXVanderbilt event in 2021. My talk was titled "Si Se Puede Apoyar: The Importance of College Persistence Practices in Higher Education Through the Lens of Latina Women." My talk centered on the importance of supporting Latina women at the college level and how this can shift the way we view college completion in the world of higher education. This talk is an accomplishment that I hold close, primarily because it connects to my own identity, and the topic is something I am passionate about, particularly because my college experience at the U was an inspiring and empowering one.



**Belle Terek, J.D. '20**

## **Associate Director, Technology Policy, Anti-Defamation League**

### *What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moments at the U were the ones in which, even as a student and early career professional, I had the ability to drive impact in my field. Most often, I felt that way working as a legal fellow for the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative, where my fellow practicum colleagues and I played a role in legislative drafting, conducting research for amicus briefs, and supporting the advising of social media platforms on their content policies.

### *What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

There are over 200 ABA-accredited law schools in the U.S., but only one Dr. Mary Anne Franks! As a tech policy aspirant, having had the opportunity to learn from and work with one of the nation's preeminent first amendment and Internet law experts was truly unparalleled. I owe so much of what I learned in law school, and my career trajectory afterward, to her.

### *How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

Working in tech policy is the epitome of community-focused work because it requires constant thought about how a policy will affect the most powerful person in the space and, more importantly, the least powerful. Although I'm a few years out of law school, I bring my 'Canes-inspired dedication to community—and to serving its least powerful members—into everything I do.

### *What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

My proudest achievement since graduating from Miami Law is definitely landing my dream job working in tech policy at the Anti-Defamation League, where I've had the honor and responsibility of crafting the policy recommendations that make their way into ADL reports, blogs, and Congressional testimony.



**Beth Markowitz, B.F.A. '18, M.S. '22**

**Manager of Foundation Relations, Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

The opportunity to have graduated with two degrees from the University of Miami, a university that is both culturally connected within the community and globally impactful, allowed me to acquire the skills needed to lead effectively in today's ever-changing world. The connections that I formed with classmates, professors, bosses, and mentors during my time at UM have shaped who I am today.

*What did you learn at the U, that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

As an undergraduate, I worked in the box office at the Jerry Herman Ring Theater and served as the house manager for 70 performances. This is where and when I knew that I wanted to pursue a professional career in the non-profit sector, particularly arts and culture. I look forward to being a part of Miami's continued growth as a vibrant and international cultural hot spot.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

I was born and raised in Miami and come from a proud family of UM alumni. For me, being able to provide our community and its future generations (including current and future 'Canes!) with equitable access to the arts at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County is a full-circle moment.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

I was hired from my internship at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County. Working in a non-profit performing arts center is so rewarding because I can help ensure that every child in our community has access to high-quality performing arts experiences—both within and beyond their local performing arts center.



**Daniel Braggi, B.A. '15, M.D. '21**

## **Resident Physician, Baylor College of Medicine**

### *What was your brightest moment at the U?*

Pitching for the school. I probably remember my first game against Rutgers and our run to the College World Series the best, but having the opportunity to play with that team and on that stage was special.

### *What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

I grew up fast at the University of Miami—probably faster than I would have anywhere else. My experiences reinforced the value of sacrifice and persistence, and I met some of the best people I know at UM. College is a formative time for most people, and I feel very lucky to have spent those four years in Coral Gables.

### *How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

Through medical school I remained active in the academic and local community through leadership roles in DOCS, the university's health fair and clinic program serving un- and underinsured patients in South Florida. I've also mentored younger undergraduate and medical students with similar career interests. The principle of looking out for those in your community has kept me involved as a volunteer in New Haven and Houston.

### *What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

I worked for Congresswoman Shalala in her DC office during the summer between my first and second year of business school. In this role, I helped our team bring an opioid awareness/harm reduction briefing featuring medical, law enforcement, and beneficiary experts to Capitol Hill. Being a part of her team and health policy conversations were opportunities made possible by my UM roots, and have informed my interest in returning to policy work in the years to come.



**Daniel Quevedo, B.S.B.E. '15**

## **Senior Manager, METiS Therapeutics**

### *What was your brightest moment at the U?*

Two brightest moments from my time at the University of Miami come to mind. The first was when I rushed the court with fellow students after our underdog basketball team beat top-ranked Duke. It was a moment of pure school spirit and pride, and a memory that I will always cherish.

The second moment was when I was awarded the Thomas Brownell Award from the College of Engineering, the highest honor given to a student for academic achievement and service to the school and community. I was particularly proud of this achievement because it recognized not only my academic and research accomplishments but also my leadership in Engineers Without Borders, where we worked to build a wastewater system for a small town in Ecuador. I am grateful for the opportunities that the University of Miami provided me to pursue my passions and make a positive impact on the world.

### *What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

One of the most valuable things I gained from my time at the University of Miami was the opportunity to interact with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. This experience has been instrumental in my career, which requires me to communicate and collaborate with individuals from all over the world. I truly believe that this exposure to cultural diversity is something unique to the University of Miami, and I am grateful for the lessons it taught me.

