Student Swap

CASE STUDY · 2026

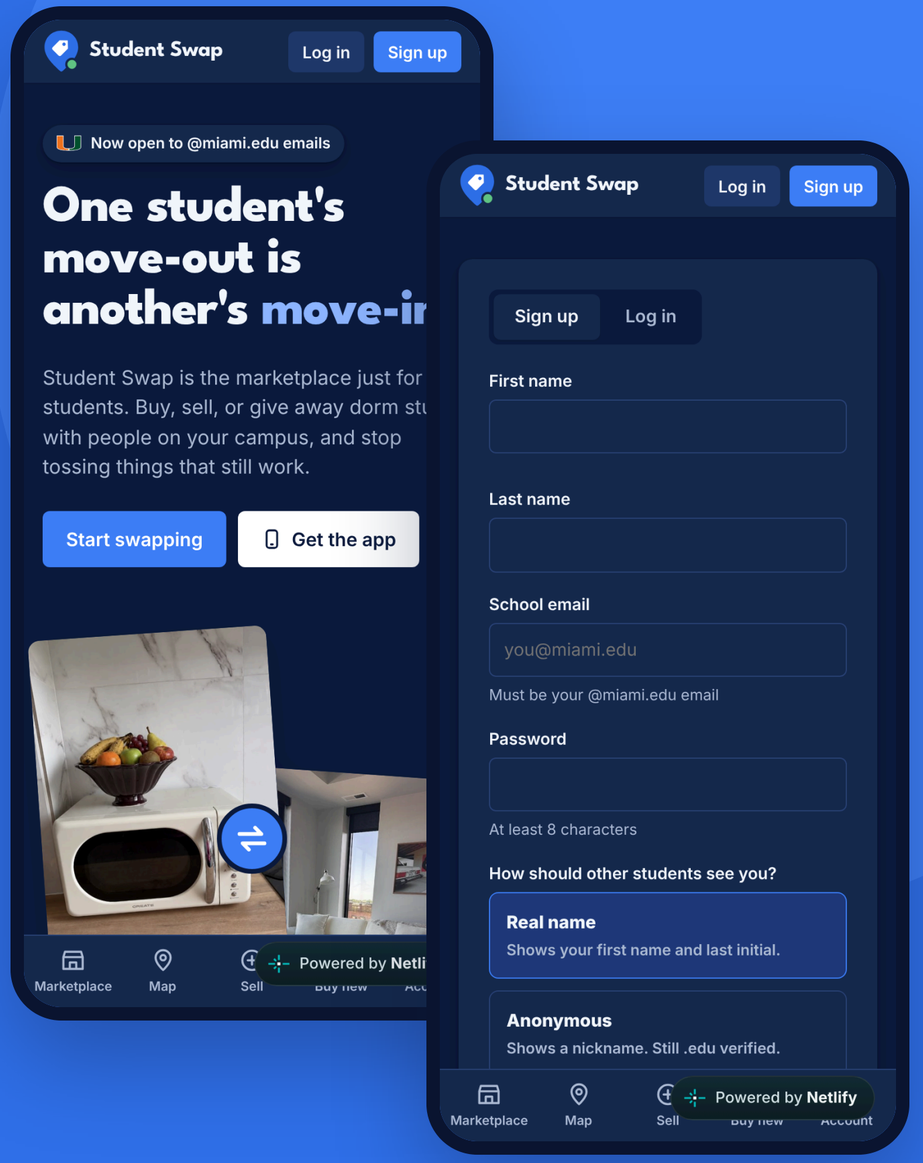
Safer swaps. Less waste.

How I designed, built and launched a students-only marketplace for the University of Miami, after Facebook Marketplace kept putting me in scary situations.

ROLE
Founder: strategy, brand, product, marketing

CONTEXT
University of Miami marketing project

STATUS
Live, taking real payments



elle lafontan · studentswap-miami.netlify.app

WHERE IT STARTED

I needed a couch. I got a stranger's address.

When I moved into my place in Miami, I furnished it the way everyone does: Facebook Marketplace. Again and again I ended up meeting people I knew nothing about, alone, at their homes or in empty parking lots, carrying cash. Some of those meetups were genuinely scary.

As a girl in Miami, I started asking why the only way to buy a used lamp was to take that risk, especially when the students around me were selling exactly what I needed, and throwing it in the dumpster every May.

THREE PROBLEMS, ONE APP

Safety

Anyone can be on the other side of a listing. Meetups happen at strangers' homes.

Scams

Cash, Zelle and "hold it for me" deposits with no protection if the item never shows.

Waste

Perfectly good furniture gets dumped at move-out while new students buy it all again in August.

THE NUMBERS

Buying from strangers online is a billion-dollar risk.

