



The Uniquely Abled Academy® Replication Guide

Element 2: Establish and Manage the Training Program

Element 2.1NL: A Suggested Process for Establishing a Uniquely Abled Academy

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Note: The links in this public version have been deactivated.

See following relevant files:

- Exhibit 2.1 - A Suggested Process for Establishing a Uniquely Abled Academy
- Exhibit 2.25 – An Example Timeline for Establishing a Uniquely Abled Academy

Each Uniquely Abled Academy (UAA) will likely be unique, so this UAA Replication Guide is exactly that – a guide, not a set of requirements. Each UAA team needs to adapt what is written here to their unique circumstances.

The UAA Project Team is the group of individuals and organizations committed to establishing and managing a UAA.

The recommended steps to establishing a Uniquely Abled Academy are:

1. Identify the target diagnosis and target jobs for the UAA.
2. Identify the target geographic area.
3. Validate that there is a demand in the target geographic area for the target jobs.
4. Validate that there is a sufficiently large population of individuals with the target diagnosis in the target geographic area.
5. Establish one or two people as the driving force for establishing the UAA.
6. Identify and recruit an educational institution that will provide the skills training, i.e., training in CNC operation.
7. Decide whether will be contract (non-credit) or credit.
8. Identify and recruit a social service organization to provide one or more of the following: job readiness training, job search and placement, and post-hire support.
9. Hold a Formation Team Meeting.
10. Consider whether to incorporate.
11. Hold the first meeting of the UAA Project Team.
12. Decide on dates, times, and location(s) for future Project Team meetings



13. Prepare for and conduct Second and Future meetings of the UAA Project Team.
14. Recruit volunteers.
15. Execute the UAA Project Plan

Each of these topics is covered in the following sections.

1. Identify the target diagnosis and target jobs for the UAA

A fundamental principle of the UAA is to match the extraordinary skills of those with a diagnosis to jobs in demand.

For example, it's been observed that jobs requiring individuals with a high degree of focused attention to detailed repetitive processes, ability to follow clear objective instructions, a strong ability to detect when something is not "right", and familiarity with computers are typically well suited for a person with autism. These characteristics are a perfect match for the duties of a CNC (computer numerical controlled) machine operator, of which there is a huge shortage in the manufacturing industry today.

The match used in this Replication Guide is "level 1 autistic" to "CNC operator".

It is critically important that the UAA target jobs be in demand. This increases the probabilities of 100% placement of graduates and their career success.

See Element 1 - Match the Individual to the Job.

2. Identify the target geographic area.

Selection of a target geographic area should be based on a first estimate of the size of the target diagnosis population and of the demand for the target jobs. In general, one starts with a general target area, e.g., a city. Later, when a training facility is identified, a target area can be defined as a circle with radii not longer than a 1 hour travel time (by car or public transportation) from the training facility.

3. Validate the demand.

Validate that there is a demand in the target geographic area for the target jobs.

Resources for determining the demand for CNC operators include:

- Local National Tooling and Machining Association (NTMA) chapter
- Internet searches
 - Search for "sites for posting jobs"



- Search for “CNC job openings”
- Monster.com
- Indeed: <https://www.indeed.com>

4. Validate the population of target students.

Validate that there is a sufficiently large population of individuals with the target diagnosis in the target geographic area.

If the target population is those with level 1 autism, resources for determining the size of the local population include:

- Local government agencies focused on supporting post-high school individuals (in California they are called Regional Centers).
- Local non-profit organizations focusing on autism,
- County agencies focused on workforce training, etc.
- Social service organizations, such as the Autism Society. See the webpage **Social Service Organizations** on the Uniquely Abled Project website for a list of such organizations.
- State agencies, such as the California Department of Rehabilitation,
- An internet search on autism organizations in your area.

5. Establish the driving force for establishing the UAA.

- a) Establish one or two people as the driving force for establishing the UAA. Every project requires individuals who are committed to its fulfillment. A good combination is the person who originated the idea of establishing a UAA and the head of the organization providing the CNC skills training. These people should be organized, committed, and able to recruit people to the UAA Project Team and lead Project Team meetings.

Typically, one of these people comes from the organization providing the CNC skills training. Make sure they have sufficient administrative support, e.g., sending out notices to the UAA team, securing a meeting place for the team, etc.

- b) Who will perform the functions of a Marketing-PR Coordinator needs to be identified. Essentially this is the person who manages the marketing, recruiting, and selection process. They are the person whose name is on the Open House flyers. They are the person to whom all applications, questions, etc. are directed, and who will keep track of each applicant up to the start of the first class. At this time how this person will be paid should be determined.
- c) Each UAA also needs a Program Coordinator, the person who will manage the operation of the program beginning with the first class through to



successful job placement. They typically develop a personal relationship with each student so they can support them when needed. At this time how this person will be paid should be determined.