### *How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

The University of Miami instilled in me a strong sense of community and the importance of giving back. Since graduating, I have strived to carry on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes in my industry and community. One way I do this is by actively mentoring

individuals and providing service to my community. For example, I am a proud member of my local Rotary Club, where I serve as the webmaster. Additionally, I am always looking for opportunities to teach and learn from others, as I believe this is a crucial part of giving back and making a positive impact

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

Looking back on my achievements since graduating from the University of Miami, I am most proud of completing my Ph.D. in biomedical engineering at the University of Michigan. During my time there, I was able to publish multiple papers and receive recognition for my work, including the NSFGRFP and Fulbright awards, which I received with the support of Miami's Office of Prestigious Awards and Fellowships. This experience has opened up doors for me in the biotech industry, where I am excited to continue my career and make meaningful contributions.



**Dr. Ethan Homedi, B.S. '17**

**Pediatric Resident, Loyola University Medical Center**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

When thinking back on my four amazing years at the U, my brightest moment was discovering Camp Kesem my freshman year. This organization became such an integral part of who I was—and still am—and served as an impetus for becoming a pediatrician. But there were also so many little moments along the way that I look back on with so much nostalgia and happiness. From going to the Wynwood walls to road trips down to Key West to just sitting on the gliders at the Rat, I will forever be grateful for memories I share with my lifelong friends.

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

Both the U and Miami as a whole are some of the most culturally rich and diverse places in which someone could spend part of their formative years. I was able to walk away with such an increased appreciation for the world around me, further fostering my interest in global health. I also learned so much more about myself as a person, student, leader, and friend that I truly do not think I would have been able to do anywhere else.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

'Canes Care for 'Canes is really at the center of the medical field, but I think especially so in pediatrics. Not only do I have the privilege of impacting the lives of one of the most vulnerable populations, but I also get to spend every day surrounded by a network of peers who dedicate themselves to the betterment of each other and those around us. I've crossed paths with a few 'Canes along the way, and every time I do, I'm reminded of just how special of a community we are.



*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

Following graduation, I was able to go to medical school and ultimately end up back home in Chicago for my pediatric residency training. Along the way, my proudest accomplishment was receiving a global health research scholarship which gave me the opportunity to spend two months in Uganda conducting a study that ultimately culminated in a regional conference-winning presentation and publication.



**Ginelle Solis, Ed.D. '22**

**Director of Admissions for Graduate Programs in Public Health,  
University of Miami**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

I know this is considered a glorious moment for anyone who defends their dissertation; however, the moment I completed and passed my dissertation defense was the brightest moment for me. Excluding the mixture of emotions, it was one of the most exciting moments in my life where I had the chance to not only reflect on all the work that I had done to get to that point, but also to think about the next steps in my career.

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

Appreciation for diversity. As a city, Miami is a vibrant and rich community that is made up of individuals from all over the world. However, the University of Miami provides you with an opportunity to really take a step back and welcome those diverse perspectives, ideas, and opinions. Having culturally enriched dialogues is something I don't think I would have had anywhere else, and I'm grateful I was able to learn (and appreciate) that at the U.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

For starters, continuing my career at the University of Miami has allowed me to utilize the knowledge that I learned during my time as a student and give it back to the 'Canes community. Working for UM gives me the privilege to utilize the 'Canes Care for 'Canes philosophy in my everyday work life by respecting and supporting prospective and current students, coworkers, and the 'Canes community as a whole. Taking small moments of each day, such as calling a prospective student to check in or ask a coworker about their day, shows them you care and can make a difference in their day.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

Recently, I was given the opportunity to become the director of admissions for the Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. Becoming a director of admissions has been my dream job since I decided to pursue a career in higher education during my freshman year in college. To see all the work that I have done since then, recognized and to be considered (and selected for the role), was truly a noteworthy moment (and accomplishment) for me.



**Ian H. Malesiewski, B.S. '22**

**Law Student, Harvard Law School  
President, DefIANT Scholars Program**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moment while at the University of Miami was when I was tapped into the Iron Arrow Honor Society.

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

While at the U, I learned so much about other cultures, communities, and traditions. Specifically, the international nature of the University and the city of Miami allowed me to meet people from all over the world that I wouldn't have been able to find anywhere else.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

I have carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into my community by starting the DefIANT Scholars Program. The DefIANT Scholars program is a scholarship fund designed to help aid the disabled community in an attempt to break down barriers, stereotypes, and misconceptions inside and outside of the classroom.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

Since graduation, my most noteworthy accomplishment was either getting accepted to Harvard Law School or being inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame.



**Inngide E. Osirus, B.S. '18**

## **Epidemiologist, New Jersey Department of Health**

### *What was your brightest moment at the U?*

I can't believe it's been almost 10 years since I started my undergraduate career at University of Miami! Of all my many moments at the U, my brightest moment was becoming a member of the Sigma Delta Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated. It was easily one of the best decisions I made at the University of Miami—to be in a sisterhood with like-minded women and part of a community-conscious, action-oriented organization that is impacting communities across the world.

### *What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

As a Gates Millennium Scholar, I attended events the Office of Academic Enhancement hosted for the students they serve. One event I could never forget was with Dr. Donna Shalala. She spoke about her academic and professional journey and shared how she was one of the first Peace Corps volunteers. During this time, she encouraged us to “go wherever your next biggest adventure.” I used this quote as a compass to guide part of my decision making for my next steps. It fueled my passion for adventure beyond my comfort zone and finding balance in life.

### *How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

As a public health professional, I've been in spaces, both in work or in other capacities that provided me the opportunity to care even in the smallest ways—whether providing education, reassurance, and support to community members who tested positive for COVID-19 at the beginning of the pandemic or currently volunteering with an organization to encourage middle and high school students to pursue careers in STEM.