$15.9B

reported lost to fraud by US consumers in 2025, from 3 million fraud reports. Up from $12.5B in 2024.

Source: Federal Trade Commission, Mar 25, 2026

56,478

FBI complaints in 2025 for non-payment / non-delivery: paying for something that never arrives, or handing it over and never getting paid. $503M lost.

Source: FBI IC3 Internet Crime Report 2025

#3

Florida's national rank for internet-crime complaints (52,191) and losses ($1.07B) in 2024.

Source: FBI IC3 Internet Crime Report 2024

ALSO

The FTC ranked **online shopping** the **#2 most-reported fraud category** of 2024. That is the category every Marketplace couch, desk and mini fridge falls into.

CLOSE TO HOME

The scariest part is the meetup.

MIAMI-DADE · OCT 2025 – MAY 2026

17

robberies and grand thefts (11 robberies, 6 grand thefts) targeting people selling phones and laptops through Facebook Marketplace. In one, the suspect lifted his shirt to show a gun in his waistband. Four people were arrested.

Sources: NBC 6 South Florida, May 7, 2026; CBS News Miami, May 6, 2026 (Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office)

WYNWOOD, MIAMI · APR 2026

A seller meeting a Facebook Marketplace buyer for a Cartier watch was robbed, police say, by an 18-year-old carjacking convict wearing an ankle monitor.

Source: WPLG Local 10, Apr 22, 2026

ATLANTA · JULY 2026

Three Marketplace meetups for game consoles turned into robberies at gunpoint on the same street.

Source: FOX 5 Atlanta, Aug 26, 2026

CHICAGO · SEPT – OCT 2026

Police issued an alert after three armed robberies of people who arrived at a Marketplace meetup spot.

Source: Newsweek, Oct 12, 2026 (Chicago PD alert)

AND THEN IT GETS THROWN OUT

Good furniture, straight to the landfill.

12.1M

tons of furniture and furnishings thrown away in the US in one year. **80% went straight to a landfill** (9.7 million tons). Less than 1% was recycled.

Source: US EPA, Facts and Figures about Materials, Waste and Recycling: Durable Goods (2018 data, latest available)

MOVE-OUT WEEK, CAMPUS BY CAMPUS

272 t

collected at Villanova during the 3 weeks of 2025 move-out, about 130 tons more than normal operations.

Source: Villanova University Facilities

~30 t

of usable items recovered and reused in one move-out season at the University of Washington.

Source: Resource Recycling, Jun 19, 2026

10+ t

of donations left behind in University of Michigan housing during 2024 move-out.

