

THE INFORMED DEMOCRAT OF SWFL



One Graduate's Story

By Michaela O'Brien

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I graduated last summer with a BA in Communication Studies from Florida Gulf Coast University and a 3.9 GPA. I was part of the Honors College, multiple honor societies, and have nine years of experience working on campaigns and with nonprofit organizations.

Still, what I've seen so far in the job market is uncertainty layered on top of uncertainty. The federal hiring freeze eliminated many of the pathways I had planned to pursue as preparation for graduate school, internships, and entry-level government jobs, among them. Losing those opportunities has made my transition from college to continuing my education and finding a career far more difficult.

Since the age of 14, I've worked in fast food, retail, and customer service, but with the experience I've built now, that's not a path I'm eager to return to. Instead, I've sought adjacent roles or industries I hadn't originally considered, just to keep building experience and moving forward.

The scarcity of jobs in my field has forced me to be flexible. Fortunately, I've secured roles with the Lee County Young Democrats and Rising Voices Collective, completed internships with PACs like Save Our Democracy Corp, and was recently hired as the Administrative Lead for Reverend Howard Sapp's congressional campaign in Florida's District 19.

These opportunities have allowed me to network locally, strengthen my skills, and stay open to experiences that can help me grow. There's pressure, for sure, but also a chance to adapt in ways I didn't expect.