### *What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

Making a decision to pursue my terminal degree (Ph.D.) at Tulane University in the fall.



Irene Guerrero-Calderón, B.A. '16, M.P.A.  
'17

## Founder & CEO, Holy Crab Delivery

### *What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moments were when I pledged for Delta Phi Epsilon, and Senior Day at the Rat with Sebastian, gliding picnic tables, and our personalized pitchers around the lake!

### *What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

The U taught me that knowledge is power. Being a Double 'Cane living in Miami is a privilege I do not take lightly. In both my undergraduate and masters careers we were taught that it is okay to think freely, ask questions, and dissent. I uphold all these lessons on the daily in both my personal and professional life. It is always a great day to be a 'CANE!

### *How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

After receiving my masters in public administration I have been at a nonprofit serving the Alpha-1 community, specifically in fundraising. I have recently celebrated my five-year anniversary with the organization and hope to be part of finding the cure for this genetic disorder in the near future.

### *What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

My proudest accomplishment is co-founding Holy Crab Stone Crab Delivery in Coral Gables. I always knew I wanted to be a part of the community and give back somehow. Holy Crab allows us to bring family and friends together with the freshest stone crabs for local delivery and nationwide shipping. Using all my knowledge from the U we have been able to turn an idea into a business—hopefully a multigenerational family business. Holy Crab serves the local community and the country while providing jobs to local fishermen from the Florida Keys. Stone crabs are 100% sustainable and so is Holy Crabs packaging. We take great pride in the freshness of the product and customer service. As a Miami native I can not think of a more delicious and fitting product to sell.



**Jessica Westwright, M.S. '17, Ph.D. '20**

**Clinical Psychologist, Herschel Woody Williams VA Medical Center**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

Marrying my husband, Joseph Westwright, in 2017. Joe moved to Miami with me in 2014 to support my pursuit of doctoral training, giving up the opportunity to pursue his own graduate training at another university. He since earned a M.S.Ed. from the U and is also honored for this award.

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

I had the opportunity to conduct basic science and mechanisms research, investigating the relationships between stress and chronic disease within a highly regarded clinical health psychology training program. This unusual combination of research and clinical training experiences has given me a unique perspective and knowledge base regarding relationships between physical and mental health that has served me well in my clinical work with patients and families.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

I am originally from a rural area, and my intention in pursuing high-quality graduate and postgraduate training in clinical psychology has always been to return and practice in a rural underserved area. I have been blessed by the opportunity to do this in my current position at the Huntington VA Medical Center in Huntington, West Virginia.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

Taking a position as the Palliative Care/PRRC Psychologist providing care to rural underserved veterans at the Hershel "Woody" Williams VA Medical Center in Huntington, West Virginia.



**Jessica Firdman Moore, M.D. '20**

**Resident Physician, Jackson Health System - University of Miami, Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

After a night shift, my wonderful co-resident, Lindsey Finch, and I mustered up the strength to safely make our way down to volunteer at the DOCS Keys Health Fair. I have participated in countless DOCS Health Fairs, but this was my first time participating as a physician. Being able to both give back to our community and teach the next generation of medical students was an unforgettable experience. I plan to continue this broaden my involvement with DOCS.

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

How to deliver culturally competent care. Our population in Miami is more diverse, and frankly more underserved, than anywhere else in then country. Learning how to take care of these patients at the Miller School of Medicine as if they were my own family is something nowhere else can replicate.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

Medicine is a small world. Just the other day I met a 'Canes alum on my interview trail who welcomed me with open arms, and we formed an instant connection. Similarly, 'Canes undergraduate alumni have come to me for advice, and I taken them under my wing.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

Advocating for my patients' reproductive rights.





**Joseph Westwright, M.S.Ed. '19**

**Data Engineer, Google**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

Having the privilege to marry my amazing wife Jessica—I wouldn't trade all the years that led to that moment for anything

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

The U taught me that there are a thousand paths to every goal and every destination. None of them is bad, just different. The unique academic and professional challenge prepared me for so much of my future career and success.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

My mentor at the U, Eli Stephan, would often repeat the motto of cultural transformation: "transforming lives through teaching, research, and service." In every step I take professionally and within my community I am mindful of doing my part to transform lives, from mentoring junior engineers to making sure I spend money locally to support small agriculture and small business. 'Canes Care for 'Canes extends beyond the U; we are one people and there is no reason we can't act accordingly.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

I've had the opportunity to win large grants, obtain more degrees, and work for prestigious institutions. But what's been the most noteworthy is that my work has made a difference in the lives of students and educators across the country, and at least in some small way have been able to provide them with a better and brighter future.



**Khaila Prather, B.S.P.H. '19, M.P.H. '20**

**Research Analyst, Abt Associates**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moments at the U have included getting accepted into the 4+1 B.S.P.H./M.P.H. program, graduating with my master's in public health during COVID-19, and being a part of the women's basketball team, winning games and making lifelong friendships with my teammates and coaches.

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

At the U, I learned that nothing beats passion, hard work, and connecting with other amazing 'Canes. There is no place like the U that has molded me into the woman I am today.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

As a two-time graduate of the U, it has been impactful not only to learn from other 'Canes in the public health industry but to also support rising 'Canes in the field and continue on the legacy and reputation of U in my community and wherever I go.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

My most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation was during the peak of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021. I was supporting efforts of the University of Miami Health System and Florida Department of Health to help alleviate the spread of the disease. I also supported the CDC in their Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), presented at a White House briefing to show in real time the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines in preventing infections among frontline workers.