Source: University of Michigan PBA, Jun 20, 2024

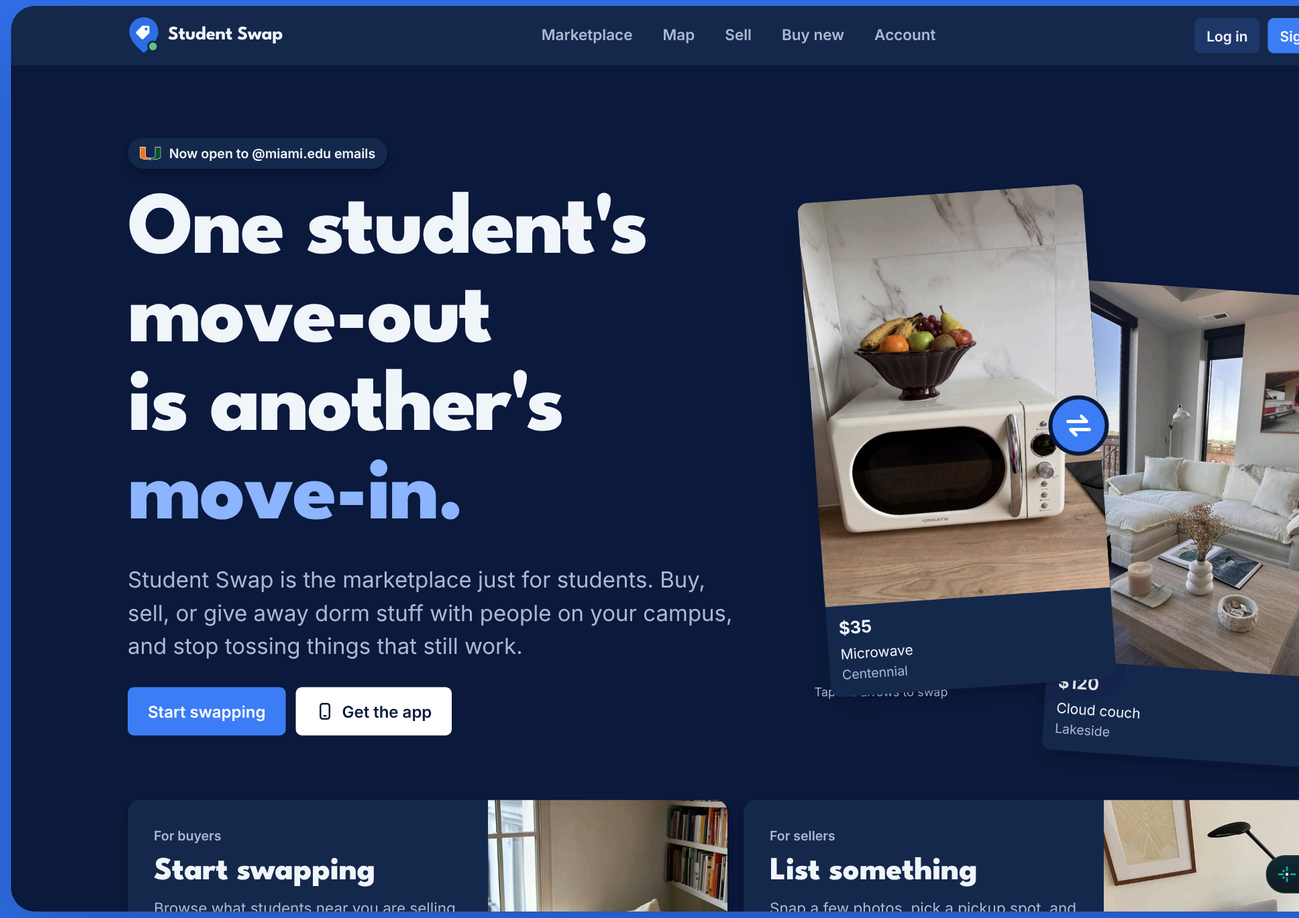
MEET STUDENT SWAP

One student's move-out is another's move-in.

A marketplace only for verified University of Miami students. Buy, sell or give away furniture and dorm stuff with people on your own campus, pay safely in the app, and hand off in a busy lobby instead of a stranger's driveway.

@miami.edu only · Pay in the app · Campus pickup spots · Free to list

Live at **studentswap-miami.netlify.app**



BUILT SAFE FROM THE FIRST SCREEN

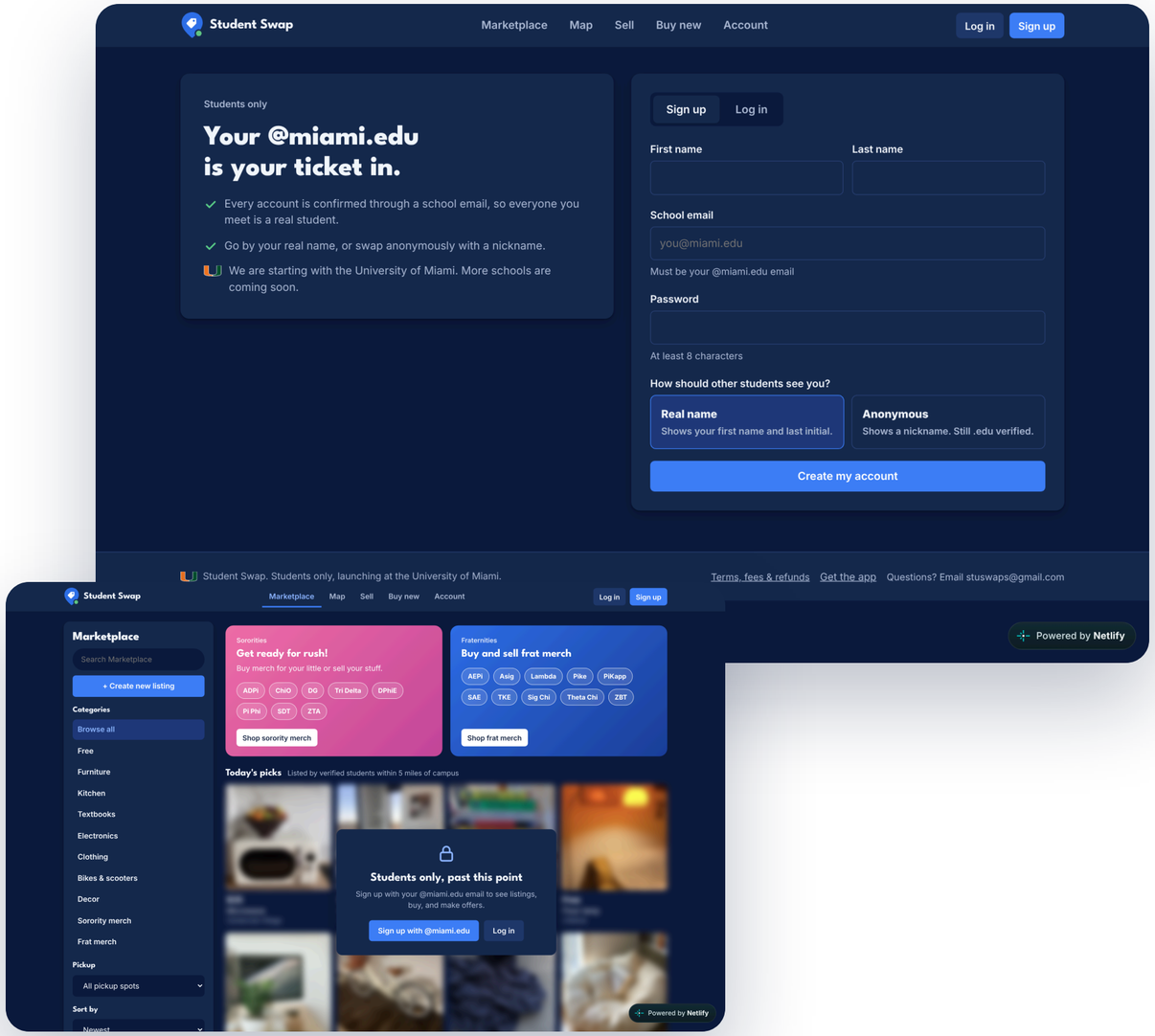
Only @miami.edu.
No strangers.

