

25-26

A YEAR IN REVIEW



UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
CENTER for ACADEMIC
NAVIGATION & SUCCESS



A YEAR IN REVIEW

REFLECTIONS & DIRECTION

FROM DR. VALERIE OLSON, SR ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Like many people in Miami, I spend a fair amount of time commuting. On most mornings, I listen to podcasts in the stop-and-go traffic on Hwy 1. One of my favorites is a call-in show hosted by a mental health professional who often says, *People communicate with words, but they think in pictures*. He notes that many communication challenges arise when we fail to share those mental pictures clearly, and he encourages listeners to ask one another, “What is your picture of _____?”



That idea resonates because it is so easy for two people to imagine the same experience very differently. A couple planning a vacation, for example, may each have a completely valid but very different picture in mind. While one person imagines quite time with a book on the beach, other other one pictures a full itinerary of excursions. Neither picture is wrong, but frustration can build if those expectations are never shared and adjusted.

Lately, I have been returning to this question as I think about our students and the work of the Center for Academic Navigation and Success. What picture do students carry with them when they arrive on campus or when they enter into their junior year? What do they expect to think, feel, and experience when they meet with a Transitional Guide, Success Advocate, or Cane Navigator? As we know, the experience students imagine is not always the experience they encounter. How can the Center help them enhance their picture AND improve their experience?

The 2025-2026 academic year was a time of both stabilization and forward planning in the Center. In our second year, we strengthened our foundation while also chartering a three-year strategic plan to advance student success with three aspirational goals: to eliminate student barriers, elevate center services, and close student experience gaps.

The pages that follow reflect what our team has accomplished in respect to these aspirations. Because of your collective effort, insight, and care over the past year, we now have a stable foundation from which to continue strengthening the student experience and supporting students in their own paths to success (and we help them adjust their pictures along the way). Well done, team!

With tremendous gratitude,
Valerie



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THE NUMBERS

July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

NSSE Survey Academic Advising | Key Gains from 2023 to 2026

95-96%

of first-year and senior students know how to contact an advisor.

Above benchmark & improved from 2023

10 / 10

Advising-resource items improved for both first-year and senior students.

Zero declines

6 / 6

Overall Support Areas including: academic, career, wellness, basic needs and more, rated **significantly above benchmark**.



UM's benchmark position on core advising practices flipped from below institutional peers to at-or-above



"Reached out about academic progress" and "Followed up on recommendations" were the largest advisor practice gains, moving UM from at-or-below benchmark in 2023 to significantly above in 2026

40,907

Appointments
created

23,194

Scheduled
appointments

14,388

Students
served

9,974

Drop-in
appointments

97%

Student satisfaction
post-appointment

TRANSITIONAL GUIDES

LAUNCHING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS

Transitional Guides (TG) served as the primary advising resource for over 3700 incoming students during the critical window between deposit and first day of classes.

By offering personalized advising, registration assistance, proactive outreach, and strategic partnerships, the program empowered thousands of students to begin at UM prepared, connected, and confident, directly advancing the University's commitment to first-year student success and retention.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS & IMPACT

Increased Connection: 97% of participating students reported feeling more connected to the UM community after engaging with their Transitional Guide, reinforcing TG's role as a first point of belonging.

*"They were extremely helpful and understanding with anything I was struggling with and any concerns I had. They went out of their way to make this transition process as **easy and welcoming** as they could."*

*"They helped me figure out my goals and my needs for myself as a student, but also as a **human**."*

*"I felt like I had someone **coaching me** through the process, it was less stressful than doing it all by myself because I had instruction and help"*

DATA SNAP SHOT

4/1/25-3/31/26

99%
Student
Satisfaction Rate

4462
Advising
Sessions

3734 +
Students
Served

LOOKING AHEAD

Building an Integrated Onboarding Experience: In the coming year, Transitional Guides will strengthen proactive outreach for Spring Admits, refine the student handoff to Cane Navigators so every student knows what to expect in advising each semester, and use onboarding data to plan targeted support before and after matriculation.





First Year Directions (FYD 101) is a one-credit* seminar that helps students navigate campus resources, build study and goal-setting skills, explore careers, and foster wellness, leadership, and belonging.

**The College of Engineering offers FYD as a 0-credit course.*

First-Year Directions: Fall '25 students retained at a rate 2% higher than non-participants. In Fall 2026, **1,228 Fall '26 students (46% of the cohort)** enrolled in the course.

DATA SNAPSHOT

1553
students
enrolled in FYD
(Fall & Spring)

1166
Fall Term
2025 students
completed FYD

93%
preliminary
Retention for
Fall Term 2025
enrolled in FYD

93%
preliminary
persistence for
Spring admits who
took FYD

KEY HIGHLIGHTS & IMPACT

Cross-Campus Team

- 90+ staff members, representing over 30 offices on campus, hired as FYD instructors.
- 90+ student leaders on campus hired as FYD TAs.