**Kimberly Overton, B.S.B.E. '20**

**Engineer II, NPD Manufacturing, Edwards Lifesciences**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

One of my brightest moments at the U was joining my sorority, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated in the Spring of 2019. It was so humbling to reactivate the Mu Nu Chapter on campus and continue its legacy alongside my three sisters and as Chapter Basilus, or chapter president, in the following year. Reactivating my chapter allowed me to make an impact on the campus by upholding our values of sisterhood, scholarship, and service through community service and educational events on campus. One of our signature initiatives was the Be the Match program, which is focused on increasing the number of people registered on the National Bone Marrow Registry as potential stem cell donors. The Mu Nu chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho has had an impactful presence on campus since its chartering on February 29, 1992 with local and national initiatives focused on youth education, financial literacy, and women's health.

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

During my time at the U, I learned what it meant to experience community. As an active member of groups in different areas on campus, such as the College of Engineering, Housing and Residential Life, and the Association of Greek Letter Organizations, I had an opportunity to find people who had similar goals and interests to mine everywhere I went. Through these connections, I had many meaningful relationships and lots of great experiences hosting events, mentoring my peers, and developing my technical skills. Experiencing community at the U has stuck with me and encouraged me to create it for others everywhere I go as a 'Cane.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

Since graduating in 2020 and moving to California, I have been engaged in many community programs through the African Heritage Forum Employee Resource Group (AHF ERG) with my employer, Edwards Lifesciences, and through the National Society of

Black Engineers (NSBE). The African Heritage Forum ERG has been a major outlet to help cultivate my involvement in my new home. As a board member of AHF specifically focused on recruitment initiatives, I have been able to support a variety of events focused on educating my peers on issues faced within the Black community and identifying talent through NSBE as recruiter. With AHF, I have participated in volunteering at several of our local food banks, serving as an advocate to address health inequities within the Black community, and supported the development of strategies to increase the diversity of talent within my company.

Additionally, I have sponsored a portion of the UM NSBE chapter's expenses related to attending the national convention on an annual basis. Attending the 2019 NSBE convention was how I received my first internship, ultimately leading to my current employment. Because of this connection, I choose to provide financial sponsorship to my alma mater as a way to remove potential barriers to securing employment for current UM students. In addition to this, I also support an educational fund annually, where I sponsor a student living in Clarendon, a rural parish in Jamaica, so that they can purchase school supplies, uniforms, and have transportation to school. I believe that finances should not prevent access to an enriching education, which guides my habits related to donations and how I choose to engage with my community. Additionally, I am connected with UM students as a mentor, which has also been a great way to stay engaged with the campus and impart knowledge that may be helpful to students' academic career.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

At the U, I was heavily involved in the National Society of Black Engineers, where I served as both community outreach coordinator and vice president. As vice president, I reorganized the structure of our chapter to increase engagement and collaboration with other engineering society chapters. My work with NSBE as a student has lasted beyond graduation. Now, as a professional, I serve as professional development chair of the Los Angeles Professionals chapter. In this role, I have been able to host monthly panel discussions and develop a mentorship program, with the goal of supporting NSBE's national initiative for professionals. These goals include inspiring the next generation of technical professionals and serving as a catalyst for transforming the culture of engineering.



**Krishna Louis, B.S.Ex.P. '21**

## **PA Student, Morehouse School of Medicine**

### *What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moment at the U was finding my purpose through the frequent adversity I had overcome throughout my undergraduate years and walking across that stage during graduation!

### *What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

My advocacy in mental health in minority populations, being an adolescent HIV Testing Counselor at the UHealth Batchelor's Children Research Institute, and being the peer education chair for It's On Us Miami all led me to my passion that became the fuel for the insatiable fire that I call my purpose.

I am proud of my journey and progress that I made at the University of Miami through the aid of its resources and organizations. I never imagined that I would speak about mental health in such a community on a national platform, sharing my story and using my voice for others who may feel alone in their own journey, or become an HIV testing counselor for adolescents. I know this experience would not and could not be found anywhere else other than at the University of Miami because I knew that God had a plan for me that I did not imagine for myself.

### *How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

After graduating from the University of Miami, I returned home to give back to my community in the spirit of Wisdom Cole when he said, "there's a lot of conversations about the problems impacting our communities, but we have to tell young people that they have the power to create the solutions."

My journey began by reinstating the NAACP Flagler County Youth Council with my former high school assistant principal and mentor, and being appointed as president. This

organization was the fulcrum of my advocacy, activism, and mentorship of youth in building those same leadership skills that have been instilled in me from the NAACP's Strategic Initiatives. This initiative focuses on education, civic engagement, and personal wellness through events, presentations, collaboration with local organizations, and community service.

Overall, this journey is just the beginning of my activism, advocacy, and leadership. I would never have imagined that, having just graduated from the University of Miami, I would reinstate an inactive organization in my hometown. This allowed me to open doors and opportunities that I never thought I would see myself in. Through hard work, dedication, consistency, and passion, I am setting up the foundation to build leaders-in-the-making in the community. These experiences have allowed me to grow into the woman that I continue to aspire to be. As a future physician assistant, my goal is to continue to change, empower and uplift my community in all aspects, just as I learned from the University of Miami.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

My most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation is being accepted into PA school as a first-time applicant. I will be attending the best Historically Black College/University (HBCU), the illustrious Morehouse School of Medicine, starting summer 2023. I am beyond excited to embark my journey to becoming a PA serving underserved communities.