1 **Verified students only**
Sign-up only accepts @miami.edu emails, checked in the app and again on the server. Every account confirms a 6-digit code sent to that school inbox.

2 **Listings stay behind the login**
Outsiders can't browse who is selling what. Students can still go by a nickname: anonymous, but always .edu verified.

3 **Contact only after "accept"**
Emails are shared only once the seller accepts a request. No one gets your info just by looking.

4 **Busy, familiar pickup spots**
Hand-offs happen in lobbies of popular UM dorms and student apartments, shown on a campus map.



THE OFFER / ACCEPT FLOW

No cash. No deposits.
Paid only at pickup.

1

List it

Up to 4 photos, a price (or free) and a pickup spot. Live in about a minute.

2

Buy or offer

Buyers request at the asking price or make an offer.

3

Seller accepts

Only now do both students see each other's contact.

4

Pay by card

Stripe checkout in the app. The money is held, not sent yet.

5

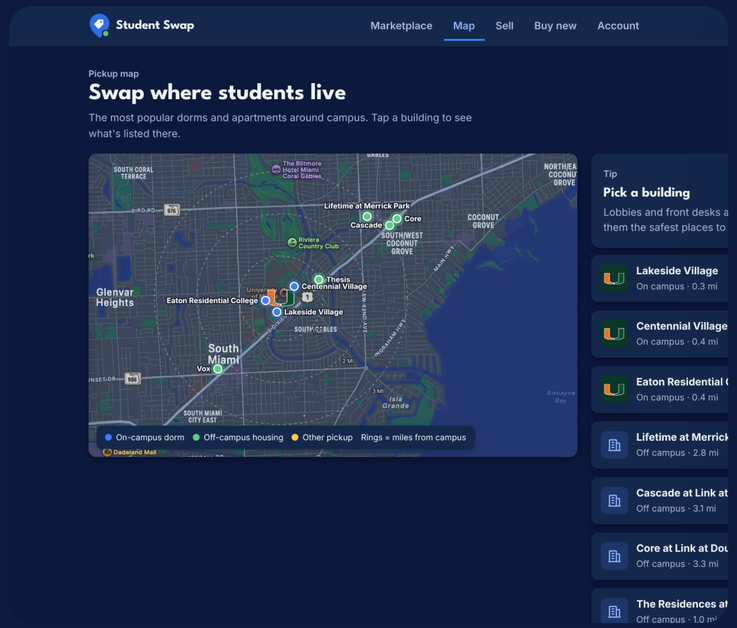
Pick up

Seller marks it picked up and gets paid. If it falls through, the buyer gets a full refund.

- **Sellers get paid out individually** through Stripe Connect, straight to their own bank.
- **No Venmo, no cash.** Every paid sale goes through the app, so there is always a record.
- **Banned items**: weapons, drugs, alcohol, vapes, stolen, recalled and counterfeit goods.

