Interview Assessment #1

Name of Professional: Yatharth Singhal

Profession: Ph.D. student

Company: The University of Texas at Dallas

Date of Interview: 10/17/2022

Assessment:

My first interview was conducted with Yatharth Singhal a Ph.D. Student at the University of Texas at Dallas. I met Yatharth before the interview as I conducted research with him this summer at the Multimodal Interactions Lab. For my ISM project this year, I was looking to utilize the skills I learned from my internship to design my own VR game. I also wanted to learn about VR from the perspective of a researcher rather than a developer to see if conducting research on virtual reality was something that I found interesting. For future research interviews, I would want to meet with virtual reality developers to see how their days are and what their job is like.

Yatharth walked me through his typical day as a researcher and I learned about the long hours he works regularly. Especially when the lab is about to submit a paper to a publication he finds himself working 20+ hours in a day. However, he still loves the feeling of finally finishing a paper and seeing the culmination of all his work. He also told me that on the day to day he works on multiple projects which helps keep the work exciting as he always has something different to work on, but he also finds it difficult to switch between projects so often as they all require different skills such as going from haptics to modeling. This helps me feel assured that there are many projects I could work on in the Virtual Reality industry where I could make a

truly significant contribution along with not being bored by constantly working on a singular project.

Yatharth also made sure to emphasize the difference between development and research to me. I learned that research usually entailed trying to do something brand new and required lots of persistence along with keeping up on the research happening in the field in order to find gaps in knowledge for you to step in and make a contribution. A developer on the other hand is more focused on being creative to try and make a brand new product while also staying up to date with the latest advancements in their field aswell. I found that my interests are more aligned with the development side of things as I want to focus on making products to fix problems for people that would be used by thousands rather than trying to advance the field.

My favorite part of the interview was learning about Yatharth's story of becoming a VR researcher. I learned that he started out as a full-stack developer but when he came to the United States for his master's he found that he had a passion for research. However, at this point, he was thinking of going into Artificial Intelligence but after a class with Professor Kim, Yatharth became the first member of the Multimodal Interactions Lab. Yatharth's story showed me that even if I'm not completely sure of what I want to do when I'm older, I can be confident that I will find my way to be able to do something I love.