**Kyras L. Williams, B.S.A.E. '16, M.Arch. '18**

**Project Manager, Ashraf Consulting Engineers**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moment at the U was spearheading the Diversity in STEM forum my senior year. As the president of National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) chapter, we had the opportunity to have students voice their concerns regarding our education and the future of the workforce to the president, vice provost, and dean of the College of Engineering.

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

The power of relationships within the U community. No matter where you are, there is a 'Cane connection!

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

I've carried on the legacy by returning to the U and serving in the College of Engineering Alumni Association in more than one capacity, serving as a mentor to younger 'Canes, and assisting 'Canes with their job searches and more. Within the community, I serve through my nonprofit, A'naiys Charities, where we provide assistance to cancer patients, the homeless, abandoned animals, and underrepresented students in STEM.

*What do you think is your most note-worthy accomplishment after graduation?*

Chartering the NSBE South Florida Professionals!



**Dr. Lauren E. Simonitis, B.S.M.A.S. '15**

**National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Biology,  
Florida Atlantic University & University of Washington's Friday Harbor Labs**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

Most of my best memories I have at the U are through the UGalapagos program. The experience of living on Isla Isabela with all sorts of interesting biomes in the surrounding land and sea was transformative for me as a scientist and as a person. We got to swim with whale sharks, mola molas, sea lions, penguins, and hammerheads—a marine biologist's dream. We also got to hang out with Galapagos tortoises and finches, learning ecology and evolution in the same place that inspired Darwin. Not only did we fully immerse ourselves in the surrounding ecosystems, but because we lived with host families, we felt tied to the community and culture of the island. This experience really drove home the value of tying textbook scientific knowledge with the lived experience of the people who actually utilize these resources. As a Latina, it also gave me a great opportunity to practice my Spanish science communication vocabulary and relate to the community on a different level due to our shared commonalities in background and experience. The bonds I formed with my fellow 'Canes lasted beyond our time in the Galapagos. Even after returning from our semester abroad we tailgated, studied, and spent way too much time at the Rat together.

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

The education I got at the Rosenstiel School was unlike any I could have received anywhere else. After working at and with other universities with similar programs, I'm reminded by how well-formed our marine science degrees are at the U. Our small class sizes, invested professors, and immersive experiences in the local South Florida ecosystems were so unique and so helpful to my growth as a marine biologist. Our normal coursework tied with my experiences in the marine science clubs (like the Marine Mammal Rescue Team and Rho Rho Rho), plus the study abroad experience through UGalapagos really set a solid foundation for my future in this field.



*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

During my time at the U, I poured myself into the community by getting involved in multiple organizations on campus such as the Marine Mammal Rescue Team, Rho Rho Rho, Ocean Awareness Week, and Chi Omega. This was where I first discovered my love for service, community care, and scientific outreach. Currently, my favorite part of my job is when I get to teach, mentor, and support the members of my community. As an academic, I love working with trainees not only to do science but share science. I love inviting students to join my research team and watching them grow as scientists and as people. As an advisory board member of the nonprofit Minorities in Shark Science (MISS), I get to expand my reach and do this work outside of my academic institutions, supporting the advancement and success of gender minorities of color in the very white, cis male-dominated field of shark science. Through MISS, I work to organize professional development events that help our members navigate the field by hosting workshops covering topics such as how to find jobs, write cover letters, find grants, and navigate academia. I also organize much needed support systems at the national scientific conferences our members attend. The work MISS does is integral to broadening participation in our field and making shark science a welcoming and accepting space to aspiring scientists despite their background and identities.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

Being awarded the National Science Foundation's Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in Biology was one of the most rewarding and affirming moments in my career. Finishing up a Ph.D. in 2021 in the middle of a global pandemic while also teaching undergraduate courses simultaneously online and in person (before widely available vaccines, mind you) was such a draining and arduous experience. Getting the notification that I had received this fellowship was life changing. This award recognized my research efforts in the field of underwater chemical defenses and marine neurobiology, interests that were sparked by working as a UM freshman at the Rosenstiel School in the Aplysia Lab with Dr. Lynne Fieber. This fellowship also gave me the opportunity to move back to South Florida and strengthen my connections with the U, allowing me to collaborate with other Rosenstiel School professors, mentor marine science undergraduate and M.P.S. students, and guest lecture in the same classrooms I had taken classes in not so long ago. It was a very full circle moment for me.



**Leonard Barrera Allen, B.S.C.E. '15, M.S.O.E. '20**

**Senior Engineer, Cummins Cederberg, Inc.**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moment at the U was winning the 2014 Cuba Infrastructure Challenge hosted by the Cuban-American Association of Civil Engineers. I was part of the team that represented the University of Miami and won the scholarship competition against numerous other participating universities.

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

I learned how to study some of the most challenging engineering topics successfully in one of the most collaborative locations at the U, the Otto G. Richter Library. I also learned to enjoy living in one of the most diverse and vibrant communities in the United States.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

I volunteer for non-profit organizations within my industry, including the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the Florida Engineering Society. I currently serve as one of the University of Miami's ASCE student chapter practitioner advisors, and I have had the opportunity to mentor students, including University of Miami students, through the Florida Engineering Society's mentorship program.