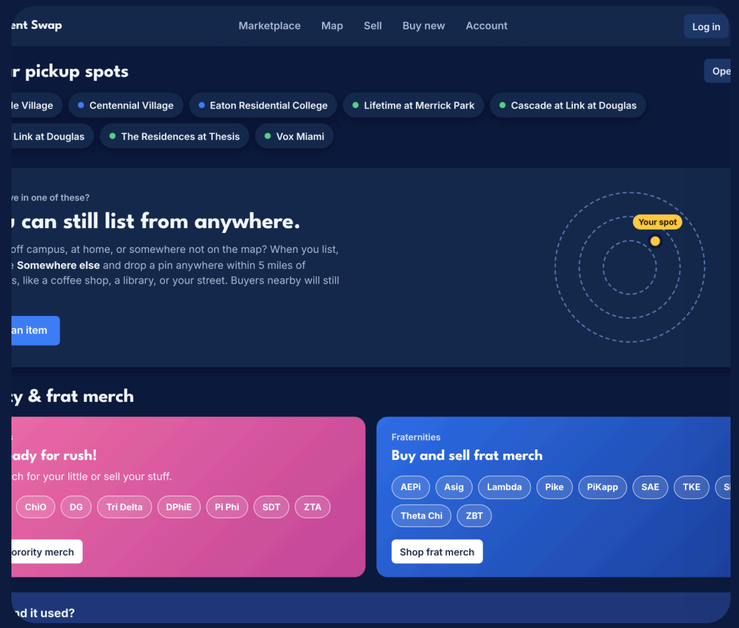
MADE FOR HOW UM STUDENTS LIVE

Everything a Cane needs to move in and move out.



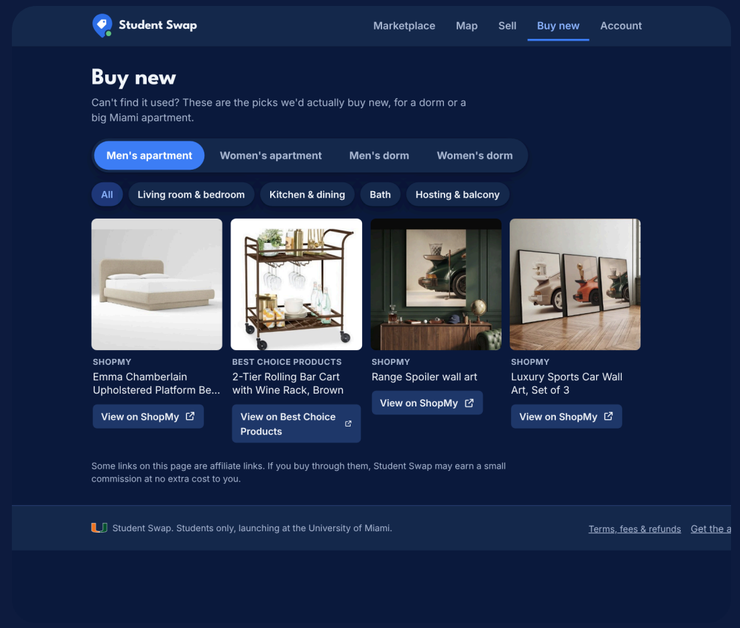
Campus pickup map

8 popular UM dorms and student apartments, plus "somewhere else" within 5 miles of campus.



Sorority & frat merch

Rush gifts for littles, letter shirts and formal wear, sorted by chapter for 18 houses.



"Buy new" picks

Can't find it used? Curated picks for men's and women's dorms and apartments, via ShopMy affiliate links.

HOW IT MAKES MONEY

Free to list. Small fee to buy safely.

Modeled on Vinted: the buyer pays a small service fee for secure payment and a full refund if the swap falls through, and the seller covers the card processing cost. Free items stay free.

