Evaluating and Comparing Job Offers

It seems like it would be a great problem to have – too many job offers! However, the reality of comparing offers and making acceptance decisions can be extremely stressful. It is often hard to know what the best decision is, especially when you may be forced into making a decision before you have all the information on all your options. Employers are out for the best candidates, and this creates a competitive atmosphere where timing is critical. Here are some things you should know about handling these types of situations:

Know what you want and need (there is a difference) in terms of salary, benefits, location, starting dates, etc. before an offer is made. Conduct salary research before your interview. This will help you answer the dreaded question, “What are your salary expectations.” You can give a $5000 range based on the research you conduct. This information will also prepare you to evaluate your job offer(s).

Salary Research Web-sites:
- www.salary.com
- naceweb.org
- collegehire.com
- www.salaryexpert.com
- www.bls.gov/bls/blswage.htm

Remember that there are many important components of a job offer other than salary. Most recent college graduates do not realize the financial and practical importance of benefits. They will focus on salary, not realizing that an offer with a great benefits package and a lower salary can actually financially outweigh a better salary offer with a not-so-great benefits package. Ask specific questions about the benefits package. Those of you who prepared for your interview know that the interview is not the time to ask questions about salary and benefits; once you have received an offer, it is the perfect time to ask these questions. Use the “Job Offer Comparison Chart” to quantify and compare various aspects of your job offer(s). You can change the items being compared based on the specifics of your offers and the things that are important to you. Remember that you will be working a minimum of 40 hours per week in this position with significantly less vacation time than you were used to as a student. Don’t forget to consider aspects of the job that are hard to quantify.

Compatibility with your interests

Compatibility with your work values (e.g., If altruism is important to you, do you feel you will be helping others in this job? If work/life balance is important to you, will you be expected to work long hours in this position?)

Compatibility with your personality (e.g., If you are more introverted, a sales job is likely to be draining.).

VCU Career Services offers several assessments that can help you explore your personality, interests, and work values. Contact your career and industry advisor to find out more about assessment options.