Immersive Learning

- Increased partnership with **UMverse** by adding a Virtual Reality experience opportunity for FYD students. This effort was recognized by both Forbes and Inside Higher Ed.

Broad Engagement

- 7 Schools / Colleges participate in FYD
- 71 sections offered in Fall 2025 and 25 sections in Spring 2026.



LOOKING AHEAD

Broader Engagement, Stronger Insights: During the Spring 2026 semester, FYD was redesigned to better support student retention by aligning the curriculum with campus support centers and outreach initiatives. The revamp strengthens collaboration with Cane Navigators, embedding academic planning, resource awareness, and student success strategies throughout the first-year experience.





Cane Navigators at the University of Miami are students' primary advisors from orientation to graduation, offering holistic support—academic, personal, and professional—embedded within their schools and colleges.

DATA SNAP SHOT

35,476

advising
appointments
recorded

12,126

unique
students
served

95%

of students **know**
who to contact
for advising

96%

reported
student
satisfaction



KEY HIGHLIGHTS & IMPACT

Implemented a Cane Navigator Proficiency Model:

Developed and launched a competency-based proficiency evaluation framework that provides clear performance standards, supports professional growth, and promotes a consistent, high-quality advising experience across teams.

Hosted the inaugural Academic Exploration Week:

Launched University-wide programming designed to help students explore majors, careers, and academic opportunities through events including Plan Your Path workshops, Career 'Canes Connect, and continuing the tradition of Coffee with the Navigators.



Created the Academic Navigation Syllabus: Introduced a shared Academic Navigation Syllabus to clearly communicate student expectations, available resources, and pathways for engagement, helping students better understand how and when to utilize advising support throughout their academic journey.

LOOKING AHEAD



Enhancing the Student Navigation Experience

Building on the improved progress of the Cane Navigator model, Academic Navigation will focus on expanding use of artificial intelligence to strengthen proactive outreach, strengthen Cane Navigator training and knowledge, and streamline administrative processes to be able to focus more time on student relationship development to provide students more personalized guidance.





The Student Success Advocates at the University of Miami provide one-on-one support and guidance to students regarding enrollment options, financial support, and success planning. Programs such as GPAim, GPAid, and Canes Complete help students achieve their academic success goals.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS & IMPACT

Increased Appointment Accessibility: 1,418 appointment were scheduled directly through Navigate, increasing accessibility and visibility for our services.

Coordinated Care through Navigate Referrals: Responded to over **460 referrals** submitted internally.

Expanded Key Student Success Programming, including:

- **GPAim:** Launched in Fall 2025, GPAim uses faculty progress reports, early alerts, and predictive modeling to reach first-year students before challenges escalate. Of 1,174 students flagged, 95.6% were invited to personalized success planning, with reach and participation increasing term over term.
- **GPAid:** Saw 79% participation among eligible students (up from 70%), with participants averaging a 0.61-point GPA increase.
- **First Hires:** In Fall 2025, 181 of eligible first-year students earned federal work study income compared to 121 in Fall 24.

**DATA
SNAPSHOT**

3,883

Cases
served via
Salesforce

1,400

Distinct
students
served

461

Resolved
staff referrals

80

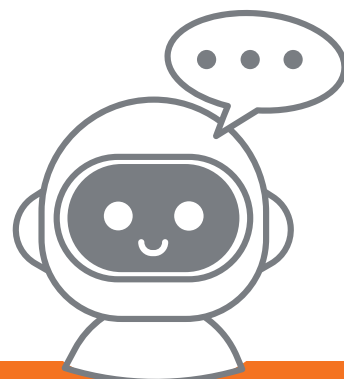
Students
completed
GPAid

LOOKING AHEAD



Scaling early intervention to moderate-risk and second-year students:

The Office of Student Success Advocacy will extend GPAim's proactive model to moderate-risk and sophomore students, using emergent AI tools such as agent campaigns in Navigate360 to personalize and automate outreach at scale, reaching more students in success planning without expanding caseload, and sustaining support beyond the first year.





During **Fall 2025**, the workgroup grounded the year's programming in staff data, using results from the **Professional Development Content Poll** to build the Center's **Fall 2025**, **Spring 2026**, and **Summer 2026** training calendars.

The workgroup sustained and expanded both initiatives it launched the prior year, coordinating the **Lunch & Learn Series** and **NACADA Watch Party Series** across all three terms, including sessions on enrollment options, student finances, DPR hands-on training, and NACADA webinars on AI in advising and supporting students from suspension to graduation.

