

By Hope Geissler and Gracie Palmer

Taylor Tardibuono enrolled at the U to pursue a degree in psychology and studio art. Miami's warm weather and amazing nightlife made her decision to leave small town, wind-chilled Lancaster, Pennsylvania, a no-brainer.

What makes Tardibuono's perfect picture less perfect, however, is Miami's expensive lifestyle.

"By the end of fall semester freshman year, I was quickly running out of money," Tardibuono said.

She needed a job.

One of Tardibuono's friends, Gabby Allen, worked at the Patti & Allan Herbert Wellness Center as a lifeguard and helped Tardibuono get a job there.

"Gabby came to me saying her boss needed people to work the front desk," Tardibuono said. "I sent her boss an email that night and was brought in for training a few days later. It was an easier process than I was expecting."

Approximately 5,500 University of Miami students are working on campus this semester, according to the Office of Undergraduate Financial Assistance and Employment. These employment opportunities stem from federal work study, student assistantships, Miami Commitment and graduate assistantships.

The university offers all students access to JobX, a student employment job posting system. Students can find and apply for on-campus and off-campus jobs directly on the site. On-campus jobs on JobX vary from research assistants to baristas at Starbucks. JobX also has a section for off-campus jobs. These include tutors, swim lesson instructors and hostesses.

Other ways for students to find jobs off campus or internships include LinkedIn and Handshake. The Toppel Career Center on campus works to connect students to job opportunities and help with resumes.

Loretta Young, an administrative assistant for the University of Miami School of Communication, says the work study program at UM is a great opportunity for students to gain valuable work experience and to balance work and life before getting out in the world.

"It gives them a sense of responsibility, accountability and common sense. It makes them a little more balanced in work life and school life," said Young, who oversees a variety of students in the school's work study program.

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Students take on jobs for reasons that range from contributing to their tuition and living expenses, to supplementing federal and personal loans, to having enough money to support their Magic City lifestyle.

Miami is the second most U.S. expensive place (behind Los Angeles), according to the U.S. News & World Report's 2022-2023 list; the cost of living in Miami is higher than the national average; and the average rent in Coral Gables for a one-bedroom apartment is around \$23,400 for a nine-month lease.

While the minimum wage in Florida is \$10 an hour, UM students earn an average hourly wage of \$11.40, according to the Office of Undergraduate Financial Assistance and Employment.

Meshi Saha, a sophomore motion pictures and business law major, performs throughout South Florida as a stand-up comic. His earnings – typically \$50-\$150 per show -- are based on his performances and the venues.

Saha estimates he spends 3 ½ hours a week on his job, including being on stage for about 30-45 minutes a performance.

“Due to my job being performance and creativity based, I am able to balance school and work pretty well,” Saha said.

However, many students are spending more time on their jobs than on their studies, national surveys show. In 2020, the majority of employed college students were working more than 20 hours a week, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Dan D'Amico, a student equipment manager for UM's football team, works between 30 and 40 hours a week at \$11 an hour.

“I have found that it's quite difficult to find time for homework and studying between my classes, work and clubs,” said D'Amico, a junior.

Maria-Cristina Espinoza-Alguera, a finance lecturer at the Miami Herbert Business School at UM, advises students to be mindful about how much they are spending and how much money they are going to have to pay back to banks in the future.

“Having fun while spending money you already have saved is less stressful than borrowing money and becoming more indebted,” Espinoza-Alguera said.

Young, the work study supervisor in the School of Communication, said a common problem work study students face is time management.

“It can be a number of things that can affect a student's ability to work,” Young said. “Some just come in and are on their A-game while others struggle with schedule and life changes.”

Emily Rodman, a senior neuroscience major, started working this semester as a teaching assistant for First Year Directions, a class for freshmen that helps them with academic advising.

“One of the biggest things I’ve learned is that just because I have a test in another class, First Year Directions can’t be put aside,” Rodman said. “I need to be as punctual there as I am in all of my other classes.”

Jessica Axtman, a sophomore exercise physiology major, works off campus at Cracked by Chef Adrienne, a South Miami restaurant. She said she struggles the most with asking for time off, since her managers are not as understanding as most on-campus job supervisors.

“It's just a lot about time management and making the best choices of what to do first,” Axtman said.

UM’s Office of Undergraduate Financial Assistance and Employment said managers are expected to accommodate a student’s class schedule when developing a work schedule and that students are not allowed to work during their class times. They further advised that students should consider the time commitment before applying for a job.

Kiana Gaviria, who works six days a week in the interlibrary loan department at Richter Library, also sings the praises of time management.

“Just don’t be so hard on yourself and make time for yourself as well,” said Gaviria, a sophomore accounting major.

Tardibuono, now a senior and a facility manager at the wellness center, said the hardest thing about working and going to school is finding time for herself.

“Intentionally making time to do nothing but relax is important and it is a skill I am still working on,” Tardibuono said. “I always thought people were being dramatic when they said work/life balance, but it’s really hard.”

Working while studying teaches students a level of accountability that classes do no, she said.

“You can skip class and not turn things in and still pass the class, but having a job is not like that,” Tardibuono said. “Life is just going to get harder, so I think it’s good to push yourself bit while you are still in a relatively safe bubble.”