



The Uniquely Abled Academy® Replication Guide

Element 3: Recruiting, Assessing and Selecting Students, Marketing & Communications

Element 3.3 Recruiting Students for a Particular Cohort

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This section focuses on the processes to recruit students to apply for a UAA, as well as the marketing and PR for a particular cohort.

1. Target Characteristics of Students

Published information should include the minimum requirements, such as:

- Show competence in organizational skills that reflect the ability to function independently in social and academic settings.
- Exhibit competence in reading, basic math and computer comprehension, specifically showing the ability to identify main ideas, make inferences and integrate disparate ideas.
- Demonstrate appropriate social competency including skills in self-advocacy, independent living, and social collaboration.
- Demonstrate appropriate skills in the appropriate use of language in a social context by applying a variety of communication skills.
- High School or GED diploma (If you do not have a high school diploma or GED you must be at least 18 or have permission from your high school to attend if you are younger) and be prepared for a variety of post-secondary and career opportunities.

Typical tasks performed by a CNC operator include:

- Recognize, deploy, and properly use inserts, fixtures and tooling.
- Read and interpret blueprints.
- Use gages and measuring instruments to meet tolerance requirements.
- Properly and safely load and unload castings and raw materials in CNC machinery.
- Perform daily and regular cleaning and light maintenance tasks on CNC machinery.

Those considering a career in CNC operating should have mechanical aptitude and a



desire to work with machines that require precise operation. The ability to read blueprints and a basic understanding of computers will also be helpful. A CNC operator is often called upon to troubleshoot when machines don't function properly and so should enjoy the challenge of this type of problem solving.

Desirable characteristics might include:

- Mechanically inclined.
- Like working with their hands.
- Able to tolerate the noise of a typical manufacturing facility. The noise level can also be very loud so someone who is okay working with noise even though they will have ear plugs etc. This depends on each individual and also the employer sites, which may be different from each other.
- Likes to solve problems.
- Likes to be accurate.
- Loves working with their hands and tools. (Enjoys auto mechanics or car shop work. Interest in airplanes and aircraft in general.)

Taking a tour of an operating machine shop to show prospective students what the machines can do and the environment is important. This provides them with a real-time experience of the environment they will be working in and may lead to some prospective students realizing that this is not something they were well-suited for.

2. Marketing and PR Processes

Marketing and PR processes include:

- Marketing and PR for the UAA (covered in [Element 3.2 - Marketing and Public Relations for the UAA](#)).
- Holding an Open House.
- Having a display/table at related job fairs and autism resource fairs.
- Rallying support from autism-focused organizations.
- Mailings.
- Websites and social media.
- Presentations at relevant events.
- Having newspapers write articles, blogs, electronic news.
- Having the application process and resources easily available, e.g., on the web.
- Establishing connections with high schools and school districts.
- Memberships in local business associations.

a. Holding an Open House



The purpose of an Open House is to introduce potential students and their parents to the manufacturing industry, CNC operation, and the Uniquely Abled Academy program. It's purpose is to also give the potential trainees a sense of the equipment – noise, size, physical activities.

See [Exhibit 3.6 - Example Open House Agenda](#).

The Open House should be held at the Host Institution and include:

- **Publicity:**
 - When the UAA is just being formed, it is useful to have a lot of publicity from every possible source, non-profits, government agencies, etc. We have found a webinar explaining the program for referring agencies is particularly useful.
 - It may be useful to combine Graduation for one cohort with the Open House for the next cohort.
- **Layout:**
 - It is ideal to have a number of round tables scattered around the room, with a screen and a podium.
 - Placing tables around the walls of the room for the supporting agencies where prospective students can ask questions, get applications, and make appointments, e.g., with state vocational rehabilitation agency and with the Program Coordinator.
 - Also useful to have big photos of CNC machines and graduates at machines on stands scattered around the room.
- **Logistics.**
 - Ideal to have some light food.
 - Have a check in where everyone submits their name, e-mail, and organization/status (parent, potential student, agency, etc.) and gets a nametag.
- On the screen, have an automatic slide show showing pictures of the educational institution, UAA classes, students at CNC machines, graduates at work, etc.
 - Show videos that take prospective students into the world of manufacturing. These videos should be able to explain what a workday for a CNC operator looks like. The video “When Autism Meets CNC Machining”, available on You Tube, might be particularly useful.¹
- Introduction of faculty teaching the Manufacturing class, Blueprint class and Job Readiness Curriculum
- Have someone, e.g., a Manufacturing employer, who can speak to the number of jobs available, the pay, room for advancement in the field, skills needed.
- At the end of the Open House, have the UAA Program Coordinator mention that applications for the program are available in the room as well as online,

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qgu0Esp0Qqo>



appointments can be made with him/her to discuss the program further and for intake purposes.