It is often the case that one person performs both the Marketing-PR Coordinator and the Program Coordinator jobs.

See Exhibit 2.3 - Example Job Description for Marketing -PR Coordinator

See Exhibit 2.4 – Marketing-PR Coordinator Guide

See Exhibit 2.5 - Example Job Description for Program Coordinator

See Exhibit 2.6 – Program Coordinator Guide

6. Identify and recruit an educational institution

See:

- Exhibit 2.7 - Identify and Recruit an Educational Institution
- Exhibit 2.8 - The Uniquely Abled Academy FAQs

A UAA is often built on an existing skills training facility. Particularly for CNC operation, it would be prohibitively expensive to establish a CNC operator training facility.

- a) Thus, an early step is to identify and recruit an educational institution that will provide the skills training, i.e., training in CNC operation.

Especially in California, many community/junior colleges have recognized the need for CNC operators and have established CNC training classes. Thus, identifying community colleges that have CNC training is a good start.

- b) Then determine whether CNC instruction is available during the weekdays (the typical time the uniquely abled population is available). In general one would like instruction to be available 4 days a week, around 8am to 3pm. Of the community colleges with CNC instruction, many have treated it as an extension course, and thus classes are often in the evenings and weekends, leaving the CNC machines idle during the day. This is an ideal situation for a UAA.
- c) Finally, determine the level of support by the educational institution for a UAA, including their support for a uniquely abled population, holding Project Team meetings, etc.

7. Decide whether will be contract (non-credit) or credit

See Exhibit 2.9 - UAA as a Pre-apprentice Program



See Exhibit 2.23 – UAA as a Contract Education Program

See Exhibit 2.24 – UAA as an Apprenticeship Program

A UAA may be for credit or non-credit. Likewise, a UAA may be, a pre-apprentice program, an apprenticeship program, or have no apprenticeship component.

Credit vs. Non-Credit

A **credit program** is one in which the UAA trainees are enrolled students of the educational institution hosting the UAA and they receive college credit for the UAA courses they successfully pass. The advantages of such a program are that the UAA trainees can access the resources of the school, including the programs established for disabled students. Likewise, it makes it easier for the UAA graduates to take additional courses beyond the UAA.

A **non-credit program** is one that, while it may be hosted by an educational institution, the UAA trainees are not enrolled students nor do they receive college credit. An advantage of a non-credit program is that there is greater flexibility available in the design of the courses and the selection of instructors. A disadvantage is that a non-credit program typically does not benefit from the state financial support of the college tuition and may be required to fully cover its costs. Thus the tuition may be higher than for credit programs.

There are also UAA programs that are a combination of credit and non-credit.

Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship is a real job where the trainee learns, gains experience, and gets paid. The apprentice is an employee with a contract of employment and holiday leave. By the end of an apprenticeship, the goal is that the apprentice has the right skills and knowledge needed for the chosen career.

An apprenticeship program is one in which employment is an integral part of the program. Employers provide on-the-job training as part of the program. Typically, apprenticeship programs are registered with their state, and are called Registered Apprentice Programs (RAP).

A pre-apprenticeship program is a program or set of strategies that is designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP). For more information see:

<https://www.apprenticeship.gov/employers/explore-pre-apprenticeship>

The website [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov) is a one-stop source to connect career seekers, employers, and education partners with apprenticeship resources. Discover apprenticeships across industries, how programs are started by employers, and



how to become an apprentice.

A UAA may also have no formal apprenticeship component. In this case the job placement and post-hire support (Element 8 – Support Employment) becomes more critical.

8. Identify and recruit a social service organization

Identify and recruit a social service organization to provide one or more of the following: job readiness training, job search and placement, and post-hire support. The social service organization must have enthusiasm for the uniquely abled concept and the formation of a UAA. It is likely that some of their participation, e.g., in Project Team meetings, will be pro-bono.

9. Hold Formation Team Meeting.

See Exhibit 2.22 – Example Formation Team Meeting Invitation.

See Exhibit 2.10 - Agenda for Formation Team Meeting for a suggested agenda for the Formation Team Meeting.

The purpose of the Formation Team Meeting is to plan for the first UAA Project Team Meeting.

