

UNDERSTANDING INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

What is an Informational Interview?

- ▶ An opportunity to learn about a career which interests you, by meeting and talking with someone who is working professionally in that field or industry
- ▶ A question-and-answer session to learn first-hand about a job, field or industry of interest

Arranging the Informational Interview:

- ▶ Use your networking to create a list of prospective interviewees. Contact friends, family, current and former supervisors, professors and alumni and ask them for referrals.
- ▶ Prioritize your list, based on areas of greatest interest to you. Select two or three to contact
- ▶ Contact the person(s) you wish to interview. Identify yourself as a student at VCU and that you are interested in learning more about the career they have chosen. Ask if they would mind emailing, talking or meeting with you for 20-30 minutes to discuss their career and to answer some questions.

Preparing for the Interview:

- ▶ Determine the key points you wish to learn during the interview and select questions accordingly (see below). Be ready with 7-10 questions
- ▶ Dress appropriately for the job you are investigating.
- ▶ Arrive 10-15 minutes early.
- ▶ Bring a copy of your resume with you in case it is requested. Your purpose is to gather information, so only provide a resume if requested.

Evaluation and Follow-up:

- ▶ Evaluate your experience. What did you learn from it? Do you have new questions?

Did the interview reinforce your interest in this career? How does this career “fit” you?

- ▶ Keep names, addresses, and telephone numbers of your contacts for future reference.
- ▶ Send a brief thank-you note to each person you interviewed, thanking them for their time.

Informational Interview Questions:

- What is a typical day like for you?
- What is the most satisfying part of your job? Least?
- Describe your career path.
- How happy are you with your job here?
- Would you choose to enter this field again? If not, what other field would you choose?
- What would you most like to change about your position?
- What is your educational background?
- What courses best prepared you for this position?
- What professional organizations do you recommend?
- Knowing what you know now about your field, what courses or training would you have done differently?
- What are the most valued skills in this field? How can I best obtain these skills?
- What is your biggest responsibility, and how much pressure do you feel from this responsibility?
- How do you feel your salary compares to other occupations with the same educational requirements, skills, and level of responsibility?
- How much travel and/or geographic relocation is required in your field?
- What was your first job in this field? What was the progression of jobs you had in order to get to your present position?
- What is a lesson that you have learned as a professional in this field that you wished you had known when you were a student and/or new professional?
- Can you suggest other people I might be able to interview who have similar career interests?