

## Super Temps to the Rescue at UVA

**H**ow much more efficient would your workplace be if temporary hires showed up on the first day of work ready to hit the ground running? What if they already had two weeks of systems training under their belts? And what if these temp workers proved so valuable that many were hired on full time? Through its innovative Super Temps program, the University of Virginia (UVA) is realizing these benefits by creating what it calls the “hiring wave of the future.”

### Bridging the Gaps

Temporary services is the division within UVA’s human resources department that is charged with finding talent to meet temporary departmental staffing needs throughout the university. The group already had a track record for bringing in highly skilled, exceptional talent, but when it introduced the Super Temps program in the summer of 2011, the team raised the bar.

temporary basis. “Super Temps has helped meet campus employment needs by not only bringing in exceptional talent with great skills, but also having them show up on the first day already trained on the organization’s systems,” says Janet Turner-Giles, manager of UVA Temporary Services. Since its inception in August 2011, 60 individuals have completed the training program. “The Super Temps program is very competitive,” says Turner-Giles. “Only 12 candidates are selected (out of hundreds of applicants) for each training cohort. We really do try to choose the best of the best.” Many Super Temps have advanced degrees and several years of professional experience.

### In Demand

The interview process consists of phone interviews, Skype interviews, in-person interviews and Microsoft Office testing, all completed within three weeks. “Time,



Representatives from University of Virginia Human Resources were on hand at the CUPA-HR Annual Conference 2013 to accept the association's HR Innovation Award for the Super Temps program.

energy and funds are invested into the candidates without hesitation, knowing that through this intensive process, the top candidates are chosen,” says Turner-Giles. The selected Super Temps receive training on many of the university’s highly sought-after integrated system responsibilities (human resources, finance, student information), which enables them to contribute immediately to departments and fill roles otherwise not possible by temporary employees.

Super Temps is a two-week paid training program for exceptional temporary employees who possess superior interpersonal and technical skills with proven success in a senior-level administrative or project management role and a willingness to commit to long-term temporary work. The program helps to fill critical gaps of employment across UVA by equipping these temporary employees with the necessary training to enable them to step in to critical roles and make immediate impact on a

It also allows them to get a foot in the door at the university, and oftentimes paves the way for full-time employment down the road. In fact, to date, 33 of the 60 individuals who have participated in the Super Temps program have been hired on full time by UVA. And all but four individuals have been employed by the university continuously since placement at the end of their Super Temps training.

Because of the extensive training they receive and their applicable professional experience, Super Temps can easily adapt to most any role in which they are placed. According to one manager who hired a Super Temp from the second training cohort, “Not only did she present a higher level skill set, but she had the confidence and willingness to learn new things because of the training foundation she was given. She has added tremendous value in her position and beyond. The program seemed to instill a sense of pride in her that is quite refreshing and contagious.”

“To say these specialized temps are in high demand would be an understatement,” says Turner-Giles. “We always have several campus departments expressing interest in employing them before training even begins.”

## Who Are the Super Temps?

So just who applies to be a Super Temp at UVA? “Our Super Temps have been managers and entrepreneurs, organic farmers and high school coaches, peace corps volunteers and flight attendants, attorneys and ice-cream scoopers,” says Alexandra Reborn, communications manager for UVA human resources. “Some have MBAs or master’s degrees in other fields. Some are recent college graduates looking to expand upon their professional experience. Along with several Charlottesville natives, a few moved to the area to be closer to their grown children or grandchildren. And a few have already flexed their fingers in temporary positions at the university.”

### “Making a Career Out of It”

Before she joined the Super Temps program, Mary Ellen McLernon worked for more than 10 years as a temporary employee in a number of UVA campus departments and offices, including the international studies office, the office of the registrar, the office of sponsored programs, the Virginia Film Festival, psychiatry and neurobehavioral sciences, and the Addiction Center. She then left Charlottesville to travel for a few years, but when she returned, she wanted to re-enter the workforce. She applied for and was chosen for the first Super Temps training cohort. “I enjoy moving around in the diversity of situations at UVA and being able to exercise and improve upon my customer service and management skills,” she says. “I’m definitely content to be a long-term temporary employee here at the university.”

### “I See It as Giving Back”

Allison Robinson is a recent graduate of Yale University. Prior to being chosen as a Super Temp, she served as a project manager for Yale’s Ogilvie Robinson DeChabert Leadership Forum and as a fellow for the Robert Russa Moton Civil Rights Museum in Virginia, where she handled fundraising and marketing communications. “As an early career professional, I was looking to gain some additional experience and kind of explore different opportunities,” Robinson says. “This is what initially attracted me to the Super Temps program. Both my siblings went to UVA and both my parents taught here, so I was also excited about the opportunity to be able to give back to the university that has played such a big part in my and my family’s life over the years and to be a part of the dynamic UVA community.”

## Innovation and Collaboration at Work

Super Temps is a case study in effective collaboration. Within the human resources department, three divisions work together to execute the logistics of the program: temporary services recruits and hires the 12 individuals for each training cohort, HR IT ensures that each individual is connected to the university-wide system, and employee development trains the temps on all the systems. The program also requires collaboration and cooperation between human resources and the different departments across campus that utilize the Super Temps.

Innovation is also a hallmark of the program, as it creatively solves two important issues: first, meeting unmet staffing needs of UVA, and second, putting talented and capable people back to work in positions that tap into their unique personal strengths. “The Super Temps program has created a path for those who are unemployed, underemployed, have been downsized, returned home from war or recently graduated college to be put to work in positions that enable them to utilize their specialized skills and expertise,” says Turner-Giles. “And UVA has reaped the rewards of this new way of hiring.” 

*If you’d like to learn more about University of Virginia’s Super Temps program, visit [www.hr.virginia.edu](http://www.hr.virginia.edu) or contact Janet Turner-Giles at [jmt4q@virginia.edu](mailto:jmt4q@virginia.edu).*