

Here's how a Memphis bank is partnering with U of M for cybersecurity



UMRF Ventures is located on the U of M's South Campus.



By [Wendy Guzmán](#) – Reporter, Memphis Business Journal

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A student-staffed company has been working with a major local bank for over a year.

UMRF Ventures Inc., which is owned by the [University of Memphis](#), offers students jobs working with Memphis-area companies.

Its partnership with Memphis-based [First Horizon](#) Bank recently hit the one-year mark.

“It’s been a pleasure to work with UMRF,” Steven Jones, SVP and chief information security officer at First Horizon, said in a news release. “Their team brings incredible energy, creativity, and collaboration to every challenge. It’s a valuable strategic alliance in every sense.”

So far, students have collectively earned about \$200,000 in wages from the partnership. The eight students working with First Horizon have contributed 6,000 hours of work to the bank.

The student employees work with First Horizon’s cybersecurity team to “enhance system visibility, automate workflows, optimize resources, and develop dashboards,” according to the release.

“We value the partnership for several reasons,” UMRF CEO Pierre Landaiche told MBJ. “We appreciate the fact that [First Horizon] wants to support local businesses, local small business. I also admire them for wanting to support the flagship university in West Tennessee, as well as its students.”

UMRF expects to continue expanding the partnership with First Horizon. According to the release, the organization plans to continue to “advance security monitoring, leverage data-driven intelligence, and expand automation to optimize operations and reduce risk.”

Landaiche said that the partnership has been able to not only pay students but also provide them with experience they’ll need once they graduate.

“By the time they graduate, some of our students may have one, two, or even three years’ experience under their belt,” Landaiche said. “So it's really important for them to take what they're learning in the classroom and apply it to a real-world scenario for a real company.”

[Last year](#), UMRF surpassed 100 student employees in total. UMRF [launched in 2017](#) and moved in 2019 into its [14,000-square-foot space](#) on U of M’s South Campus at 4075 Park Ave.

While owned by the U of M, [UMRF is its own company](#), with eight full-time salary employees who handle administration and operations.