*What do you think is your most note-worthy accomplishment after graduation?*

I was awarded the "Young Engineer of the Year" accolade by the Miami-Dade branch of the American Society of Civil Engineers in August 2022. I was both humbled and honored to be recognized by my peers in the engineering industry.



**Mayra Arana, B.S.N. '16, M.S.N. '20**

**Pediatric Surgery Nurse Practitioner, Miami Associates in Pediatric Surgery**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moment at the U was being on the executive board of the UM Wishmakers. We selected a child with a critical illness through the Make-A-Wish Foundation and spent all semester fundraising to fulfill his wish. Many days were spent in the breezeway selling baked goods, raffle tickets, date auction tickets, and henna tattoos. We also partnered with local vendors for the cause to host a co-ed volleyball tournament in the Wellness Center. It was a lot of fun coming together as a team and rewarding reaching our goal!

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

At the U, I learned how much I value the Miami community and the importance of family, not just the one you're born into but the one you choose.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

I've carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes by being available as a resource for nursing students, those considering the career field, and even those 'Canes looking for jobs post graduation. I'm more than happy to provide mentorship and seek that myself in our amazing alumni and faculty.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

After graduation, I was a part of the development and pilot process of a nursing position that has helped improve patient flow, family experience, and clinician satisfaction. I've loved watching the position expand and continuously adapt. I'm also very proud to have followed my love for pediatrics, and transitioned to the provider side of miracles as a nurse practitioner at Miami Associates in Pediatric Surgery.



**Nadia Peyravian, Ph.D. '22**

**Technology Transfer Patent Specialist, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH)**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

Ask any former Ph.D. student what their brightest moment in graduate school was, and many will probably say the day they defended their thesis and officially became a “Dr.” I would have to say they same. My mentor, Dr. Sylvia Daunert, gave a beautiful and kind introduction and then I hit the ground running, presenting two projects and a patented technology in about an hour. No questions were asked from the public audience, which of course reassured me that I had done a good job explaining basic science. Of course my committee asked plenty of a questions, as a good committee should, and five years and 11 months of hard work paid off, and I was officially a Ph.D.!

*What did you learn at the U, that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

My mentors gave me a lot of freedom: to read, write, experiment, and teach, making my graduate education super special. I wasn't confined to one project, but instead my advisor, Dr. Daunert, gave me the freedom to conceive projects and ideas of my own, ones that with excellent collaborators, Dr. Sapna Deo and Dr. Joaquin J. Jimenez, we were able to make into several noteworthy publications and even a patent! All of these accomplishments, I couldn't have achieved if it weren't for the supportive mentors I had at the U!

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

During my Ph.D. studies, I had the opportunity to teach undergraduate organic chemistry and biochemistry labs in the chemistry department across three different semesters. Teaching became my happy sanctuary from my own grueling laboratory work and experiments. My undergraduate students/fellow 'Canes taught me a lot, as I hope to have taught them. My time spent teaching was marked with many teaching awards, including

an ultimate “Excellence in Undergraduate Education” teaching award, an award that I carry in my heart, knowing that I made a positive impact on students’ education and lives.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

Since graduation, I have been fortunate to have moved to a position at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). I have been working as a technology transfer and patent specialist, directly working with management, decision making, and licensing of the intellectual property that comes from our federal laboratories and reaches the public. It is very, very exciting work that is a cross between excellent ground-breaking research and public service with the ultimate goal of preventing and reducing illness and disease among fellow citizens. I couldn’t be more grateful of this opportunity and truly look forward to my work every day!



**Samantha D. Verling, B.S. '19, M.S. '21**

**Medical Student, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

Throughout my time as an undergraduate, in my master's program, and now in medical school at the U, I have created countless unforgettable memories. My involvement with UM's Pre-Health Peer Mentoring Organization afforded me an opportunity to attend to my love of teaching. Being a mentor was a gratifying experience, as I could share the wisdom I gained as a first-generation pre-med student and demystify the process for other students. I am excited to continue my passion for teaching as head TA for MSAT (Medical Students as Teachers) at the Miller School of Medicine and provide support and guidance to students navigating their first years of medical school.

One of my most memorable experiences in medical school so far has been leading Miller's Medical Arts Club and promoting UM student-made art, inspiring creativity among the student body and reinforcing the education of the whole person. I was particularly honored to be inducted into Omicron Delta Kappa, one of the oldest and most prestigious honor societies at U. I have always cherished the collaborative environment I experienced at the U and am incredibly thankful to be furthering my medical career with the Miller School family.