See Exhibit 2.11 - Identifying and Recruiting UAA Project Team Partners

Participants in the Formation Team Meeting are typically:

- The people who were the driving force behind establishing the UAA
- Educational institution representative
- Social service organization representative
- Uniquely Abled Project representative

Critical to the UAA Project Team are the following individual roles:

- **UAA Principal:** ensures that the UAA accomplishes its goals.
- **UAA Project Team Leader:** plans and moderates Project Team meetings. Often the same person as the UAA Principal.
- **UAA Program Coordinator:** point of contact for all applicants and students, manages all the applicant and student paperwork
- **UAA Marketing Coordinator:** accountable for marketing the UAA and recruiting activities for sessions, e.g., attends job fairs, prepares and distributes flyers
- **UAA Consultant:** the person assigned by The Uniquely Abled Project to consult with, support, answer questions, and provide advice regarding establishing and managing the UAA.
- **Administrative Support:** makes sure Project Team Meetings notices are



issued, etc.

Possible additional professional personnel include:

- a cadre of instructional staff
- job developers
- administrative assistants
- an Accounting Manager
- part-time consultants for technical support
- behavioral and educational consultation
- a psychologist
- a public relations consultant
- individualized career planning, and instructional and curriculum oversight to ensure the program aligns closely with the needs of the marketplace
- a part-time development consultant to help raise money

In selecting those who should be invited to the UAA Project Team meeting, ensure to identify and invite organizations/individuals that cover the ten Element Teams, especially sources of the following:

- **CNC Skills Training:** Usually the first organization to be identified is the one that will provide the CNC skills training. This is often a community college or junior college that has a CNC training program. This will establish the geographic focus of the program.
- **Job Readiness Skills Training:** Often local social service agencies are able to provide this capability.
- **Training and coaching of the trainers:** Trainers will need training and coaching of the skills on how to teach the particular student population. Some local social service agencies are able to provide this capability, particularly if they provide training for the target student population. Other sources include local workforce investment agencies and Goodwill.

Good reference material is in Element 6 – Provide Resources for Instructors

- **Training and coaching of employers:** Employers will need training and coaching on how to evaluate, select, on-board, and manage the particular student population. Some local social service agencies can provide this capability, particularly if they provide job search and placement for the target student population. Other sources include state agencies (such as the CA Department of Rehabilitation), local workforce investment agencies and Goodwill.
- **Job Placement:** Some local social service agencies can provide this capability, particularly if they provide job search and placement for the target



student population. Other sources include state agencies (such as the CA Department of Rehabilitation), local workforce investment agencies and Goodwill.

- **Post-hire Support:** Some local social service agencies can provide this capability, particularly if they provide job search and placement for the target student population. Other sources include state agencies (such as the CA Department of Rehabilitation), local workforce investment agencies and Goodwill.

10. Consider whether to incorporate.

Non-profit incorporation involves considerable additional work, e.g., establishing a Board of Directors, By-Laws, filing with the IRS, etc., so there should be a good reason for incorporation. A primary reason for establishing your UAA as a non-profit corporation is to be able to receive donations and grants. However, typically community colleges (who typically provide the skills training) have fund raising departments, through which donations and grants may be channeled to the UAA, thus reducing, or eliminating the need for incorporation.

See Element 2.5 - Information Concerning Incorporation for more information about incorporation and the associated resources needed.

11. Hold the first meeting of the UAA Project Team.

An example Agenda for the first meeting of the UAA Project Team is in Exhibit 2.13 - Agenda for First Project Team Meeting

A UAA Project Team consists of representatives from the agencies providing the services that cover all ten Elements.

The most important intended outcome of the first meeting of the UAA Project Team is the population of the Element Teams.

The following Element Teams are recommended to constitute the UAA Project Team, corresponding to the 10 required elements for a successful vocational education program (See *Element 0.1 - Ten Elements Summary* and *Exhibit 0.1 - Ten Critical Elements of a Successful Vocational Education Program for the Uniquely Abled*)

1. Element Team 1: Match the Individual to the Job

- Purpose: Decide on the targeted diagnosis, the targeted job, and targeted geographic area.



