



A Professional Development Program  
for Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Fellows  
Offered by the Teaching Resource Center

## Administrator Interview: Things to Consider

As at most colleges and universities, administrative positions at U.Va. vary by type, primary responsibility, and overall purpose. Administrative positions typically focus on academic affairs or student life but also include technology and development officers as well as deans, associate deans, program and center directors, and department chairs, among others. The job descriptions for these positions differ accordingly – there are, for example, deans of academic affairs, academic programs, research, graduate programs, undergraduate programs, students, and advising – just to name a few. Lists of different A&S administrative positions, programs and centers, and department chairs (and links to other schools) can be found online at <http://artsandsciences.virginia.edu/>.

Once you have identified an administrative position of interest to you, it's time to contact the individual holding that position. Keep the following points in mind as you arrange and conduct the interview.

- Request the interview either by phone or email. Be sure to:
  - briefly introduce yourself
  - explain why you are requesting the interview
  - give an example of the type of questions you will be asking
  - mention (and/or send via email) the Confidentiality Clause
  - suggest (or ask the interviewee to suggest) a date and time for the interview; mention that you'll be happy to meet at his/her office and that you'll be sure to limit the interview to 30 minutes
  - provide your contact information (e.g. email address, phone number(s)).
- Confirm the meeting date, time and location a few days before the interview.
- Arrive at least 5 minutes early for your scheduled interview.
- During the interview:
  - re-introduce yourself and explain why you requested the interview. The interviewee will likely be interested in why you chose him/her.
  - mention and hand the interviewee a copy of the Confidentiality Clause.
  - use the questions below, or others you're interested in, to guide the interview.
  - be respectful of the interviewee's time and follow your established time limit.
- Before leaving the interview, thank the interviewee for his/her time. Also, be sure to send a handwritten thank-you note to the interviewee via Messenger Mail within 2-3 days. (A good rule of thumb for all informational or job interviews.)

## Administrator Interview: Possible Questions

The following sets of questions are meant as a guide for conducting the administrator interview, not as an exhaustive list. Please select the ones of most interest to you or compose similar ones of your own.

### *Position*

- What is your current position and how long have you been in it? What are your responsibilities? What other responsibilities do you currently have beyond this position?
- What is your academic background? How did you arrive at the position you're in today? Where might such a position lead you in the future?
- What do you find most surprising/interesting about the position? Why? What are the challenges/obstacles? Who supports your efforts? In what ways?
- What advice would you give to someone interested in developing skills for a future administrative position

*Unit/office/center*

- What is the size of your unit? What is the role of your unit in the University?
- What is the history of the unit? How would you like to expand/change your unit's role in the University?
- How does your unit interact with the local/regional/national community?

*Relationship between administrators and students/faculty*

- How would you describe the relationship between administrators and students/faculty?
- How does your unit affect students and their education? What is your unit doing for students today? What do you think the University should do for students today?
- How do you feel students, faculty, etc. perceive your contributions? What would you like to be recognized for? How should your contributions be formally recognized?
- Do you have a mentor or serve as a mentor to another faculty member? What role has mentoring played in your career? What advice do you have about choosing a mentor?

*Additional Suggestions*

- Before conducting the administrator interview, you might want to write a job description that you imagine might fit/capture the roles and responsibilities of the person you are interviewing. This may also help frame what questions you would like to ask the person. Then after the interview write a more enlightened job description.
- During the interview, ask the administrator to comment on who has influenced them most at the University and why. Remind them that this need not necessarily be one of their favorite people.