Members also supported the **February 2026 Student Success Summit**, introduced **post-session feedback surveys** to measure impact and shape future programming, and closed the year by setting the **Fall 2026** and **Spring 2027** calendar.

21

Hours of professional development offered*

15

Average attendees per session

94

Staff members attended at least one session**

*Includes 8 concurrent sessions offered during the Spring 2026 Student Success Consortium

** Includes center staff and student success partners

SIDEBAR: AT A GLANCE

- Center staff-informed programming plan
- Three-term professional development calendar delivered
- Supported Spring 2026 Student Success Summit
- Feedback surveys introduced



In **Fall 2025**, under Nicole Maarraoui's leadership, the group planned and delivered the **Fall 2025 Wrap-Up and Holiday Celebration**, built entirely around connection and camaraderie. The breakfast event included a guest session with Jordan Coello on wellness, mental health, and self-care, and a game of Family Feud with center teams.



By Spring 2026, the team had revised the **Staff Recognition awards** nomination process, shortening and simplifying it so more colleagues could be celebrated, and spearheaded **Pep Rally Week**, aligning with **NACADA's Global Advising Week**. Five themed days carried the Center from a **Pick-me-up Picnic** and the **Walk the U Challenge** through **Ports of Culture**, **Crew Connections**, and a **Dock Party Finale** ice cream social. The week opened with the "**Cruising into Summer**" **End-of-Year Celebration**, where staff reflected together on wins and wow moments, gratitude, and what they were excited to build next year, and gave each other shoutouts in real time.

That work culminated at the **Fall 2026 Center Kickoff** on July 30, where the **Center Recognition Awards** honored center staff and student success partners for their outstanding contributions to student success in the 25-26 Academic Year.

Looking ahead, the group's 2026–2027 goals are to develop a consistent Center welcome and onboarding checklist, establish meaningful ways to recognize achievements within teams and across the Center, expand social networking opportunities across units and the wider University, and create annual team-building opportunities that build a strong shared culture.

2026 CENTER RECOGNITION AWARDS

- Dr. Erika Velarde, ***True to the U***
- Dr. Kylan Robinson, ***Rising Star***
- Deborah Foley, ***Building Legacy***
- Dr. Mykel Billups, ***Campus Partner***



STUDENT SUCCESS CONSORTIUM

A UNIVERSITY-WIDE COMMITMENT TO STUDENT SUPPORT

The Student Success Consortium brings together departments and offices from across the University to strengthen support for students throughout their academic journey.

Led by the Center for Academic Navigation and Success, the Consortium brings together key campus partners to improve coordination, share strategies, and enhance student support.

The Consortium met twice during Fall 2025 and twice during Spring 2026, anchored by a fall professional development workshop in September and the Spring Student Success Summit in February. Meetings focused on partner updates, demystifying complex policies for advisors, training on new technology — including the Navigate360 AI Staff Assistant — and exploring new initiatives to support student progress and engagement.

SIDEBAR: AT A GLANCE

Our Campus Partners

- Housing & Residential Life
- Admissions
- Registrar
- Pre-Health Advising
- Undergraduate Research
- Toppel Career Center
- Office of Academic Enhancement

Meeting Cadence:

- 2 sessions in Fall 2025
- 2 sessions in Spring 2026

Recent Highlight:

- Spring 2026 Student Success Summit

The Center for Academic Navigation and Success hosted the **Spring 2026 Student Success Summit** on **Monday, February 9 at Lakeside Pavilion**, opening with welcome remarks from Valerie Olson and a keynote by **Renee D. Callan**. The day featured **eight concurrent breakout sessions across four blocks**, led by Student Success staff and campus partners, and closed with an extended session with **Provost Samuels** for Center staff.



Sessions spanned coaching frameworks for everyday student support, GPAim and GPAid as first-year retention programs, authentic mentorship practice, the NCAA Transfer Portal, demystifying student finances, high-impact practices, advising–disability services partnerships, and belonging in the classroom. As the Consortium continues its work, it remains focused on strengthening partnerships and improving outcomes for students across the University.

WHAT'S NEXT?

OUR THREE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Our Mission

The Center for Academic Navigation and Success will champion its mission to empower all undergraduate students to excel academically & achieve their educational goals while fostering an inclusive & student-centered culture.

Through strategic collaborations with campus partners and university stakeholders, the Center will advance the following aspirations:

ADVANCING STUDENT SUCCESS

Eliminate Student Barriers

We will champion experience improvements student for registration, self-service degree planning, and financial flexibility to reduce administrative complexity that unnecessarily impede degree completion.

Elevate Center Services

We will design streamlined practices that improve the quality of student interactions, and academic guidance support that consistently provide value and meet expectations.

Close Student Experience Gaps

We will design programs and improve campus partnerships to enhance students' academic confidence and sense of belonging.