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

As president of NuRhoPsi, the national honor society in neuroscience, as an undergraduate, I initiated the society's philanthropic arm and organized several community outreach events throughout the Miami-Dade and Broward area. Whether I was helping organize the SunSmart 5K race, raising awareness for Alzheimer's disease, or volunteering with the Women's Breast and Heart Initiative, I was granted the opportunity to learn from an incredibly diverse patient population. As a medical student volunteering at health fairs and interacting with patients in the hospital, I am continuously developing a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by individuals from diverse

backgrounds and learning how best to address both social and health issues in the community. Interacting with Miami's culturally diverse patient population has been one of the most valuable learning experiences of my academic and professional career.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

The tenets of 'Canes Care for 'Canes have guided me throughout my medical journey and embody the influence I hope to have on my future patients. As my career progresses, I continue to advocate for health equity and strive to provide patient-centered and culturally competent care. I chose to see the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to develop my skills as a medical leader and advocate for health equity by empowering vulnerable populations affected by the pandemic. I volunteered with The Tree of Life Center in Miami to provide resources to women and mothers struggling with homelessness, teenage pregnancy, or domestic abuse. In this manner, I hoped to address system-level issues and patient health challenges. As president of Project Freedom, I am promoting awareness of and assisting in combatting human trafficking. I am hosting several workshops to train first- and second-year medical students about trauma-informed care and how to approach situations in which human trafficking is suspected. We are working with human trafficking victims and those in the community to help the fight to eliminate human trafficking. Florida is my second home, and I am honored to be giving back to its communities as I practice medicine.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

Since graduating from the University of Miami, I have completed a master's in biomedical sciences and started medical school at the Miller School of Medicine. I am honored to be one of seven students selected annually, based on my interest in regenerative medicine, to participate in a directed four-year longitudinal scholarly pathway to develop a strong foundation in stem cell medicine, gene therapy, and transplantation immunology. I have been actively involved with clinical and translational research in the fields of regenerative medicine, dermatology, and plastic and reconstructive surgery. Moreover, as president of the Medical Arts Club, I am very excited to organize our first-ever Art Masel art gallery this summer to celebrate artwork inspired by medicine and created by our UM medical students. As I continue this journey, I aim to keep challenging myself and grow as a medical leader.



**Tuana Yazici, B.A. '21, M.A. '22**

**Law Student, University of Miami School of Law  
Founder, Chair, and CEO of holding company Tuana Group and its subsidiary  
companies, AeroAI Voyages and AeroAI DesignLab  
Founder, Chair, and CEO of nonprofit AeroAI Global Solutions**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moment at the U was running for Senate as a freshman. Even though I had just started the U, seeing the overwhelming support of my classmates showed me the incredibly strong sense of community at the U, and I knew that it would only grow as the years went by.

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

I learned the importance of time management while working on my own research, interning with the Space Foundation, learning to fly helicopters, and keeping up with research jobs for Harvard Law School while, at the same time, continuing to take extra credits to obtain my B.A. in PPE (philosophy, politics, and economics) a year early and a master of arts in international administration with a concentration in international space law at the University of Miami, also a year early, before starting at the University of Miami School of Law in the fall of 2022.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

'Canes Care for 'Canes promotes the values of caring, respecting, and supporting your peers in your community. My work requires forging an innovative new path within the space sector and leading partnerships between non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and the government. These values set the foundation on which to build such work and community-wide relationships.



*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

I have two recent publications in the field of space law and policy. I am currently working with the government and the private sector to implement internationally my recent research project, “A Proposal for the Usage of Reconnaissance Satellites to Monitor International Human and Wildlife Trafficking Hotspots,” which was published in the journal *Acta Astronautica* in March 2022. As a speaker during the 37th Space Symposium in Colorado Springs in April 2022, I gave a presentation on this journal publication.

While interning at the Space Foundation, my other research project, “Analysis: Legal Barriers Complicate Future in Orbit” was published in Q4 of *The Space Report* in January 2022. The article discusses the Artemis Accords, the legality of anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons, and space debris mitigation, and offers recommendations for the U.S. and other international actors on how to address these issues. I continue to have meetings in Capitol Hill and the White House on both of my publications. As I proceed with my education in law school, I continue to advocate for an international system where reconnaissance satellites are used to detect human rights and animal welfare violations, keeping countries accountable.



**Valerie Quirk, B.B.A. '16**

**Graduate Student, University of Pennsylvania**  
**Founder, The Great Untold EDU**

*What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moment at the U was founding the organization Girls 4 Good—now known as Girls of Outreach and Diversity, aka G.O.O.D.—which was centered on weekly discussions, local community engagement, and global action on issues that primarily impact women and girls with a key focus on equity in education. Through Girls 4 Good, I got to work alongside a group of incredibly smart, passionate, and wonderful people looking to make a difference. We hosted events, fundraisers, and many discussions, and collaborated with other student groups and UM offices like the Butler Center. I am proud that the organization continues at the U to this day—nearly a decade later—under new leadership taking it to bigger places than I could have ever dreamed!

*What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

At the U I learned about the power of a diverse, engaged community. UM was home to so many incredible students and professors from so many different backgrounds, equipped with a wide array of skills. This made building things and collaborating on initiatives easier than in other environments I've experienced in the post-college world.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

The ethos of 'Canes Care for 'Canes is centered on leaning on one another. I really believe that life is a round table so I've done my best to be supportive, to empower, and to elevate as many people as I can.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

Since Miami, I've continued on the road of being an education-focused entrepreneur. My work centers on leveraging technology to give students access to new places, people, and

ideas from around the world. My proudest accomplishments align with this personal mission and include founding The Great Untold and my current organization, Post Pigeon EDU.

I co-founded The Great Untold EDU with another UM alum (who is now also my fiancé!) in 2018. For this we spent a year driving from the U.S. to South America in a self-converted van, taking classrooms across the U.S. along with us, virtually. Students worked on our program curriculum, participated in video calls, and completed lessons sent from the road.

My current venture, Post Pigeon EDU, follows a similar model. At Post Pigeon EDU we are building the Cameo for education, starting with connecting classrooms with national park rangers via personalized video messages. I believe that sparking curiosity about the world beyond what's right in front of us is incredibly important for young people, and I hope to continue building programs that can create that spark.



