2023

VCU Job Shadowing

Austin Adam
Virginia Commonwealth University, acaustin@vcu.edu

Nora Bloch
Virginia Commonwealth University, blochn@vcu.edu

Sue Kurgatt
Virginia Commonwealth University, kurgatts@vcu.edu

See next page for additional authors

Authors

Austin Adam, Nora Bloch, Sue Kurgatt, Ezrah Medina, Erin Pacelli, Rebecca Segal, and Stephanie Thulin

VCU Job Shadowing

Connecting Students to a World of Opportunity

Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute

VCU Leadership Development Program, Class of 2023

Table of Contents

Team Members

Adam Austin, Communications Specialist, Enterprise Marketing and Communications

Nora Bloch, Collections Care Librarian & Conservator, VCU Libraries

Sue Kurgatt, Radiation Safety Officer, VCU Safety and Risk Management

Ezrah Medina, Assistant Director of Grants & Contracts Accounting, VCU Controller's Office

Erin Pacelli, Nurse Manager, VCU Health System

Rebecca Segal, Professor and Interim Chair, Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, College of Humanities and Sciences

Stephanie Thulin, Associate Professor, Department of Kinetic Imaging, School of the Arts

Project Sponsor: Maggie Tolan, Senior Associate Vice President for Student Success

Project Abstract

Job shadowing is an initiative aimed at bolstering students' career preparedness through an immersive exploration of the multifaceted landscape of career opportunities within higher education. By facilitating these experiential learning opportunities, this program endeavors to achieve a twofold objective. Firstly, it seeks to enhance the student experience at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) by cultivating meaningful interactions between students and VCU's typically non-student facing staff and faculty members. Secondly, by facilitating direct engagement with our students, it is our aspiration that every member of the VCU community, regardless of their traditional roles, will have the opportunity to support our students' personal and academic growth.

Quest 2028

Theme 1: Diversity Driving Excellence
- Nurture an institutional culture and climate that is diverse, inclusive, equitable and engaged.

Theme 2: Student Success
- Enhance the university culture of care and responsiveness supporting student engagement, success and sense of belonging.

Project Goals

1. Enhance the student experience
   a. Increase the number of touchpoints students have at VCU
   b. Improve career readiness by providing additional venues for students to explore careers
2. Improve staff connection to VCU Mission
   a. Increase staff interaction with student body

Project Strategies

With a shared vision in mind, our group embarked on a journey of collaboration and innovation. Our primary goal was to provide a comprehensive pitch that would mitigate the time, effort, and resources, a department would need to bring our vision to reality. To that end, we met with key stakeholders in the Office of Student Affairs, VCU Business School, Alumni & Development Relations, VCU REAL, and SEMSS (Career Services). This helped guide us to the VCU Link platform and start to develop the tools that would be needed for administering this program, which included:

- Researching job shadow programs at peer institutions

- Developing a comprehensive timeline of workflow to guide project execution

- Designing and deploying a staff engagement survey to determine interest in such a program

- Creating a VCU Link Program with a landing page, resources, and sign-up functionality that is ready to be published

- Providing resource guides for VCU staff and students who may be future participants of this program

Action Steps

- Pilot shadow experience with a limited number of staff & students

- Populate VCU Link with willing staff members

- Identifying administrative home for the program

- Hire graduate assistant(s) and/or FWS interns

Outcomes

The final product would be a simple, easy to use process connecting students and staff to facilitate job shadowing. This connection can support students in discovering their academic goals and play a role in obtaining internship opportunities later in their academic paths.

This will lead to improved staff and student satisfaction, potentially reduce staff turnover, and increase student retention rates. Another potential benefit is the recruitment of VCU graduates to fill staff vacancies at VCU.

Sustainability

Key stakeholders for this project are the Offices of Strategic Enrollment Management and Student Success, along with VCU student organizations and VCU Staff Senate. This program would complement the current efforts to link students with career opportunities, internships and mentors by providing a local, low barrier experiential learning opportunity.

Financing & Resources

Financing for the job shadow program will involve three categories: salary for VCU staff, stipend for graduate assistantship(s), and miscellaneous expenses for program materials and administration. Because VCU Link is provided by the University, there are no additional costs associated with hosting the program on VCU Link or maintaining the platform.