- Accountability: That there is a great match of the target diagnosis and targeted job, and that there is a sufficient demand for workers of the targeted job in the targeted area and there is a sufficient supply of individuals in the targeted area with the targeted diagnosis.
 - See Element 1: Match the Individual to the Job
- 2. Element Team 2: Establishing and Managing the Training Program**
- Purpose: Manage the UAA
 - Accountability: That the UAA be successful
 - See Element 2 – Establishing and Managing the Training Program
- 3. Element Team 3: Marketing, Recruiting, Selecting, and Onboarding Trainees**
- Purpose: Establish policies and procedures for recruiting, assessing, and selecting students.
 - Accountability: Full classes of appropriate students
 - See Element 3 - Marketing, Recruiting Selecting and Onboarding Trainees
- 4. Element Team 4: Provide A Vocational Training Curriculum - Teaching and evaluating CNC and CMM Skills**
- Purpose: Have the students learn to be entry-level CNC machinists
 - Accountability: That all students graduate with the intended CNC and CMM skills
 - See Element 4 -Provide A Vocational Training Curriculum.
- 5. Element Team 5: Provide A Job Readiness Curriculum - Teaching and evaluating Job Readiness Skills**
- Purpose: Have the students learn the job readiness skills they will need to be successful in the workplace.
 - Accountability: That the graduates have the intended job readiness skills.
 - See Element 5 – Provide A Job Readiness Curriculum.
- 6. Element Team 6: Provide Resources for Instructors - Coaching Instructors on how to Teach Uniquely Abled population.**
- Purpose: Provide information, coaching, and training to the instructors on how to teach the uniquely abled students of this UAA
 - Accountability: That the instructors are aware of and modify their teaching methods to accommodate the diagnosis of the students.
 - See Element 6 – Provide Resources for Instructors.



7. Element Team 7: Provide Job Development - Job Placement and Coaching of Students and Employers

- Purpose: Establish policies, processes, and provide resources for job placement and post-hire support
- Accountability: That every graduate has and keeps an appropriate job.
- See Element 7 – Provide Job Development.

8. Element Team 8: Support Employment

- Purpose: Provide students with an experience of the work environment.
- Accountability: That each graduate has a good grasp of the environment to which they are headed
- See Element 8 – Support Employment.

9. Element Team 9: Provide External Support Systems

- Purpose: Ensure the support of external systems, including transportation and parents.
- Accountability: That each student is adequately supported by external systems.
- See Element 9 – Provide External Support Systems.

10. Element Team 10: Provide Funding

- Purpose: Establish processes for raising needed funds.
- Accountability: Delivery of sufficient funding to run the UAA with the desire that all the UAA is free for trainees and all service providers receive their normal compensation.
- See Element 10 – Provide Funding.

12. *Decide on dates, times, and location(s) for future Project Team meetings*

Particularly at the beginning, the Project Team should meet monthly. Ideally the same day of the month, same location, and time (experience is that 2 hours is a good, elapsed time) is established.

13. *Prepare for and Conduct Second and Future meetings of the UAA Project Team.*

An example Agenda for the subsequent meetings of the UAA Project Team is in Exhibit 2.14 - Example Project Team Agenda.



Create a Project Plan

Lay out a Project Plan for monitoring the establishment of the UAA. A blank Project Plan form is in *Exhibit 2.16 - Blank Project Plan Form*. An example/starting point Project Plan is in *Exhibit 2.15 – Example Project Plan*.

How to Maintain and update the Project Plan

See *Exhibit 2.18 - UAA Project Team Management Guide* for suggestions as to managing the UAA Project Team.

14. Recruit volunteers.

Many volunteers may be needed for the various committees.

Sources

Good sources are the parents of those with ASD.

Families of UAA participants have told us that for the first time, they are able to see a future for their grown children with autism, in which they can become self-sufficient, productive members of society and meaningfully socially integrated within it, and even, have a social network and friendships. In the past, this quality of life seemed unreachable for their youngsters, a heartfelt and intense desire that was never expected to be realized. Seeing this dream become a reality during these students' enrollment at UAA is very meaningful and gratifying to their family members, motivating them to support the UAA.

Parent Group

The UAA may consider establishing a parent group of parents of past, current, and potential future students. Email communications and newsletters may be sent out periodically, and as needed. The two primary purposes of the group are educational and program support.

In order to educate parents on issues related to employment and life for young adults with autism, speakers with expertise in relevant areas should come to address the group. Some of the topics have included advocacy, social skills, adaptive living skills, and employment. Program support is accomplished through a variety of means. Participation in the public relations efforts of the UAA with friends, extended family and media contact is one means by which parents support the program. An Annual Fundraising Campaign (if held) and identification of potential financial supporters of the program are two additional and important contributions made by the parent group. Additionally, potential subject matter



expert guest speakers, contacts within companies which allow field trips, and potential employers for the graduates can be identified and contacted by the parents to assist the program and its students in meeting their goals.

15. *Execute the UAA Project Plan*

It may be useful for each participating agency to be public about what it desires to get out of supporting the UAA program.

Then monitor to ensure resources are on track with every agency's anticipated goal.

It may be useful to develop a flow chart of who will be doing what AND a flow chart of what each agency is providing to the program.