**Willie Herenton, B.A. '21**

## **Investment Analyst, Channing Global Advisors, LLC**

### *What was your brightest moment at the U?*

My brightest moment at the U was receiving a full athletic scholarship for the men's basketball team. This was an incredible moment for me as it is testament to my desire, hard work, and sacrifice. Miami has always been my dream school, and hearing the surprise announcement from my coaches and teammates is a moment I will never forget. Also receiving academic recognition from the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) for consecutive years while being a member of the men's basketball team was a very special moment. The plaudit goes to undergraduate men's basketball players in their junior or senior academic year who post a GPA of at least 3.2 for the year. I was among a select group of 15 Atlantic Coast Conference student-athletes to make the cut.

### *What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

Being a student athlete in the midst of such a dynamic city, which boasts a top vacation destination in the world, has taught me laser focus discipline academically and socially. The ability to balance rigorous academics while competing at the highest level in the ACC and still having a fun time is something that is unparalleled. Also learning from students and professors from multicultural and international backgrounds fostered a deeper understanding and appreciation of the world around me. My perspective on the world has become more expansive. The U is all about swagger and it has given me an unshakable confidence and motivation to become the best version of myself professionally and socially.

### *How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

I am an active member of the Young Alumni Leadership Council (YALC) at the University of Miami. Being an elected member requires serving in a leadership capacity with a mission

of connecting recent graduates and young alumni for business and social networking as well as keeping them connected to our alma mater. Being an ambassador for the University of Miami and being responsible for recruiting new students and working within the community to influence change and inspire the youth is an incredible honor.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

My most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation was creating my own scholarship, The Willie W. Herenton Business Scholarship, at the University of Miami. The ability to create a lasting impact on the lives of others is priceless because it makes life about something much bigger than myself. Giving has given me an opportunity to grow as a person and has positively impacted my perspective and enriched my life on so many levels, especially in the early stages of my career. The scholarship helps underrepresented students with financial challenges to attend the University of Miami, and will be specifically for undergraduates who want to be a part of the business school at the University of Miami.



**Zahra Markatia, B.A. '18, B.S. '18, M.D. '23**

## **PGY-1 Ophthalmology Resident, Baylor College of Medicine**

### *What was your brightest moment at the U?*

I have been so fortunate to experience many special moments in my nine years at the U, from winning national dance competitions and joining executive committees such as Student Government, Honor Council, and SAFAC, to eventually getting accepted to my dream medical school: The University of Miami Miller School of Medicine! My journey continued during medical school where I maintained leadership positions with Women in Ophthalmology and Johnson & Johnson Surgical Vision, and was privileged to publish and present my ophthalmic research at dozens of ophthalmology conferences worldwide. Among all the unforgettable memories and opportunities I've been granted at the U, I'm proud to say my brightest moment was during my fourth year of medical school when I matched into ophthalmology residency at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas! I can't thank the University of Miami enough for making it possible for me to pursue my dream career.

### *What did you learn at the U that you know you couldn't have learned anywhere else?*

The U taught me to how to be a leader in the most impactful way possible: by being a model for others. Through my involvements on both the undergraduate and medical campuses, I was continuously challenged not only to become the best version of myself, but also encourage those around me to do the same. One example of this took place on my undergraduate competitive dance team, Miami UJhoom, which I was lucky to captain during my senior year. It was the first time I was expected to train and direct a group of my peers to achieve their highest potential while also pushing myself to do the same. This valuable experience has now translated into my medical training, as I understand the importance of educating and empowering my patients to take ownership of their own care while setting an example for them myself. Although I am nowhere near the leader I aspire to be one day, I thank UM for showing me where to start.

*How have you carried on the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes into your industry and community?*

The legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes has been the foundation of my academic and medical journey throughout my time at UM. It has motivated me to create positive change in my community through my passion for medicine, and more specifically, ophthalmology. My interest in community service around visual impairment was first sparked during my University of Miami Alternative Breaks (UMAB) trip to the World Services of the Blind in Arkansas. On this trip, I volunteered my time to working with and training the legally blind population of Little Rock.

From there, I confirmed my interest in medicine and began finding ways to serve my community within the field while preparing for medical school. This included serving on multiple medical charity e-boards and volunteering at the University of Miami Hospital. After starting my education at Miller School, I was able through the UM DOCS program to begin providing ophthalmic care to the underserved patients in the communities of South Florida that raised me. I subsequently took a year off from medical school to pursue ophthalmology research at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, much of which included publishing novel information and understanding modern technologies that can help provide ophthalmic care to underserved areas. As I now enter residency, my long-term goal is to continue embodying the legacy of 'Canes Care for 'Canes by carrying this passion for service into my current and future practice.

*What do you think is your most noteworthy accomplishment after graduation?*

Besides the honor of matriculating to the Miller School of Medicine, and later matching into ophthalmology residency, I am privileged to say that one of my most noteworthy accomplishments after graduating from UM was joining the Johnson & Johnson Surgical Division as the first medical student healthcare consultant in J&J history. My role as a consultant has involved creating a nationwide mentorship program that will accelerate the slow learning curve commonly associated with the field of ophthalmology. This advancement in my career aligns with my passions for education and mentorship and has impacted not only my ability to serve as a leader on a national level, but also on the smallest scale: with my patients.