5% + 50¢ buyer service fee, Student Swap's commission

2.9% + 30¢ card processing, paid from the seller's share

Affiliate commission on "Buy new" picks, at no cost to students

EXAMPLE: A $15 LAMP

Item price	$15.00
Service fee (5% + 50¢)	+ $1.25
Buyer pays	**$16.25**

Seller gets
$14.22
$15 minus 78¢ card cost

Student Swap keeps
$1.25
7.7% of the order

IDENTITY

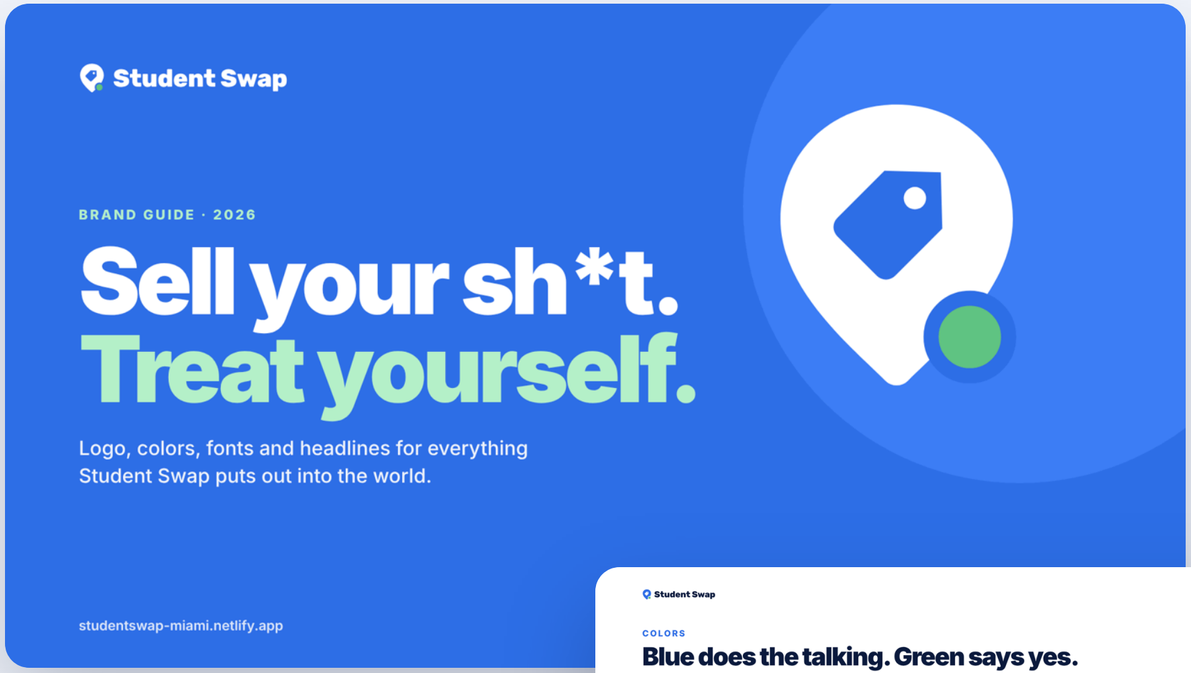
Friendly, local, and a little cheeky.

A map pin holding a price tag: buying and selling, right where you live. Every headline pairs a plain setup with a green punchline.

Swap Blue	Go Green	Night Navy	Mint	Sunny
#2F6FE8	#63C483	#0D1B3E	#B8F2CC	#FFC845

Sell your sh*t. Treat yourself.

Inter · DM Serif Display · Rubik

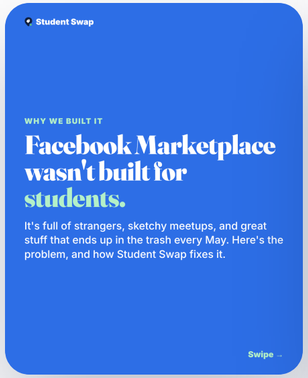




LAUNCH CAMPAIGN

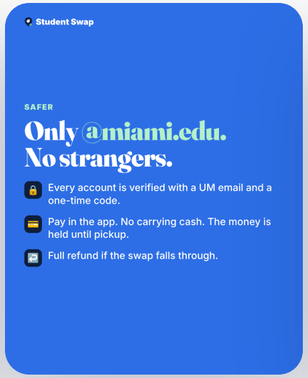
Social, print and Greek life.

A 7-slide Instagram carousel that tells the safety and waste story, Reels, stories for students going abroad, and QR flyers for move-out, sorority rush and frat merch. Each QR code carries its own tracking tag so sign-ups can be traced back to the flyer.

