

Unseen Horizons: Madison Hurtado's Path to Success at NSU

By Arianna Morel



NSU, Fort Lauderdale — For many students, the college experience is marked by ups and downs, struggles, and victories. Despite the hectic pace of college life, there are sometimes unnoticed stories of determination, dedication, and unrelenting passion. Madison Hurtado, a senior communication major at NSU, has a story just waiting to be told.

Hurtado's undergraduate journey began in 2020 as she started college with uncertainty and fear as most incoming students do. As a commuter student, managing the complex demands of campus life was difficult, including making friends and building a connection with the community. Especially given the COVID-19 pandemic at the time, which forced many people to isolate themselves.

"As a commuter student, it was a bit hard for me to imagine meeting people, especially coming through like COVID Year," Hurtado said. "I was just kind of secluded to my house and I didn't really get the experience that other people got."

Hurtado's persistence and determination, however, quickly led her down a path of discovery and progress.

"I'm glad that I was able to prove myself wrong from that original thought," she said.

With a switch in major from marketing to communication and a new sense of direction, Hurtado proceeded to immerse herself in NSU's exciting community. Taking any opportunity that presented itself whether it be a new club, class, or internship.

Hurtado's turning point took place during her junior year, when she adopted the phrase "Doubt kills more dreams than failure ever will," said by American poet and writer Suzy Kassem.



Hurtado performing in short film "Teen Victim Body Shamed" in 2022

Through her involvement in acting, she not only developed her craft but was able to attend a movie screening that led to her first internship with Allied Global marketing, a corporate experience she had long desired.

"I wanted something that was within my field of interest," Hurtado says of her journey from retail jobs to her first internship in corporate America where she was able to work at different movie screenings, premieres, and influencer events. "It was a truly enjoyable experience. I did that for almost the entire school year and learned a lot."

Hurtado also formed long-lasting connections through her internships at Allied Global marketing and the Mayor's Office in Fort Lauderdale. In addition to her participation in the Recoding Academy's Grammy U program and Student Alumni Association that led to new experiences and opportunities.

Her journey was not just about gaining experiences, but also about establishing her passions and developing her career path. Hurtado went beyond NSU's campus, by expanding her horizons with internships at prestigious organizations such as the Mayor's Office in Fort Lauderdale.

Driven by a desire to try new things, she said, "I ended up gaining some valuable personal skills, and some valuable life lessons. I wouldn't have known that if Megan Fitzgerald, Ph.D., didn't ask if I was interested."

Hurtado's journey reflects her personal achievements and the crucial guidance and direction she received from professors.

"I'm glad I was able to have her as a guide that led me there," Hurtado says of Fitzgerald, who arranged for her internship with the Mayor's Office of Fort Lauderdale.

Beyond the classroom, Hurtado was involved in various NSU activities. Hurtado, who serves as co-social chair for NSU's Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) and vice

president for the Student Alumni Association showcases her determination to being involved in the community.

"I think it's something that's super important and something that a lot of people should do and not be very close-minded about certain aspects of where life can take them," Hurtado said.

She additionally acknowledges the influence of professors like Whitney Lehman, Ph.D., and Alex Bordino, Ph.D., whose classes helped her gain real-world knowledge about her field.

"I feel like there are things that I've learned through them that I wouldn't have learned if I didn't take their classes," Hurtado said.

Becoming a member of the Recording Academy's Grammy U program was also a highlight for her. A selective program introducing new opportunities and people in the music industry into her reach.

"I just really learned that life is all about connections and networking," Hurtado said.

Hurtado's transformation from a starry-eyed elementary school student dreaming of Disney Channel fame to a motivated and talented individual exemplifies the power of passion, determination, and persistence. Jeannie Hurtado reminisced nostalgically about her little sister's creative journey, emphasizing Madison Hurtado's natural dedication.

"Every time she got to perform in front of an audience, she lit up the room, it was an amazing experience to watch her," Jeannie Hurtado said. "I always remember her as a little girl just excited to be in front of the camera or in the spotlight or the center of attention, ready to perform in front of people," said Jeannie Hurtado.

"It's always been something I've loved," Hurtado says of her passion for the arts. "It will be a part of my life throughout. I truly don't have any other options."

In recognizing her accomplishments, not only her individual successes but also the collective culture of ambition and persistence that distinguishes the NSU community. As she prepares for the next phase of her life at the University of Miami's graduate school, her story inspires others.

"She inspires me and gives me motivation. She does so many things that I would never even think of," said Amanda Lafleur, NSU alum and Grammy U member.

Hurtado's path to success may have gone unnoticed by many in NSU's community, but her drive and determination has left a lasting influence on the university.

"It's the little things that she does for people that makes her stand out from the rest of everyone else," said Lafleur.