The VCU staff member will be responsible for managing the program administratively which will include:

- Supervision of the graduate student and other student workers
- Advertising the program via meetings, emails, community engagement opportunities, linking to career maps
- Program oversight in the form of reviewing staff & student pairings, including any conflict resolution

The student workers can be a graduate student assistant, undergraduate Federal Work Study participant, or both, and will be responsible for maintenance of VCU Link and organizing the day-to-day program logistics such as:

- Maintaining staff and student enrollment in VCU Link
- Facilitating profile building in VCU Link
- Monitoring the matching of students to staff for shadowing
- Following up with students and staff after shadowing

Miscellaneous expenses may be required during the recruitment phase(s) of the program to provide program materials (flyers, photos, videos, and social media announcements), and pay for fees to attend career fairs and other community engagement events.

Projected Budget

Item	*FTE/Hours per Week*	*Cost ($)*
VCU Staff	.20 FTE (annualized)	$14,800*
Graduate Student Assistant or FWS Student Intern(s)	20 Hours per Week	$7,500** Or FWS (No cost to department)
Miscellaneous	N/A	$2,500
	Total	$24,800

* Cost based on average salary for non-faculty at VCU CY 2022
** Minimum stipend amount for 9-month graduate assistantship at 20 hours per week. Funding may come from the department, foundations, or government.

Recommendations

While this program will be advertised to the student body at large, we recommend that Academic Advisors are used as a possible primary resource to connect students to this job shadowing opportunity.

And what we are proposing is a Tier 1 level of engagement, which we define as a light, casual engagement (non-credit bearing). This level of engagement could include students browsing bios on the job shadow website, attending an information session to learn more about the job shadow program, initiating informational meetings with staff of interest, and participating in a casual job shadowing experience, which could be a half or full day. Further expansion of this program could include:

Tier 2 - Medium / Casual to Serious Engagement (non-credit or credit bearing)
- Browse bios, Information session, multiple information meetings, and/or casual shadows
- A 1-day shadow as a class assignment (target - professional practices courses within various schools/departments)

Tier 3 - Heavy / Serious Engagement (credit bearing)
- REAL 399 (0-3 credits, pass/fail) or as Internship credit through the student's major department (1-3 credits, graded) - the experience can range from a pure job shadow to a more hands-on / interactive experience, based on the staff's need and students interest and experience.
  - 1 credit = approximately 40 hours, 24 hours of job shadowing (with same or different people) + 16 hours of self guided assessment/reflection
  - 2 credits = approximately 80 hours, so 64 hours of job shadow (with same or different people) + 16 hours of self guided assessment/reflection
  - 3 credits = approximately 104 hours of of job shadow (with same or different people) + 16 hours of self guided assessment/reflection
- REAL Co-curricular experience - does not apply towards credits, but would appear on transcript in a more descriptive way

Final Pitch

Since 40% of VCU grads end up staying in Richmond, we would like to provide VCU students with greater exposure to non-academic career pathways that exist within the University. Through job shadowing, students will learn how the skills and knowledge learned through their coursework can be applied in the higher education profession. Further, this would connect non-student facing VCU staff closer to our institutional mission via direct interaction with students. Expanding the worldview of students and their idea of what's possible in their career, will aid in student retention, satisfaction, and overall success. This collective engagement, rooted in a culture of care and collaboration, will empower every stakeholder to actively contribute to the cultivation of knowledge, nurturing of talent, and the overarching mission of VCU.

Resources
VCU's Impact on the Region: https://president.vcu.edu/reports-and-initiatives/impact-2022/
VCU Facts and Rankings: https://www.vcu.edu/about-vcu/facts-and-rankings/
VCU Career Services, First Destination Survey Results: https://careers.vcu.edu/about/vcu-outcomes-data/

Team Process Observations

Career Services is not a linear process but rather a cyclical process, and students seeking their services are entering from all different perspectives. This proposal is meant to address this issue with the goal of creating a platform to capture students where they are and direct them to the appropriate resources. VCU enrolls a diverse population of students with 1 in 3 students being first generation college students. There are many resources available to students in regards to career exploration and development, but there are too many and in various locations.