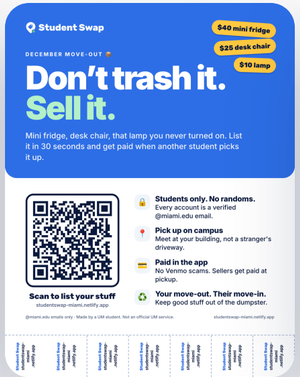


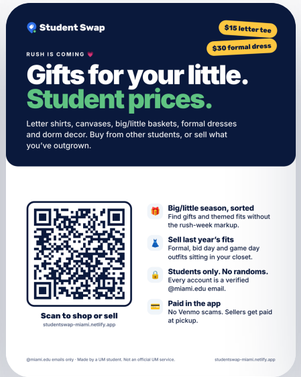


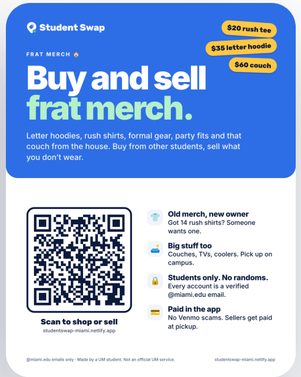




INSTAGRAM CAROUSEL







QR FLYERS: MOVE-OUT · RUSH · FRAT MERCH

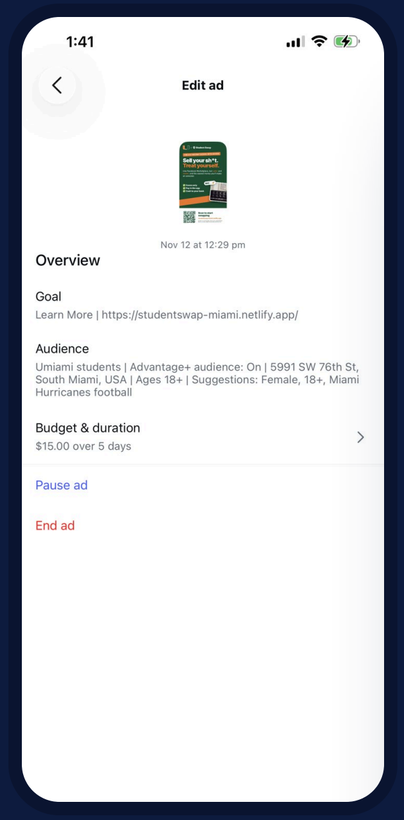
PAID SOCIAL · LAUNCHED NOV 12, 2026

A $15 test ad on launch day.

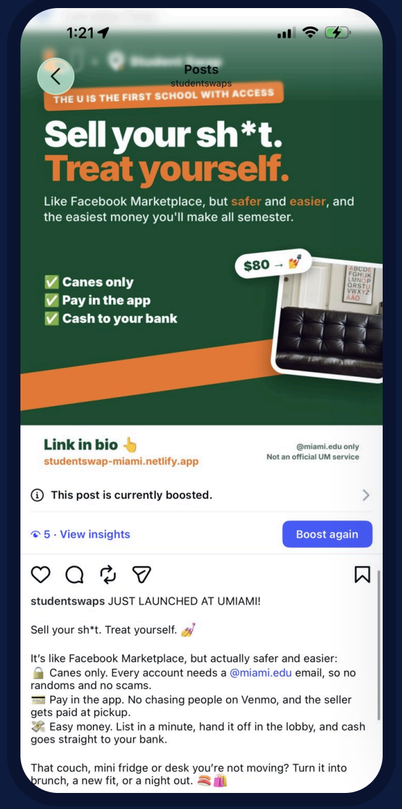
I boosted the launch post on Instagram and Facebook with a Learn More button to the site, targeting UM students near campus (18+, Advantage+ on). Two versions of the creative ran. These are first-hour numbers, captured about an hour after the ad went live.

$15 budget over 5 days	**45** people reached	**46** views
2 engagements	**1** link click (~2% CTR)	**27 / 19** views, version A / B

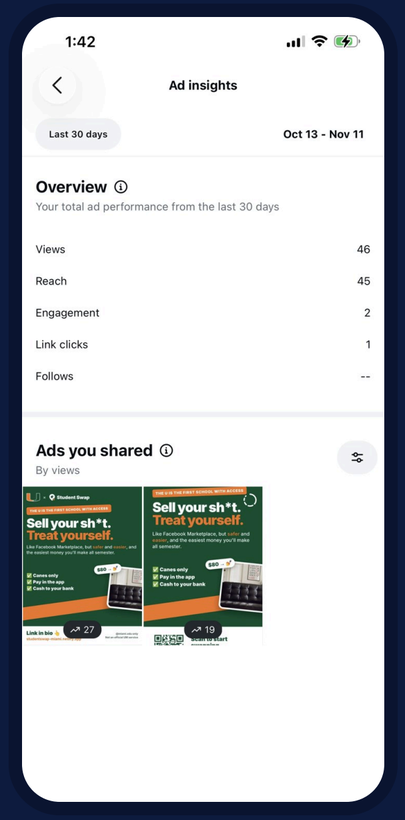
Only one hour in. The campaign keeps running through move-out week, when students have the most to sell and the most reason to sign up, so I expect results to grow from here. Next I'll compare the two versions and move budget to the winner. The creative was made before the brand guide, so it still uses early launch colors.