- After the Open House presentations take the students and their families on a tour of the machinery shop and the classrooms where the classes will be taught.
 - It can be very helpful to have a CNC machine already programmed to make a small part. The faculty person can load the machine, and then have a potential trainee push the “start” button, the faculty person takes out the part when done and then the potential trainee can go home with the part that is made.
- A video of the entire Open House event could be made and put on the UAA website. This is essential for prospective students unable to come to the Open House.
- Follow-up can be very useful, especially for those who didn’t apply that evening.

b. Having a display/table at related job fairs and autism resource fairs

The UAA needs to be represented at all relevant job fairs, etc., with presentations to a variety of groups. Most students will hear about the program through word of mouth.

Most job fairs involve a table (useful to have a tablecloth or a stand-up placard with the UAP logo) and UAA materials for people to take home.

c. Support from autism-focused organizations

Have a program to reach out and regularly make connections to autism-focused organizations in your geographic area, e.g., schedule a tour for those in the local autism community to see the program. Have meetings and meals with agencies, relevant non-profits, and personal connections. Make sure they understand the entrance criteria, the goals of the program, and the results produced to date.

Utilize and distribute these two one-page flyers:

- General Information Flyer: 1-page, generally general info FAQ not referring to any specific class ([Exhibit 3.1– Example Cohort Announcement Flyer](#)).
- Class Announcement Flyer: With information for the next class for autism-focused organizations to distribute. Should be 1-page and added to their periodic mailing (find out if they are willing to include the flyer, their publication schedule and what form the flyer needs to be in to be included). The flyer needs to be nicely done graphically (See [Exhibit 3.7 – UAA Flyer](#)).

Social media is about what is happening right then, so post the specific class flyer here. On Facebook is immediate timing “sign up now”. On the UAA website post the



FAQ flyer since it will not change.

Remember to feed back to referring organizations how their consumers are doing, success stories, so they can have confidence in recommending others.

Local governments may have established committees and offices to support employment of the uniquely abled. Get involved.

d. Mailings

Snail Mail

Snail mail is a little passé. You would need to decide who would be the targets of the mailing. In the end snail mail is probably too expensive and maybe not widely read.

E-mail

There is a UAP Newsletter in which a UAA can utilize to share and publish articles and updates.

In addition, each UAA can consider having its own mailing list and newsletter so it can direct mailings to its geographic area. The list can be developed through a number of sources:

- Signups through the UAP and UAA websites
- Signups through the UAP Newsletter
- Signups through the local UAA newsletter
- Signup sheets at events (every event should have e-mail sign-up sheets)

Eventually a UAA program may have its own newsletter in addition to the UAP Newsletter.

e. Websites and Social Media

It is anticipated that each UAA will have its own website, likely linked from the main UAP website.

For the students an UAA wants to attract, social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are likely the more useful for recruiting students, LinkedIn less so.

Both the UAP and UAA websites need to be frequently updated.

f. Presentations at relevant events

Attend meetings of local manufacturing associations. Attend and offer to present at relevant conferences and industry trade shows, particularly at conference where users



of CNC machines will be in attendance. Example conferences include:

- Haas Technical Education Center Conferences:
<http://www.htecnetwork.org/conferences.cfm>
- NTMA: <http://www.ntma.org/upcoming-events/>
- Manufacturing Trade Shows & Conferences 2016-17:
https://businessresources.peoples.com/SBR_template.cfm?Document=IndustryMarkets/manufacturing-trade_shows.html

Make sure you have a table in the exhibit area for talking with people after your presentation.

Presentations are available on the UAP website for customization. Remember that quotes from employers and pictures are powerful, especially of successful graduates.

g. Having blogs, electronic news newspapers/magazines write articles

See [Element 3.2 - Marketing and Public Relations for the UAA](#) in general. This section focuses on marketing and PR to recruit students for a specific class.

Having articles in local periodicals (either paper or electronic) about Open Houses and upcoming classes is very useful.

h. Have the application process and resources easily available, e.g., on the web

The application process and links to needed resources should be easy to find and easy to use.²

² See <http://uniquelyabledproject.org/applying-to-the-gcc-uniquely-abled-academy/> as an example.