SETUP



BOOSTED POST



AD INSIGHTS

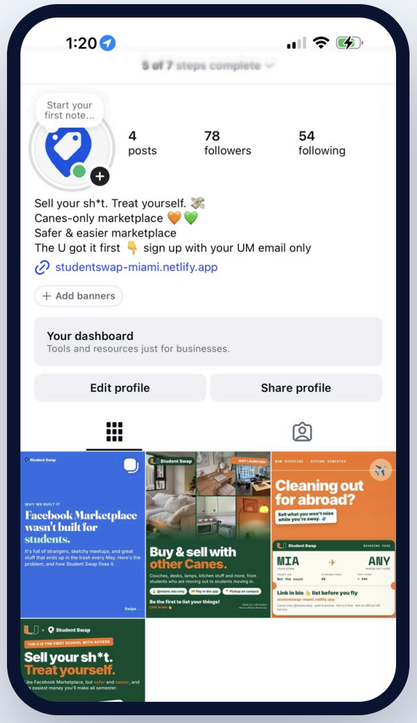
INSTAGRAM + FACEBOOK

Launched at the U in one day.

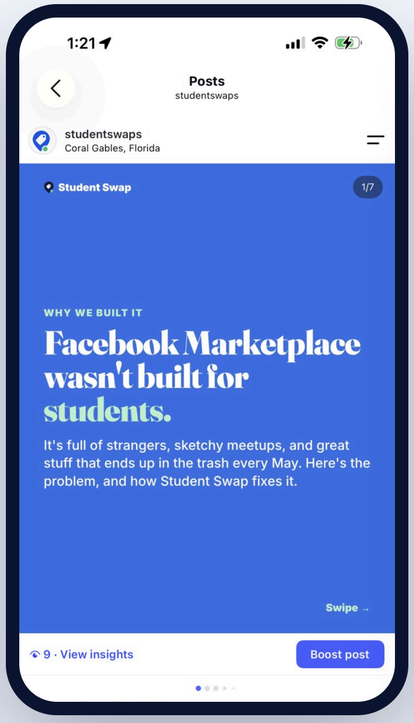
78
Instagram followers @studentswaps

4
launch posts, incl. a 7-slide carousel

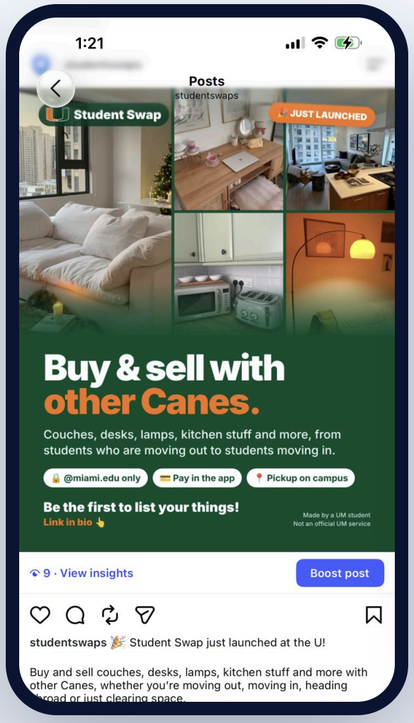
2
channels: IG account + Facebook page



IG PROFILE



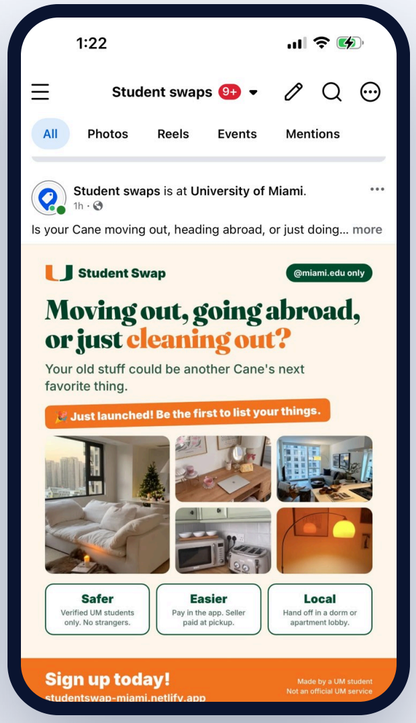
CAROUSEL · 9 VIEWS



LAUNCH POST · 9 VIEWS



ABROAD POST · 2 VIEWS



FACEBOOK PAGE POST

FROM CLASS PROJECT TO LIVE PRODUCT

Not a mockup. A real marketplace.

Live website

Installable as a phone app, with real accounts and shared listings.

Real payments

Stripe in live mode, with held payments and individual seller payouts.

Verified sign-up

@miami.edu only, confirmed with a one-time email code.

Full brand + campaign

Brand guide, social, Reels, Meta ads, QR flyers and Greek-life outreach.

STUDENT SURVEY
50 UM students asked

84% said they'd use it (42 of 50)

76% signed up on the spot (38 of 50)

What's next Keep the campaign running through move-out week · more schools beyond UM · in-app messaging · seller ratings

studentswap-miami.netlify.app

SOURCES

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Student Swap is an independent student project and is not affiliated with or endorsed by the University of Miami.